

**HEARING TO CONSIDER NOMINATIONS OF
DR. CLIFFORD STANLEY TO BE UNDER SEC-
RETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND
READINESS; ERIN CONATON TO BE UNDER
SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE; AND LAW-
RENCE ROMO TO BE DIRECTOR OF THE SE-
LECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM**

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2009

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:35 a.m. in room SH-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Senator Carl Levin (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Levin, E. Benjamin Nelson, Udall, Burris, McCain, Thune, and LeMieux.

Committee staff members present: Richard D. DeBobes, staff director; and Leah C. Brewer, nominations and hearings clerk.

Majority staff members present: Jonathan D. Clark, counsel; Madelyn R. Creedon, counsel; Gabriella Eisen, counsel; Creighton Greene, professional staff member; Gerard J. Leeling, counsel; Jason W. Maroney, counsel; William G.P. Monahan, counsel; John H. Quirk V, professional staff member; and William K. Sutey, professional staff member.

Minority staff members present: Joseph W. Bowab, Republican staff director; Daniel A. Lerner, professional staff member; Lucian L. Niemeyer, professional staff member; and Richard F. Walsh, minority counsel.

Staff assistants present: Jennifer R. Knowles and Breon N. Wells.

Committee members' assistants present: Christopher Caple, assistant to Senator Bill Nelson; Ann Premer, assistant to Senator Ben Nelson; Patrick Hayes, assistant to Senator Bayh; Gordon I. Peterson, assistant to Senator Webb; Jennifer Barrett, assistant to Senator Udall; Roosevelt Barfield, assistant to Senator Burris; Anthony J. Lazarski, assistant to Senator Inhofe; Jason Van Beek, assistant to Senator Thune; and Brian W. Walsh, assistant to Senator Martinez.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARL LEVIN, CHAIRMAN

Chairman LEVIN. Good morning, everybody. The committee—I don't think these mikes are on.

The committee meets today to consider the nominations of: Dr. Clifford Stanley to be Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness; Erin Conaton to be Under Secretary of the Air Force; and Lawrence Romo to be Director of the Selective Service System.

By the way, I'm not sure these mikes are still working at all. Can somebody check the mikes?

We welcome our nominees and their families to today's hearing. Senior Department of Defense officials put in long and uncertain hours and we appreciate very much the sacrifices of our nominees to serve their country, their continuing sacrifices in most of their cases. But their families deserve equal gratitude for the support that they provide, because that support is essential to the success of these officials.

Today's nominees are highly qualified for the positions to which they've been nominated. Dr. Stanley served 33 years in the Marine Corps, became the Marines' first African American regimental commander, and retired in 2002 as a two-star general. Since that time, Dr. Stanley has served as Executive Vice President of the University of Pennsylvania and President of Scholarship America.

If confirmed he will be the principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense on the recruitment, retention, pay and benefits, health care, readiness, and quality of life of the men and women of our armed forces. He will also be the primary official responsible for shaping and developing the Department of Defense's 680,000-person civilian work force as the Department implements the Secretary's new hiring plan.

Ms. Conaton has served as Research Staff Director for the Hart-Rudman Commission on National Security in the 21st Century, a professional staff member of the House Armed Services Committee, and most recently as the Staff Director of the House Armed Services Committee. If confirmed, she will be the second-ranking official in the Department of the Air Force and will serve as the chief management officer of the Air Force. Previous Under Secretaries have also been designated DOD's executive agent for space. We do not know yet whether Ms. Conaton will exercise this responsibility.

Ms. Conaton is of course well known to all members of our committee for her hard work, her capable leadership in our conferences on the National Defense Authorization Act. I am confident that we're going to be able to forgive her for her persistence in supporting the House position in these conferences, and I think the person sitting to her right is very well aware of just how well she did in her persistence and how she accomplished things which should not have been accomplished.

Mr. Romo retired as Lieutenant Colonel after a career in Air Force Reserves. He's currently Soldier and Family Assistance Program Manager for the Army's Fifth Recruiting Brigade and an Admissions Liaison Officer for the Air Force Academy. If confirmed, he will be responsible for managing the Selective Service System of our country.

We look forward to the testimony our nominees, to their speedy confirmation. I now call upon Senator McCain, and then we will quickly call upon our dear friend Ike Skelton for an introduction.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN

Senator MCCAIN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I welcome our friend Congressman Skelton, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, who is here with a mistaken mission this morning. But we're always happy to see him and we very much appreciate the environment that persists, thanks to the efforts of Ms. Conaton and our staff, that makes us work successfully together and maintaining a record of a defense authorization bill being signed by the President of the United States for many years now.

I welcome all the nominees and their families. I thank them for their willingness to serve in these key leadership positions. Dr. Stanley, the nominee to be the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel Readiness, has a distinguished 33-year career as a Marine Corps officer, culminating in his assignments as Commanding General, Marine Corps Air-Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, and Deputy Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command in Quantico. His employment as President of Scholarship America demonstrates his commitment to public service and the importance of education and personnel development.

The manpower and readiness challenges facing the Department of Defense and the Services in this eighth year of the war on terrorism are many. In your advance policy question responses, you identified the challenges of continuing to sustain the All-Volunteer Force and ensuring appropriate compensation and personnel policies, quality health care, and essential support to military families and wounded warriors. I agree with you and I would add that the challenge of formulating policies and programs aimed at ensuring the highest possible readiness of our personnel and operational units during a time of great stress, at preventing sexual assaults and suicides, at bringing under control the rising costs of personnel as an overall part of the DOD budget without eroding readiness, at restructuring the National safety personnel system and creating an acquisition work force that is capable of delivering weapons systems on time and within budget.

Dr. Stanley, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the challenge that will probably fall under your purview of eliminating or changing the DOD homosexual conduct policy. As I've stated before, I believe that the current "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy works, is not a failure, as some have proclaimed. I would be opposed to any attempt to modify existing policy in ways that will harm military readiness or place upon the shoulders of military leaders an extra burden that they simply do not need.

If change in policy is contemplated, it should be accompanied by input and studies by the Joint Chiefs, input by people like yourself, hearings, and votes before this fundamental policy, which has worked successfully in my view, is changed for political reasons.

Ms. Conaton, the nominee for the position of Under Secretary of the Air Force, is currently the Staff Director for the House Armed Services Committee, and I know you'll be missed by Chairman Skelton. You'll be missed by all of us. You've done an outstanding job and I congratulate you for all the work you've done. You'll be an asset to Secretary Donnelly and General Schwartz, and I congratulate you on your nomination.

Mr. Romo is the nominee to be the Director of the Selective Service System. An Air Force Academy graduate, Mr. Romo served over 20 years in the Air Force and Air Force Reserve. Since 1999, as a civilian employee of the Army's Recruiting Command he has headed up the Soldier-Family Assistance Program in the San Antonio, Texas, region.

The Selective Service System, while an independent agency, continues to be an important element in our National defense planning. The all-volunteer military as a strategic national resource has never been more capable and respected. I certainly hope we'll never face the requirement to reinstate the draft. It's essential that we retain the Selective Service System and the means to do so.

I look forward to the testimony of the nominees today and I again thank them and all their families for their service.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Senator McCain follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator McCain.

Now we're going to call upon our good friend Chairman Ike Skelton of the House Armed Services Committee for an introduction. We welcome you enthusiastically, Ike. It's always great to see you.

**STATEMENT OF HON. IKE SKELTON, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE
FROM THE STATE OF MISSOURI**

Mr. SKELTON. Thank you, Senator.

Is this on?

Senator MCCAIN. There's something wrong, Ike.

Chairman LEVIN. Just talk as loudly as you possibly can, because the mikes, Ike, are not working.

Mr. SKELTON. Well, it's an honor to be here this morning, Mr. Chairman, Senator McCain. It's a bittersweet moment for me. I'm here to recommend and urge the confirmation of Erin Conaton, the Staff Director of the House Armed Services Committee, to be the Under Secretary of the United States Air Force.

Seldom is there a combination or confluence of talent, good judgment, knowledge, devotion to duty, common sense, and, as we say in Missouri, good get-along, particularly someone who is of the tender age of Erin Conaton. She's a remarkable young lady.

We on the Armed Services Committee have been the beneficiaries of her hard work, hard work, good judgment, fantastic talent. I know that the Air Force will be in good hands. She's a good manager. She handles people very, very well. She's respectful and her knowledge is as good as anyone I have ever run into in a position comparable to hers.

I ask that my formal remarks be placed in the record.

Educated at Georgetown, Tufts University, on the Hart-Rudman Commission as a staffer, as you mentioned in your opening remarks, she came as a staff member of the acquisition Armed Services Committee, and when I became the ranking member she was the ranking staff director, and now since we've been in the majority she has been the director and has run the Armed Services Committee as well as anyone in the history of my some 33 years in this Congress.

I'm privileged to know her. We are all privileged to have been the beneficiaries of her fantastically first-rate work, and she's a good friend. I know that our country will be in not just good hands, but better hands, with her as Under Secretary of the Air Force.

I sincerely urge her confirmation and I know she will make us all proud.

[The prepared statement of Representative Skelton follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Representative Skelton, Chairman Skelton. I know how much that extraordinary tribute and introduction means to Ms. Conaton, and it does mean a great deal to us as well.

Your entire statement will of course be made a part of the record. We know that you've got a heavy load on your schedule, so that you are excused. You're free to leave at any time that you wish.

Let me now ask all three of our witnesses the standard questions, and then we'll call upon each of them for their opening statements. They can introduce families or whoever else that is with them that they would like to introduce. Here are the three standard—here are the standard questions that we ask all three of you:

Have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest?

Mr. STANLEY. Yes.

Ms. CONATON. Yes, Senator.

Mr. ROMO. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Have you assumed any duties or undertaken any actions which would appear to presume the outcome of the confirmation process?

Mr. STANLEY. No, Senator.

Ms. CONATON. No, Senator.

Mr. ROMO. No, Senator.

Chairman LEVIN. Will you ensure your staff complies with deadlines established for requested communications, including questions for the record in hearings?

Mr. STANLEY. Yes, Senator.

Ms. CONATON. Yes, Senator.

Mr. ROMO. Yes, Senator.

Chairman LEVIN. Will you cooperate in providing witnesses and briefers in response to Congressional requests?

Mr. STANLEY. Yes, Senator.

Ms. CONATON. Yes, Senator.

Mr. ROMO. Yes, Senator.

Chairman LEVIN. Will those witnesses be protected from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

Mr. STANLEY. Yes, Senator.

Ms. CONATON. Yes, Senator.

Mr. ROMO. Yes, Senator.

Chairman LEVIN. Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify upon request before this committee?

Ms. CONATON. Yes, Senator.

Mr. STANLEY. Yes, Senator.

Mr. ROMO. Yes, Senator.

Chairman LEVIN. And do you agree to provide documents, including copies of electronic forms of communication, in a timely manner

when requested by a duly constituted committee or to consult with the committee regarding the basis for any good faith delay or denial in providing such documents?

Mr. ROMO. Yes, Senator.

Ms. CONATON. Yes, Senator.

Mr. STANLEY. Yes, Senator.

Chairman LEVIN. Okay. Now I think in terms of the order here for you to give your opening statements and introduce people who accompany you today, we'll first call upon you, Dr. Stanley, and then Ms. Conaton, and then Mr. Romo. That'll be the order.

Dr. STANLEY.

STATEMENT OF CLIFFORD L. STANLEY, NOMINATED TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS

Mr. STANLEY. Thank you, Senator. Good morning. Chairman Levin, Senator McCain, members of the committee: I appreciate the opportunity to appear here today. I thank President Obama for having the confidence in me to nominate me to be the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness of the Department of Defense. I am also appreciative to Secretary Gates and Deputy Secretary Lynn for their support.

My wife Rosalyn and daughter, Lieutenant Commander Angela Stanley, United States Navy, are here today, along with—accompanying my wife is our service dog and family companion, Juno. Not present today, but serving in uniform, is my niece, Air Force Staff Sergeant Michelle Stanley.

My wife's support throughout my career and the inherent challenges associated with special needs as we moved from duty station to duty station have afforded me added insights into the needs of military families. The service of our daughter, niece, and many friends still serving has kept me current on many of the issues shared by both men and women currently serving in uniform.

The President and Congress, particularly the members of this committee, are working together to support our military, their families, and Defense Department personnel serving our Nation. If confirmed, I will do my best to ensure optimal standards of personnel support and operational readiness.

That concludes my statement.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Stanley follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Dr. Stanley.

Ms. CONATON.

STATEMENT OF ERIN C. CONATON, NOMINATED TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE

Ms. CONATON. Thank you, Chairman Levin. Let me just say at the outset, thank you to you, Senator McCain and to the chairman, for those extraordinarily kind words.

It's an honor to appear before all of you today and an honor to be nominated for this position. At the outset, I would like to thank President Obama for nominating me and Secretary Gates, Deputy Secretary Lynn, and Secretary Donnelly for supporting this nomination. If confirmed, I greatly look forward to working with all of them.

My current boss and mentor, Chairman Skelton, likes to note Cicero's adage that gratitude is the greatest of all virtues. I've always agreed with him in this and all things, and in that regard I need to say a few more words of thanks.

First, I have a lot of friends and family here today. It's not an understatement to say that I would not be here without their unwavering support. I'd like to acknowledge my parents, Stan and Pat; my aunt and uncle, Judy and Tom; my brother and sister-in-law, Sean and Erin; my sister and her partner, Meg and Drew. But most especially, I'm thrilled that my 2-year-old niece Nora can be here today and that her 4-year-old brother William was able to be excused from pre-school to be here with us.

Chairman LEVIN. He would have probably been here even if he weren't excused. He looks like—[Laughter.]

Ms. CONATON. I think that's right.

Second, I'm confident that I would not be nominated for this position if it was not for the gentleman from Missouri, Chairman Ike Skelton. I have benefited greatly from his wisdom and counsel and from his friendship. He's already provided me some additional wisdom in the event that I'm confirmed by reminding me that I should always ask myself, what would Harry Truman do.

I have to admit that the prospect of not working directly with him every day made the choice to accept this nomination very difficult. I can only hope that I will make him proud if confirmed to this position.

Finally, I would like to thank the tremendous staff associated with this committee and the staff of the House Armed Services Committee, which I have been privileged to lead. These staffs, both those who work in member offices and those who serve the committees directly, are extraordinary professionals. I have been privileged to work with them over these years and I have learned much from our debates, deliberations, and friendships.

Mr. Chairman, this committee knows well the challenges facing the Air Force and has been instrumental in efforts to address them. The Air Force is a great service, with a proud history and a commitment to service shared by the nearly 700,000 members of the Air Force family, active duty, Reserve, National Guard, and civilians. If confirmed, I would consider it a privilege to become part of that family and to help Secretary Donnelly, General Schwartz, and General Chandler in their strong leadership of this service. I would also welcome the opportunity to contribute to the joint effort, working with the other services, the team that makes up the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and the Congress.

I also would like to say what an honor it is to be on the same panel as Dr. Stanley and Mr. Romo, and I would look forward to working with both of them.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I thank you, Senator McCain, and the committee again for this opportunity, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Conaton follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you so much, and again our thanks for your great service to the House committee and the way in which you've worked with our staff as well. Your comments are I know appreciated by them and appreciated by us.

Mr. Romo.

**STATEMENT OF LAWRENCE G. ROMO, NOMINATED TO BE
DIRECTOR OF THE SELECTIVE SERVICE**

Mr. ROMO. Chairman Levin, Ranking Member McCain, and members of the committee: Good morning. I'm indeed honored and humbled that President Obama has expressed his confidence in me to become the twelfth Director of Selective Service. Pending Senate confirmation, I look forward to serving my country in this unique position.

At one time or another, I think most of us have dreamt about being in place in charge of an organization where we can make a difference. If I am confirmed as Director, you will be placing me in a fortunate situation as someone who is very interested in national security and our armed forces. I believe I am highly qualified to preserve the best aspects of a proud agency that has a distinguished 69- year history, while making improvements to operational efficiency, motivating employees and volunteers, and boosting morale.

The Selective Service System is an important Federal agency with dedicated people doing terrific work, but there is always room for improvement. I know about people and I have studied how the Selective Service System operates. I understand its importance to national defense and readiness as America's only proven defense manpower insurance for our Nation's all-volunteer military. I stand ready to make the needed improvements to the agency's structure and priorities and defend its budget and necessary existence as a key component of our National defense.

Because of personal experiences with the military and our wonderful veterans, I also understand and believe in the role that every young man must play with regard to the Selective Service. I will encourage the 2 million men reaching age 18 every year in the United States that they must live up to their patriotic, legal, and civic obligation to help provide for the common defense by registering with the Selective Service.

With your support, I stand ready to take up the challenges of this important assignment, and I thank you for considering me. I want to thank you all for the service you do to our country.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Romo follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you so much, Mr. Romo.

Let me start asking questions of Dr. Stanley. Dr. Stanley, as you know, our service members and their families are under severe stress. One component of the stress is the repeated and lengthy combat deployments, especially in the Army and the Marine Corps, and the lack of adequate dwell time for our service members. What can you tell us about your views on that issue and what would be your plans and hopes in terms of that challenge?

Mr. ROMO. Yes, Senator. We have—as I alluded to in the opening statement, the All-Volunteer Force is actually going to be one of the top priorities, if confirmed.

Chairman LEVIN. The voices are going to be going on and off because the mikes are on and off. I don't know if you can hear when the mike goes off.

Mr. ROMO. I can hear it kind of going up and down.

Chairman LEVIN. Yes. So keep your voices up as high as you possibly can.

Mr. ROMO. Yes, Senator.

The All-Volunteer Force is actually one of the highest priorities. Under that subset of the All-Volunteer Force is, of course, wounded warrior, dwell time issues, family issues, the stress that's affecting our military today. So if confirmed, I promise that that will be one of the top priorities that I'll be focusing on as Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

Chairman LEVIN. In April, Dr. Stanley, Secretary Gates determined that the Department of Defense had gone too far in relying on service contractors to perform basic functions and announced that the Department would seek to substitute civilian employees for contractors in critical roles. He stated: "Our goal is to hire as many as 13,000 new civil servants in fiscal year 2010 to replace contractors and up to 30,000 new civil servants in place of contractors over the next 5 years."

Would you agree that the civilian employee work force of the Department plays a critical role in the success of the Department's activities, and if confirmed will you make the planning and management of that change and of the civilian work force a high priority?

Mr. STANLEY. Yes, Senator, I would and I do.

Chairman LEVIN. Our service members have now been fighting in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom for many, many years, and the wear on our service members and their families continues to grow. Timely access to mental health care for both service members and their families must be a priority as these brave men and women work through what they've experienced in combat and the hardships that they faced at home while their loved ones are away at war.

What efforts should be undertaken to increase the number of mental health professionals available to service members and their families?

Mr. STANLEY. Well, Senator, as I understand it, if confirmed, we know that the mental health stress on our troops, their families, and really also the entire Department of Defense is very significant. So if confirmed, this would be an area that I would put a lot of emphasis in. We know that right now probably one of the most important things that I could do if confirmed would be to actually ensure that we have the right people selected to help with that process of selecting the best people as we look at these difficult, challenging issues of stress within the armed forces.

Chairman LEVIN. By the way, I didn't announce this, but why don't we have a 9-minute first round, for whoever's keeping time there.

Senator McCain made reference to the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. The President's made it clear that he would like to see that Federal statute repealed. You will be responsible for leading the implementation of any change in the policy within the Department of Defense if that policy is changed. Before it's changed, there will of course be significant input from the uniformed military and from others. There will be hearings, of course, before any change is voted on, and then there will be votes to determine whether in fact such a change should take place.

If you are confirmed, will you give us your best objective opinion on the question of whether or not “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” should be maintained or dropped?

Mr. STANLEY. Yes, Senator, I will.

Chairman LEVIN. Ms. Conaton, the Under Secretary position also serves as the chief management officer of the Air Force, as I mentioned. We established that provision in 2007 out of the frustration that we had with the inability of the military departments to modernize their business systems and their processes. We chose to have the Under Secretary serve concurrently as chief management officer because no other official in the Air Force other than the Secretary sits at a high enough level to cut across stovepipes and implement comprehensive change.

I think you’ve given us one of the great opportunities that we’ll have to achieve a comprehensive change because you know this subject so well. Will you make modernization of the Air Force’s business systems and processes a top priority?

Ms. CONATON. Yes, Senator, I will.

Chairman LEVIN. Give us an idea, if you can, how you’re going to balance your duties as the chief management officer with the other duties that you’ll have as Under Secretary?

Ms. CONATON. Yes, thank you, Chairman Levin. My understanding of the roles and responsibilities of this position is that as Under Secretary of the Air Force I would be responsible for being the principal assistant and deputy to the Secretary and to take on such roles and responsibilities as he sees as appropriate.

In addition to that, you point out rightly—and obviously I was involved from the Hill perspective in helping to give the responsibility to this position for chief management officer. I think you’re right to point out the daunting nature of that task. I’ve been informed that the Air Force already has an office dedicated to the chief management officer’s responsibilities up and running. If confirmed, I’ll look forward to working with them to see how far along they are and be able to give you by best assessment of where we stand and to balance those duties with the other things that Secretary Donnelly would ask me to take on.

Chairman LEVIN. The efforts to improve business systems in the Department of Defense, for instance by purchasing commercial off-the-shelf systems, frequently fail because too many people in the Department want to keep doing things the same way that they’ve always been done, refuse to give up unique business processes and data requirements that don’t fit into new systems.

Instead of instituting approaches that have worked in the private sector, the Department ends up spending hundreds of millions, indeed billions, to tailor off-the-shelf systems to interface with obsolete systems and to meet the unique demands of DOD users. Now, such changes have resulted in delays, duplication, added expense, and system failure.

Do you believe that you will have the authority needed to work across stovepipes and to drive the change in the Air Force’s business processes that is so needed, so much needed to effectively implement new business systems?

Ms. CONATON. Yes, Mr. Chairman, I believe that that is the intent of the law as it was passed by this Congress and that that is

the way it is being implemented in the Department. If I find upon confirmation that there are additional authorities needed, I would certainly let this committee know that.

Chairman LEVIN. That was my next question: Will you let us know promptly when you've run into those obstacles if you need additional authorities, because this has been a longstanding goal of this committee, indeed the House committee and the Congress. So if you'll do that we would appreciate it.

Ms. CONATON. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. On the question of the next tanker aircraft, do you agree that the new tanker is needed, first of all, I assume?

Ms. CONATON. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. But will you, in your role, to the extent that you are involved, will you bring to that role the neutrality, the fairness, the objectivity which is so essential?

Ms. CONATON. Yes, Mr. Chairman. My sense and my commitment is to ask questions upon confirmation that would lead to this competition being concluded to the best interests of the warfighter. I think it's very important that this be a fair and open competition and that it be clear to those who see the results how the decision was made, and I would look forward to being able to ask those questions in a neutral and objective manner.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

The issue of climate change and the interrelated issue of energy use, and that particularly involves the potential for renewable energy use, that issue has been receiving huge and needed attention throughout the government, including here on Capitol Hill. The largest user of fossil fuels in the Federal Government is the Department of Defense, which creates a significant carbon footprint, and as a result is going to need to do its part to reduce carbon emissions in the years to come.

Can you give us your views on this challenge and this essential effort, so that we can reduce this footprint in a significant way?

Ms. CONATON. Mr. Chairman, I concur with you that the Department of Defense and indeed the Department of the Air Force are significant users of fossil fuels, including in the case of the Air Force for aviation fuel. In my capacity as Staff Director at House Armed Services Committee, I'm aware that the Air Force has put in place goals for reducing that and for increasing the percentage of renewable fuels that are part of the fleet's operation.

If confirmed, I believe that energy policy will be a critical area to look at and one of the responsibilities that I would look forward to taking on. Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Okay, thank you.

My time is up. I have asked that Senator Ben Nelson take over the chairmanship up here because I must leave, and I'm very much appreciative of his willingness to do so. According to our early bird rule, I will call on Senator Udall next and then turn the gavel over to Senator Nelson.

Senator Udall, you're next. Sorry to interrupt the conversation there.

Senator UDALL. Senator Levin, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I wanted to start out by giving a special welcome to Ms. Conaton. I served in the House Armed Services Committee and many people

would probably think all that I know is tied to Chairman Skelton, but it's actually tied to Ms. Conaton's mentorship and her great friendship. So this is an exciting day for me as well as for you.

If I might, I'd like to share a concern with you. It's a comment at this time, not a question. I'm sure you're aware that the Air Force recently came out with its Joint Strike Fighter candidate basing selection. I'm still trying to understand how the Air Force arrived at some of its calculations, and I intend to schedule a briefing with the Air Force soon to get some more clarity. So I wanted to just let you know that that's a concern of mine and it'll continue to be a concern of mine as we move forward.

But again, welcome, and I look forward to your confirmation process moving quickly and getting to the point where you no longer have to say "if confirmed," but it'll be "I have been confirmed and now I can go to work."

Ms. CONATON. Thank you, Senator.

Senator UDALL. Great to see you here today.

Mr. Romo, if I might, a comment as well that I could direct your way. As I understand it, currently DOD policy, current policy, prevents individuals who fail to register with the Selective Service within the legal time frame between the ages of 18 and 26 from joining the military. That seems fair to me. But the same policy also prevents them from ever obtaining a Federal job, and waivers to the policy are permitted, as there should be, at times when circumstances could explain why an individual didn't fit into that time frame.

But my office has petitioned for a number of Coloradans, without success. It seems that, frankly, in some cases the punishment may exceed the crime. I'd like to follow up with you and see if there isn't some remedy in those cases that have merit. I just wanted to bring that to your attention.

Mr. ROMO. Thank you for the questions, Senator Udall, and thank you for serving the people of Colorado. I spent a good time there at the Air Force Academy and I enjoyed my experience. Maybe not the first year, but I enjoyed the other years.

Senator UDALL. Not the first year.

Mr. ROMO. But in answer to your question, our job is to implement the policy that the President and the Congress directs. You set the standards in the statutes and, candidly, it's up to you to decide which way you want to direct us. If you say for us to look at different processes, we'll be happy to look which way you want to go.

My job when I'm in there, if confirmed, is to assess and evaluate the situation and to optimize the procedure and processes. For example, we want to do a quicker turn-around when you have inquiries when somebody is looking to get a certificate that they registered for Selective Service for a student loan, a Federal grant. We want to make sure we have a quick turn-around because 90 days is unacceptable right now, what I've been told. But that's my position right now.

Senator UDALL. Thank you for that interest and clarification. Again, I look forward to working with you to see if we can resolve some of these cases in Colorado and perhaps look more broadly in

those cases where, as I said, the punishment may exceed the crime or the oversight.

Dr. Stanley, General Stanley, great to have you here. I can find fault with only one part of your application. It's that you seem to have no family members serving in the U.S. Army. You've got all the other Service branches covered. [Laughter.]

I'd like to follow up on the same line of questioning and comments that the chairman directed your way, starting with the mental health of our service men and women. At Fort Carson in Colorado and across the country at many installations, there's a combination of combat stress and repeated deployments, mental illness, failures of leadership, drug and alcohol problems that have led to broken soldiers, broken families, and increased incidence of suicides and homicides.

You know and I know there's a stigma attached to mental health issues, not just in the military community, but in society at large, quite frankly. We can't pass laws to eliminate it. I wish we could some days. So it's all the more critical, I believe, for our military leaders to stand up and demonstrate the courage to talk about this. Our military leaders must work to change the culture.

I would note, General Graham, he just left his post at Fort Carson after a very significant 2 years, was one of those leaders.

Will you commit to helping in this effort, is the question I'd like to direct to you.

Mr. STANLEY. Yes, Senator, absolutely. I'm aware of the stigma associated with mental health issues, particularly anyone going to seek counseling for mental health, having served on active duty as well as even my current experience. So if confirmed, I certainly will look into that.

Just for the record, Senator, my father and my brother served in the United States Army.

Senator UDALL. I'm glad I gave you that opportunity to clarify the record. That was my intent.

Let me move to "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," if I might, a sensitive topic, but an important topic. As a commander, you saw and experienced "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" being implemented. I'm sure you're aware that gays and lesbians are already serving in our armed forces and thousands of gays and lesbians are civilian employees at the DOD. Today you'll be looking at DADT as a soon to be very senior member of the President's Department of Defense leadership team. We all heard the Commander in Chief say last month that he intends to end "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," and I thought the President sent a clear message to every service member in uniform, straight and gay, regardless of service or rank, that this change was coming.

Some in Congress believe the President's prepared to include repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" among his policy recommendations to the Congress in the defense budget that he submits to us early next year. Is that a recommendation you're prepared to support?

Mr. STANLEY. Senator, I clearly recognize that this is a very sensitive issue, and it's an issue that I'm prepared to address if confirmed. I certainly will be taking input from all sources. This is Department of Defense, it's outside of the government, it's Congress, the Senate—in general, a lot of input, the service chiefs in par-

ticular and our commanders, all the way down to really—from the deck plate down to the squad level.

This is a very, very challenging subject, but one that I know we can get our arms around. I have to provide, based upon that input, a recommendation to Secretary Gates. Based upon whatever I get, which I don't know right now—and I enter this discussion or now what we're talking about with no preconceived notions. I fully expect that it will be a challenge, but I am up for that challenge if confirmed.

Senator UDALL. Thank you for that forthright answer. I look forward to working with you further, when you're confirmed if I have anything to say about it. I would associate myself with the remarks of the chairman on "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" as well.

Again, I want to thank the panel for your willingness to serve, for your wonderful and illustrious careers that you've had already, and I know our men and women in uniform will be well served by all three of you and the important work that you're about to undertake.

Mr. Chairman, thank you and I yield back any time I have. Thanks.

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you, Senator.

First of all, thank you all for your willingness to serve in these new responsibilities.

According to the list, I call upon myself to begin my questioning. Dr. Stanley, Secretary Gates announced earlier this year and Chairman Levin referred to it as well that the Department would scale back the role of outside contractors in support services. The goal as I understand it is to reduce the number of support service contractors from the current 39 percent to 26 percent and replace them with full-time government employees.

I understand DOD's efforts to efficiently utilize its resources and I realize that an overreliance on contractors can lead to the erosion of the in-house capacity that's essential to effective government performance as well. But I want to be assured that this policy is grounded in a very thoughtful analysis that considers both base mission and local community implications as well.

If DOD makes these conversions without a strategic plan in place, we have the potential to erode our industry base in key mission areas as well. From the information that's been provided to me by U.S. STRATCOM in Nebraska, it appears that STRATCOM's current conversion plan will reduce the contractor population to 227, or 22 percent of the total work force, by 2015. My sense is that for too many years we were outsourcing too much, with too little emphasis on why and whether it was justified.

But regardless of the makeup of the work force of the Department, outsourcing or insourcing, it just has to make sense and be oriented towards the best utilization of resources, both money and people. So what review of these base level decisions like the decisions at Offutt and STRATCOM will the DOD be undertaking to ensure that those decisions are both appropriate and consistent with the direction provided by the Secretary?

Mr. STANLEY. Yes, Senator. As I understand your question, we are looking at the Department of Defense reducing the number of contractors overall. I am not aware of all the details yet. I am

aware that the Air Force has been working on some of this, but I sense that the contractor issue is much bigger than even that.

If confirmed, I will certainly take this on as a responsibility within my Department to coordinate with all the services to ensure that we have equitable as well as reasonable and responsible strategic planning in the details of that, and also work very closely with Congress and this committee to ensure that we move forward properly.

Senator BEN NELSON. The consistency is extremely important, so that what we do accomplish is what the goal sets out for us, and that is the wise use of resources, both money and people, in the best possible manner. A strategic plan of some sort I think would be important to assure that that process is both consistent and we get the best use of the resources. So I'll be looking forward to further information on that as you develop your efforts.

As part of that process of putting together a strategic plan, I hope that you would approach it on a business case analysis process. I think the best decisions are typically made when there is a strategic effort under way and you can give it a good business basis for the decision, as opposed to establishing a number and work backwards toward reaching that. That's why I was a little concerned when I saw that a number had been achieved rather than doing it on a case by case basis to establish what the number should be.

Dr. Stanley also, as you have already been asked questions related to personnel and readiness, it's a broad portfolio, a broad portfolio. Can you identify what will be your top priorities, perhaps your top three priorities, in seeking that personnel and readiness role that is going to be so vital to the future of our military?

Mr. STANLEY. Yes, Senator. I would have to say that the All-Volunteer Force is number one and it's the umbrella. It's the piece that actually covers everything, because it's so all-encompassing. As you already stated, it is—the portfolio of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness is a broad portfolio.

But right under that, I'd have to look at our wounded warriors and the stress and all of the things that go along with that, because that's so significant as we now are at war on two fronts, which is very significant, and we have thousands of marines, sailors, airmen, you name it, and Army soldiers, who are actually committed and will be committed, depending on decisions that are going to be made.

So that's the wounded warriors, the stress, all the things, the things that we don't know about. Then I'd have to say families. We cannot sustain the All-Volunteer Force if we don't have our families, not only on board, but taking care of our families, and we can't have our deployed people actually worried about what's happening with families back here. So there's so much that has to be addressed there. Of course, there's schools, there's other exceptional issues that relate to families, employment opportunities for spouses, things like that, that are significant issues.

I would say that starts out the three. I almost hesitate to stop there because there are significant issues in the All-Volunteer Force.

Senator BEN NELSON. Part of the taking care of families and our service members probably includes the compensation arrangements that we're constantly trying to improve to be more competitive, to keep the All-Volunteer Force rather than to lose it due to competition from the outside.

Mr. STANLEY. Yes, Senator.

Senator BEN NELSON. Do you have any particular thoughts about the compensation package at the moment, what you might be doing to look at improving it, modifying? It's not always just about salary. It includes a number of other pieces as well.

Mr. STANLEY. Senator, if confirmed, it's certainly going to be an issue that I'll be looking at. That's why I was almost hesitating to stop at three.

Senator BEN NELSON. I'll let you have four. I'll let you have four.

Mr. STANLEY. Yes, absolutely. There is a balancing now. We're now talking about not only the compensation, but also how much we can afford in an All-Volunteer Force, what in fact should we be paying out in terms of compensation, what shouldn't we be doing. There's always going to be, as you know, a yin and a yang when it comes, because for every stimulus there's going to be some reaction.

So the bottom line is that the compensation piece is something, if confirmed, I'd have to look at very closely because I know that health care costs, as well as the personnel costs in general, are eating our organization, our Department of Defense, and our Nation, and we have to address that. So it's an issue we have to balance.

Of course, this goes into equipment, all the other issues associated with that. There is not an endless stream of money and I am very much aware of that. So if confirmed, that will be part of that priority list.

Senator BEN NELSON. Very good. Thank you.

Ms. Conaton, during the Air Force posture hearing earlier this year the KCX tanker was listed as one of the Air Force's top procurement priorities, and I expect that one of your biggest challenges will be, as already mentioned, awarding the contract to build this next generation of aerial refueling tankers.

Once you get this vital contract awarded, do you have an estimated time line and strategic vision for how the National Guard units that have the KC-135s might be rolled into fielding the plan?

Ms. CONATON. Senator, I do not at this point, not being confirmed, have a detailed sense of how the Guard will play with this. I guess I would say generally that the tanking, the aerial refueling capacity, is critical, not only to the Air Force, but truly to the totality of the service, given the joint fight, and the Guard as part of the total force of the Air Force is critical. That would be one of the things I'd be very happy to look at more carefully if confirmed, is how the Guard will play in the replacement of current KC-135 aircraft.

Senator BEN NELSON. With the new role of the Guard in the military today, obviously they'll play a very vital role in our readiness as it would relate to the new tankers. So having a plan in place to field it is going to be vital. I hope that that will be a high priority in connection with the awarding of the contract and the de-

tailoring of everything that follows the awarding of the contract with the fielding of the plan.

Ms. CONATON. Yes, Senator.

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you.

Senator BURRIS.

Senator BURRIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am very interested in these high-level positions and found it necessary to be here to listen to the testimony of these very important appointments. Unfortunately, I didn't have the opportunity to be visited personally by any of you, so I really instructed my staff so I could be here to see who would be taking these high-level positions. I must say that the President has selected very well. I am looking forward to your responsibility in these important positions that you've been appointed and entrusted to.

Just permit me to answer a couple—ask a couple simple questions. I want to ask Dr. Stanley in reference to “Don't Ask, Don't Tell.” If confirmed, doctor, you will move in immediately and I would assume that there are some cases pending for dismissal. What is your position on that situation if you were to come in contact with them or should you have—I know you say you have to follow the law, but we also have the President saying that we intend to make some changes in that policy—sorry, in that law, which was passed by this Congress.

So I'd just like to hear a little bit more on your position on that, please.

Mr. STANLEY. Senator, if I—forgive me if I make sure, if I repeat the question back, but you're talking about pending cases, what would be my position on those pending cases?

Senator BURRIS. That's correct.

Mr. STANLEY. If confirmed and there are pending cases there, they would fall under the existing statute as I would understand it. Not sure where, as I sit here right now, if confirmed, that I would be directly involved in what's going on in the service purview right then. But that's about all I can say about that at this time because I'm tissue paper-thin on a number of—on your question there.

Senator BURRIS. It's a very sensitive issue, Dr. Stanley, and we're hoping that we can get something done in this Congress in reference to that that would free up your hands and we would not even be bothered with this issue, because we need all the volunteers who will commit to serve this country of ours to be able to serve and to serve in the capacity as honorable and as brave as their capacity will allow them to.

But let me ask you this question. My colleague Senator Blanche Lincoln has put a bill into the Senate called the Selective Service Continuum of Care Act, which would provide advance physical and dental screening to our Reserve components prior to deployment. If you are confirmed, doctor, how would you address the need for pre-deployment screening and care of our National Reserve component?

Mr. STANLEY. Senator, I'm not aware of the specific law or amendment or what's being put forward right now. This is the first I've heard of that. However, on the overall issue of our Reserve and our Guard and pre-deployment issues in general, I'm very much aware and believe that we should do more with that.

I know it's an area that we'd be looking at. If confirmed, I certainly am committed to ensuring that our Guard and Reserve continue to ratchet up. I'm going back to my time when I was on active duty and I know that that was an area we needed work on. As I was getting ready for this confirmation hearing, I know there's more work that needs to be done.

Senator BURRIS. Good to have experience, right? You've been there, almost done that, right?

Ms. Conaton, if confirmed how would you plan to work with the new Director of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation position that has been created this past year to advise the Secretary of Defense on program cost efficiency?

Ms. CONATON. Senator, as you rightly point out, that new position was created by this committee and this Congress as part of an effort to get weapons system acquisition reform jump-started in the Department. I think it's a very important step. I think the acquisition challenges that the Department faces are not unique to one service. They're across the board. I think one of the critical things about the position that you mentioned, the Director of the so-called "CAPE," is to get accurate and precise cost estimates at the beginning of a program so that we have greater confidence in the ability of the program to continue forward without significant cost overruns.

But both costs and requirements are a critical issue to deal with at the beginning of a weapons system program. I would look forward to working with the director.

Senator BURRIS. Also, what priority would you be placing on the United States's advancement of unmanned drones and their use in surveillance missions? Do you believe that the unmanned aircraft should also be—unmanned aircraft pilots should also be trained to fly manned aircraft as well?

Ms. CONATON. Senator, we all are aware of how important unmanned systems have become, although it's been pointed out to me that there is still a person controlling that aircraft, so to say that it's unmanned is perhaps a little bit of a stretch.

But I think these UAVs—

Senator BURRIS. Not in the cockpit.

Ms. CONATON. Not in the cockpit, that's correct, sir.

Senator BURRIS. In the drone cockpit, a cockpit in Los Vegas or somewhere.

Ms. CONATON. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

Senator BURRIS. Or Nevada, whatever.

Ms. CONATON. I think they've been critical in the missions of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. As we all know, we have two wars going and the commanders in the theater have a tremendous demand for those types of capabilities. So I think UAV systems are things that we're going to be continuing to look at over the next couple of years.

As to the role of whether there should be—what the pilot training should be for this, that would be an area that I would want to look at more closely if confirmed. I know the that Air Force is doing a lot of thinking about that. I know how important that issue is. I appreciate you putting it back on my radar screen and it's something I would look carefully at if confirmed.

Senator BURRIS. Thank you.

Mr. Romo, I don't have any—on the Selective Service, which all the 18-year-olds must register. Do you have any idea how many or what type of a failure there is in registering of 18-year olds?

Mr. ROMO. Certainly. When I was a young officer, I was in Strategic Air Command, SAC, at Offutt. "Peace Is Our Profession" was our motto. Why? Because we have deterrence. We have different levels of deterrence. That was obviously a nuclear deterrent when I was a missile launch officer. But we have a deterrent with the Selective Service System that's essential for our National security.

Right now we have an All-Volunteer Force that works tremendously. I have the great fortune of working with a recruiting brigade of Recruiting Command and these soldiers to a tremendous job in getting some recruits for us, for our volunteer Army.

But it's essential that we maintain an optimal amount of security and register these young men when they're 18 years old. There are 6,000 young men that register—that have the birthday—over 6,000 young men that turn 18 years old every day in this country.

Senator BURRIS. Say that again? I'm sorry, I didn't hear that.

Mr. ROMO. Over 6,000 young men have their eighteenth birthday every day in our country.

And it's up to us to register those young men by marketing, having an optimal marketing plan. We have a tremendous registration rate of 90 percent and we want to make sure that we raise that, at least minimally maintain that. But that's why we do it, so we can maintain a deterrent. We have two wars going on and if the President and the Congress direct us to have a draft we are ready, and we want to show our foes that we are ready to have the draft to supplement the volunteer force if we have somebody that threatens us.

Senator BURRIS. Mr. Romo, would you look at that marketing budget, because I'm pretty worldly in reading news, but I don't even recall hearing any type of advertising recently or in the last 5 or 6 years that young men turning 18 are required to register. I heard about it when the law came out, but I don't hear that regularly. I'm just wondering whether or not we're really doing enough promotion in regards to that.

Mr. ROMO. I will ensure that—I had a great briefing by the public affairs of the Selective Service, and I will ensure that they will send to you the ways they currently market. With the wars going on, we have to be very creative. What I mean by that is creative for marketing, but creative in using the least amount of dollars for the marketing. They do do public service radio spots, for example, and they market through the State directors and the volunteer local boards that they do have all around the country. So there are many ways, but specifically I'll make sure that they send that to you.

We do have a great relationship, by the way, with the NATCOM at Great Lakes, Illinois. We do have a data center and a regional center there.

Senator BURRIS. I don't think you have a problem with those. The Navy recruits are coming to Great Lakes by the ton. I was up there the other day and God knows I really appreciate how those young people are coming forward. And that Navy ships them and

up ships them out. I'll tell you, they'll be ship-shape when they leave there.

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I want to commend our witnesses this morning. I'm very impressed and look forward to your being confirmed and carrying out your duties. God bless you and good luck.

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you, Senator.

Senator LeMieux.

Senator LEMIEUX. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

First of all, I want to thank all of the folks that are here today who are up for confirmation for your service to the public. It strikes me that we don't thank people enough for the time that they spend working for the people, and you all have long and storied careers doing that. So thank you for dedicating yourself to public service.

General Stanley, I'd like to start with you if I may and ask you a few questions. We're all seeing these reports about the stress that our military is under, both fighting out in the field and here back in the States. I'm concerned, as I know you are, about the suicide rate that's rising. I want to read a few statistics and facts for you and then ask you a question.

We learned recently that 99 soldiers killed themselves in 2006, the highest rate of military suicide in 26 years the military has been keeping statistics. In 2007 we had 115, in 2008 133, and as of this Monday we have 140 active duty Army soldiers that have committed suicide. The suicide rate for the Army for 2008 was calculated at roughly 20.2 per 100,000 soldiers, which is the first time since the Vietnam War that it's higher than the adjusted civilian rate.

So in your position to be in charge of personnel and readiness, these have to be big issues, to make sure that, one, the people that are enlisting into the military are mentally, not only physically but mentally, ready, and that once they enlist and become members of our armed services, that they continue to have the support they need and the training they need and the counseling they need to endure the very difficult duty of fighting a war.

So I would like for you, if you would, sir, to speak to those issues and what plans you have to make sure that our troops are ready on the front end and continue to be mentally strong throughout their time in the armed services.

Mr. STANLEY. Yes, Senator. I guess the first thing to say is that in the priorities I laid out that was actually at the very top. It's among my top three. The all-volunteer force in itself, when we look at the quality of people who are coming in, but also focusing on our wounded warriors and those injured, the stress associated with combat and those who are pending combat, has been very significant. I'm aware of it.

Suicide is not new, but it's going off the page here. It's been something that I've been personally familiar with from my time on active duty. Even one suicide is too many. So with that, you have the commitment, if confirmed, this will be an area that will be a priority. It's not only in terms of what's working right now, but also looking at better ways to do what we're doing, because we have to work with the services, work with the service chiefs, and then have the kind of environment, because of the cultures of our different

services, to be able to work together, because what they don't need right now is for me to come down and say, this is what you're going to do.

I think it's important that we have to work together. I'm looking forward to that opportunity if confirmed, because I think leadership more than anything right now and working as a team at the Department of Defense is absolutely critical at this time, and our civilian support, too, and Congress.

Senator LEMIEUX. Thank you, General.

Let me ask you another question, if I can, on a different topic. I know that you have personal experience with this and I wanted you to speak to your views about military personnel who have disabled spouses or children. I view, and I know that many do, that public service is not just done by the person who's involved in the public service, whether it's the military or it's here working in Congress. It's done by our families.

We have to take care of the whole family unit. So I know this is something that touches your heart and I would be interested in what goals you have with respect to these exceptional family members who have these challenges and what we can do to support them as well.

Mr. STANLEY. Yes, Senator. I'm smiling because if I flub this one my wife's going to take care of me.

Senator LEMIEUX. We don't want that to happen.

Mr. STANLEY. No, sir.

I will tell you that at no point in my career—and we've been married 38 years—have my decisions been, even as a commander, a commanding general—I've had somebody right there with me. We talked about my decision to retire. We talked about my decision to move to different duty stations. It wasn't that I was going to even think about refusing the commandant's orders. The fact is that I literally had a family. I still have a family and that's very important.

I bring that to the table of experience not to say that it's omnipotent or all-knowing, but it's a very sensitive area. Then when you start talking about exceptional family issues, from autism to any range of different issues, very sensitive to that also. I know that we have occasionally—and again I go back to an earlier question here. Working with our separate service cultures, working in areas where duty stations, people aren't even aware—people aren't—we have great people in our military, but there are a lot of things they don't know or understand about the sensitivities dealing with the only special school for this particular ailment.

So the architectural barriers that you would face in one duty station as opposed to another. Employment of the spouse, that you can work in certain duty stations, but—this is now with disabilities—but you can't work over here. Going overseas, fine, but if you go to certain duty stations the architectural issues are going to be a challenge, as well as the schooling and things like that.

Now, does that say that I know everything? No, Senator. But what it does tell me, I'm awfully sensitive to how complex these issues are and how much I'll be ready to do it. Quite frankly, even if I'm confirmed in this position, you know I'm not going to be

doing it without having the spousal support. I have to stop there, Senator.

Senator LEMIEUX. Well, I appreciate that answer. Thank you. Thank you. I know you're going to do a great job.

If I may ask, Mr. Chairman, I have one question of Ms. Conaton. Am I pronouncing that correctly?

Ms. CONATON. Yes, Senator.

Senator LEMIEUX. The military is extremely important to my home State of Florida, and certainly the Air Force is extremely important to Florida. We are very pleased with these Joint Strike Fighters going to Eglin and to the training of them and having training there. I want to know if you have any thoughts on what the role will be. I think there are 59 planned at Eglin and we're going to maybe potentially have more. I don't know if you're up to speed on that yet, but we think that we're well suited at Eglin to train for these JSFs, and I want to get your comments and thoughts on that.

Ms. CONATON. Thank you, Senator. I am not yet fully briefed, not yet being over with the Air Force, on the basing plans. I know how important the training mission is and I recognize the significant contribution that Eglin has made in that regard. If I'm confirmed, I'll be very happy to work with you to understand your concerns more and to see what is actually being planned inside the Air Force.

Senator LEMIEUX. Maybe we'll have a chance to go there together and work on that issue.

Ms. CONATON. I'd welcome that. Thank you.

Senator LEMIEUX. Mr. Chairman, that's all the questions I have.

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you, Senator.

I have no further questions, but let me say to all of you and to your families and friends, thank you for your service, your commitment, and we look forward to a rather speedy confirmation. Thank you all.

We're adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:43 a.m., the committee adjourned.]