

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATION OF: VICE ADMIRAL
RICHARD A. CORRELL, USN, TO BE ADMIRAL AND
COMMANDER,
UNITED STATES STRATEGIC COMMAND

Thursday, October 30, 2025

Washington, D.C.

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7 U.S. Senate
8 Committee on Armed Services
9 Washington, D.C.
10

11 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m. in
12 Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Deb
13 Fischer, chairman of the committee, presiding.

14 Committee Members Present: Senators [presiding],
15 Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Cramer, Scott, Tuberville,
16 Sheehy, Reed, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King,
17 Warren, Rosen, Kelly, and Slotkin.
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2 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. DEB FISCHER, U.S. SENATOR
3 FROM NEBRASKA

4 Chairman Fischer: Good morning, everyone, and welcome
5 to this morning's Senate Armed Services Committee hearing to
6 consider the nomination of Vice Admiral Richard Correll for
7 the appointment to Admiral, and to be the Commander of the
8 United States Strategic Command. Admiral Correll is here
9 with his wife Samantha. Thank you both for being here
10 today.

11 Vice Admiral Correll is a career submariner.
12 Throughout his illustrious career, Admiral Correll has led
13 many different commands and organizations. Their success
14 during and after his time with them is a testament to his
15 leadership. Since 2022, Vice Admiral Correll has served as
16 the Deputy Commander of STRATCOM. If confirmed, his
17 leadership, knowledge, and direct command experience will be
18 invaluable to the men and women who serve at STRATCOM, and
19 to the Secretary, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and
20 the Commander-in-Chief, and STRATCOM will continue to need
21 great leadership in the next several years.

22 The United States faces two adversarial nuclear powers
23 in Russia and China. It is STRATCOM's responsibility to
24 ensure they remain deterred, and never believe they can
25 attack the United States, or our allies, and not risk their



1 own annihilation. Russia is concluding a significant
2 modernization effort of its nuclear forces. Russia now
3 wields modern, diverse, and capable nuclear forces, and they
4 continue to test novel weapons, including their new
5 "Skyfall" missile earlier this week. They have long held an
6 advantage in tactical nuclear weapons.

7 China is also modernizing its nuclear forces, but with
8 far less transparency. They have improved their launchers,
9 missiles, and warheads by simultaneously ramping up warhead
10 production to potentially triple their stockpile by 2035.
11 And they are moving breathtakingly fast. For our own
12 forces, every day, our sailors, and airmen operate the
13 missiles, submarines, and aircraft that carry nuclear
14 weapons, continuously deterring any would-be aggressor. But
15 they will not last forever.

16 The Minuteman 3 ICBMs, representing the land base leg
17 of the triad has been in operation for 60 years. Each year,
18 the average age of our Ohio-class submarines, which provide
19 the most survivable leg of the nuclear triad, gets closer to
20 40. And although it is a testament to the brave men and
21 women serving that we have been able to maintain and
22 modernize our fleet of bombers over the decades, they are
23 also aging, and must be replaced with newer and stealth
24 aircraft who remain relevant and lethal in the years to
25 come.



1 The Sentinel ICBM system, Columbia-class submarines,
2 and the B-21 bombers are all progressing, but we see too
3 many delays. While it is up to each of the services to
4 properly sustain their legacy systems while fielding the new
5 capabilities, it is the responsibility of the commander of
6 U.S. Strategic Command to mitigate any risks caused by those
7 delays, always ensuring our nuclear forces never experience
8 a lapse in their 24/7 mission.

9 The STRATCOM commander also has the responsibility to
10 provide the President a broad array of options, and to
11 prevent gaps in our deterrence posture. One gap identified
12 by the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review is an adversary's
13 potential use of a tactical nuclear weapon based on a belief
14 that the U.S. does not have an adequate response to such a
15 strike and therefore would not or could not respond, the
16 theory known as escalate to deescalate.

17 Our adversaries must always know that the U.S. will
18 have a response. I look forward to hearing Admiral
19 Correll's thoughts on options to address these capability
20 gaps during this hearing. I also look forward to hearing
21 Admiral Correll's thoughts and recommendations with respect
22 to the Command, Control, and Communication of our nuclear
23 forces, or NC3, what Senator King and I refer to as the
24 fourth leg of the triad.

25 NC3 underpins all aspects of nuclear deterrence and is



1 vital to ensuring our nuclear deterrent remains effective
2 and reliable. The current STRATCOM Commander, General
3 Cotton, developed an NC3 roadmap to lay out the path ahead
4 for NC3 technology development, and the STRATCOM commander
5 will need to continue these efforts.

6 So, again, I say thank you to Admiral Correll and to
7 his family for their years of service to our country, and
8 for being here today. We are truly grateful to have such a
9 uniquely suited individual sitting before us today.

10 With that, I would ask unanimous consent to enter
11 Senator Wicker's opening statement into the record.

12 [The information referred to follows:]

13 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman Fischer: With no objection, so moved.

2 Senator Reed, you are recognized for your opening.

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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, Madam
4 Chairman. And good morning, Admiral Correll, and
5 congratulations on your nomination. I'd like to welcome you
6 and your wife, Samantha, to the hearing today, and thank you
7 both for the long career of service to the nation. Thank
8 you, Admiral.

9 You are nominated to be a commander of U.S. Strategic
10 Command, STRATCOM. If confirmed, you would be the principal
11 advisor to the President for all nuclear deterrent missions
12 during an incredibly challenging period of time. Today,
13 Russia is modernizing all three legs of its nuclear triad
14 while developing asymmetric weapons from counter space
15 capabilities, to long range nuclear torpedoes, and nuclear-
16 powered cruise missiles.

17 Meanwhile, China has built a complete nuclear triad,
18 constructed three new missile seals, and deployed hypersonic
19 systems capable of unpredictable attack trajectories. These
20 capabilities that are designed to challenge and deter our
21 presence in the Indo-Pacific. For the first time in
22 history, we face two near-peer nuclear armed competitors
23 simultaneously. Admiral, I would like to know your views on
24 whether our current strategy and capabilities can meet this
25 challenge and how you will ensure STRATCOM is equipped to do



1 so.

2 Equally important, is our own nuclear modernization.
3 After decades of deferment, we are currently modernizing all
4 three triad legs; our nuclear command and control systems,
5 and our warhead production at the National Nuclear Security
6 Administration, all the while rebuilding their Manhattan
7 Project-era infrastructure. These modernization,
8 construction and refurbishment activities are limited both
9 by their enormous cost and the scale of execution.

10 For example, the leadership of our Columbia-class
11 ballistic missile submarine program, which will replace our
12 current Ohio-class fleet, is more than a year behind
13 schedule. We need more than 100 B-21 bombers to replace our
14 fleet of B-52s, which were last built in 1962.

15 And our decades-old arsenal of Minuteman ICBMs must be
16 replaced, though the Sentinel Program faces major cost
17 overruns. Admiral, given these simultaneously challenges,
18 I'd like to know how you would propose to safely extend the
19 service life of systems already well past their intended
20 lifetimes.

21 Finally, these systems, if called to use, depend on
22 people interacting with complex hardware under extreme
23 stress, and extreme stress is probably an understatement.
24 To address this, the Fiscal Year 2022 NDAA requires high-
25 level exercises under these stressful scenarios and review



1 of nuclear weapon safety and security. Admiral, I would ask
2 for your commitment to continue realistic exercises, and to
3 personally review the classified safety and security
4 reports.

5 Thank you again, Admiral, for your distinguished
6 service to the nation, and I look forward to your testimony.
7 Thank you, Madam Chairman.

8 Chairman Fischer: Thank you, Senator Reed. Welcome,
9 Admiral. We are ready for your opening statement, please.

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1 VICE ADMIRAL RICHARD A. CORRELL, USN, TO BE ADMIRAL AND
2 COMMANDER, UNITED STATES STRATEGIC COMMAND

3 Admiral Correll: Good morning, Senator Fischer,
4 Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished members of the
5 committee. It's truly an honor to appear before you today
6 as a nominee to be the next commander of U.S. Strategic
7 Command. I'm very grateful to President Trump, Secretary
8 Hegseth, and our Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for
9 their trust and confidence in me for this nomination.

10 I would like to recognize the current Commander of U.S.
11 Strategic Command, General Anthony Cotton, and his wife
12 Marsha, for their 40 years of selfless service to our great
13 nation, and publicly express my personal gratitude to
14 General Cotton for his mentorship to me over the past three
15 years as I've served as his deputy commander.

16 Joining me today is my wife, Samantha, my best friend
17 and wife, partner for over 34 years. Service is in her DNA,
18 born and raised in Bremerton, Washington, home to one of our
19 Navy's largest and most capable shipyards. Her grandfather,
20 grandmother, father, brother, and multiple relatives all
21 worked in the Bremerton shipyard, repairing, and maintaining
22 our Navy's frontline combatants for generations, a tradition
23 that continues today.

24 A University of Maryland graduate and former
25 accountant, Samantha is a remarkable advocate for our



1 military men, and women, and their families. She's an
2 incredible source of strength and inspiration for me and for
3 our family. Not with us today, but always in our hearts and
4 minds are our three children; Mikayla, Ryan, and Sydney, who
5 after completing college are pursuing their passions. We're
6 very proud of our children for the paths that they have
7 taken.

8 I'd be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to
9 thank my father who also served our nation as a submarine
10 sailor, retiring as a Navy chief yeoman after 22 years of
11 service. A few years back, I had the privilege of
12 scattering his ashes at sea, per his wishes, from the bridge
13 of the Virginia-class submarine USS North Carolina, off the
14 coast of Norfolk, Virginia. I know he is looking down with
15 great pride on these proceedings.

16 My mom, Patricia, who is soon to be 88, is watching us
17 from her home in Mishawaka, Indiana. Growing up, she was
18 the center of gravity for me, my brother, and my sister,
19 instilling in each of us the value of hard work and service
20 above self. She is the hardest working and most generous
21 human being I've ever met and continues to inspire me.

22 Lastly, I want to thank the men and women of U.S.
23 Strategic Command for their continued professionalism and
24 dedication. Their mission focus remains essential to our
25 nation's security. We face the most complex and dynamic



1 security environment in my lifetime, and it is both our
2 conventional and nuclear capabilities, along with crucial
3 support from our allies and partners that underpins our
4 strategic deterrence.

5 Our nation's nuclear force continues to be safe,
6 secure, effective, and credible, as we bring the B-21
7 bomber, B-21 Raider bomber aircraft, the Columbia-class
8 ballistic missile submarine, the Sentinel intercontinental
9 ballistic missile weapon system, the Long-Range Standoff
10 Weapon, and the Sea-Launched Cruise Missile Nuclear, or
11 SLCMN. We'll continue to ensure the credibility of
12 deterrence for decades to come.

13 Underpinning all of this is our Nuclear Command,
14 Control, and Communication System, often referred to as NC3.
15 While the current system is secure and resilient,
16 modernization and sustainment of this capability is just
17 important as the weapon systems and platforms themselves.
18 If confirmed, I will use my authorities to ensure the NC3
19 systems continue to outpace the threat.

20 The mission of U.S. Strategic Command is to deter our
21 adversaries and employ force to guarantee the security of
22 our nation and our allies. If confirmed, I'll work with
23 relevant agencies across the U.S. government, within the
24 department, collaborate closely with civilian leaders and
25 directly with my fellow combatant commanders as we monitor



1 the global threats and execute operations in accordance with
2 the National Defense Strategy.

3 I commit to commanding a resilient joint force capable
4 of conducting multi-domain operations focused on deterring
5 aggression, and if necessary, defending our nation. I look
6 forward to working with Congress and the members of this
7 committee to address the strategic challenges of our great
8 nation.

9 Senator Fischer, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished
10 members of this committee, it's an honor to sit before you
11 today, and I look forward to answering your questions.

12 [The prepared statement of Admiral Correll follows:]

13 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman Fischer: Thank you, Admiral.

2 To exercise its legislative and oversight
3 responsibilities, it is important that this committee and
4 other appropriate committees of the Congress be able to
5 receive testimony, briefings, and other communications of
6 information. So, at this time, Admiral, I would ask you
7 some standard questions that we give to all of our military
8 nominees. And a yes or no answer is appropriate.

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

11 [Witness answers in the affirmative.]

12 Chairman Fischer: Do you agree when asked to give your
13 personal views even if those views differ from the
14 administration in power?

15 [Witness answers in the affirmative.]

16 Chairman Fischer: Have you assumed any duties or
17 undertaken any actions which would appear to presume the
18 outcome of the confirmation process?

19 [Witness answers in the negative.]

20 Chairman Fischer: Will you ensure your staff complies
21 with deadlines established for requested communications,
22 including questions for the record in hearings?

23 [Witness answers in the affirmative.]

24 Chairman Fischer: Will you cooperate in providing
25 witnesses and briefers in response to Congressional



1 requests?

2 [Witness answers in the affirmative.]

3 Chairman Fischer: Will those witnesses be protected
4 from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

5 [Witness answers in the affirmative.]

6 Chairman Fischer: Do you agree, if confirmed, to
7 appear and testify upon request before this committee?

8 [Witness answers in the affirmative.]

9 Chairman Fischer: Do you agree to provide documents,
10 including copies of electronic forms of communication in a
11 timely manner when requested by the duly constituted
12 committee, or to consult with the committee regarding the
13 basis for any good faith delay or denial in providing such
14 documents?

15 [Witness answers in the affirmative.]

16 Chairman Fischer: Thank you very much. I will begin
17 questions. We'll have a five-minute round.

18 Admiral, I appreciated our discussion earlier this week
19 on NC3 modernization, and I appreciate your comments in your
20 opening statement on that. We all know that if the
21 President is unable to command control or communicate with
22 nuclear forces in any circumstance, then we've lost our
23 deterrence. Modernizing this fourth leg of the triad is
24 just as important, if not more so than the other three legs
25 of our triad.



1 If confirmed, will you also be the department's NC3
2 enterprise lead, and can you speak to the importance of
3 modernizing our NC3 systems, including missile warning and
4 missile tracking systems, and the new SAOC aircraft?

5 Admiral Correll: Yes, I can speak to that. And thank
6 you for the time in your office. I really appreciated the
7 conversation. With respect to NC3, first off, I'd like to
8 agree with a statement that you made. It's every bit as
9 important. It's you can think of it as the fourth leg of
10 our triad. We have to have assured command and control
11 24/7, 365.

12 Four broad threats that have to be addressed, they are
13 addressed today and need to continue to be addressed going
14 forward. Those are; cyber, contested U.S. space, and by
15 that, I mean the ability of China or Russia to attack our
16 space capabilities and degrade what we deliver from space.
17 Very important for command and control. We have an
18 increasingly contested electromagnetic spectrum environment,
19 and we have a variety of novel missile systems that that
20 challenge our threat detection and missile defense
21 capabilities. We need to address all four of those with the
22 architecture going forward.

23 We have a roadmap that we're executing along those
24 lines in partnership with Secretary Duffy at ANS within the
25 department and his team. And the attributes that we will



1 continue to provide with that command and control, our
2 resilient diversity of wave forms diversity of platforms and
3 mobility so that we address all four of those threats.

4 Chairman Fischer: You're also going to have to work
5 collaboratively with services industry partners and also our
6 labs. Do you have any ideas in a short amount of time here
7 on how you can improve on that? I know that in the past
8 there's been a good relationship, but what do you see as
9 possible improvements?

10 Admiral Correll: General Cotton will often use the
11 term "buy with and through the services," and I couldn't
12 agree more. We have a very strong partnership with both the
13 Navy and the Air Force, the Air Force providing
14 approximately two-thirds of our nuclear command and control
15 systems, and the Navy, the other third. We'll continue to
16 work very closely in partnership with them.

17 Our lead for the NC3 Enterprise Center, or the NEC, is
18 a senior executive named Amanda Kato, with deep, deep
19 experience in NC3 as an acquisition professional in the Air
20 Force. She continues to work very closely with the services
21 to deliver future capabilities to provide that assured
22 command and control.

23 Chairman Fischer: Thank you.

24 The current programs of record for our nuclear forces,
25 those were decided, set up back in 2010. Obviously, the



1 geopolitical landscape has changed tremendously since that
2 time. First time we have two peer competitors and
3 adversaries.

4 So, given the new threats that we face, does it make
5 sense for us to maintain that planned force posture, or to
6 reassess some of those underlying assumptions and to look at
7 future threats that we have there? And I guess that's a
8 roundabout way of asking you about the 145 B-21 bombers.

9 Admiral Correll: Thank you, Senator. If confirmed as
10 the STRATCOM Commander, I have a responsibility to continue
11 to evaluate the threat environment. We talked a little bit
12 -- you talked in your opening statement, and Senator Reed as
13 well, about the two near-peer nuclear threats. The security
14 environment is the most dynamic and complex in my lifetime.
15 We continue to look at that closely and provide best
16 military advice in terms of options that we can use for
17 policymakers to consider that could provide more capability
18 or capacity with respect to the nuclear deterrent.

19 Chairman Fischer: Thank you.

20 I also appreciated your comments on SLCMN and the
21 importance of keeping that for an option going in the
22 future. Thank you very much. Senator Reed, you are
23 recognized.

24 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

25 Admiral, last evening, President Trump said, and I



1 quote, "Because of other countries testing programs, I've
2 instructed the Department of War to start testing on nuclear
3 weapons on an equal basis. That process will begin
4 immediately."

5 It's not exactly clear what he means by testing nuclear
6 weapons, but I take it as face value means nuclear explosive
7 testing. And I'd like to note some facts. Between 1945 and
8 1992, the U.S. conducted 1,054 tests above and below ground,
9 and even in space, in which 928 were in Nevada. Russia
10 conducted 715, China conducted 45. However, emerging
11 nuclear nations like Pakistan have conducted 6, India, 4,
12 and North Korea, 6, all of which were underground.

13 Like Russia and China, we have sophisticated modeling
14 codes based on this test data. Further, we are spending
15 many tens of billions of dollars building new plutonium pit
16 productions capabilities at Los Alamos and the Savannah
17 River site, and we conduct specialized plutonium pit test
18 underground in Nevada for verification. Finally, every two
19 years, the three directors of our nuclear weapons labs and
20 STRATCOM produce a classified report to certify our nuclear
21 stockpile, the last one being signed out by President Trump
22 in January.

23 In your military judgment, do you believe the
24 resumption of nuclear explosive testing by the U.S., and
25 very likely by Russia and China, would open the door for



1 Pakistan, India, North Korea to start nuclear testing again?
2 And would that be destabilizing for nuclear deterrence?

3 Admiral Correll: Senator, thank you for the question.
4 If confirmed as the Commander of STRATCOM, my role would be
5 to provide military advice on any discussions on the way
6 ahead with respect to testing, and you have my assurance
7 that I will do that to the best of my ability together with
8 a team of subject-matter experts to provide this committee
9 and policy makers the best-informed analysis from a military
10 perspective on any adjustments to our testing.

11 Our nation did sign and ratify the Limited Test Ban
12 Treaty of 1963, which prohibits atmospheric underwater and
13 outer space testing. That was signed by the U.S., the
14 Soviet Union, at the time, and the UK.

15 Senator Reed: But not by China?

16 Admiral Correll: Not by China.

17 Senator Reed: It appears that the most obvious and
18 perhaps the only rational reason to conduct explosive
19 testing is if you certify along with the directors of our
20 nuclear labs that you cannot ensure the safety of nuclear
21 stockpile. You just did that in January, correct?

22 Admiral Correll: That's correct, Senator.

23 Senator Reed: Do you have any additional information
24 from January that would suggest that that certification is
25 no longer accurate?



1 Admiral Correll: That, as you highlighted, Senator,
2 that certification occurs on an annual basis. The STRATCOM
3 commander's role in that is to provide subject-matter
4 expertise from the operational military perspective of the
5 stewardship program for the stockpile.

6 The administrator for the National Nuclear Security
7 Administration also provides their subject-matter expertise,
8 and each of the national lab directors. That occurs on an
9 annual basis and is ongoing. And as you indicated, that was
10 most recently certified in January of this year, and I would
11 expect that that process to continue going forward.

12 Senator Reed: Thank you.

13 Just very quickly, the issue of Fail Safe, which was
14 quite a front-page story in the '60, '70s, and '80s, is
15 getting renewed attention. And one of the things that we
16 did, and I mentioned in my opening remarks, we require that
17 very high level of DOD personnel participate in a regular
18 basis in exercises in which they have to confront the
19 possibility of a pending nuclear strike and our response.
20 And in addition, it also mandates that we review the safety,
21 security, and reliability of our arsenal; that there is no
22 deficiencies that would cause an unintended launch. Are you
23 confident that we're in a great fail-safe position now, if
24 that's an appropriate term?

25 Admiral Correll: Senator, I am absolutely confident



1 we're in a good position.

2 Senator Reed: And just quickly, what about China and
3 Russia? Do you have any concerns, or Pakistan, or North
4 Korea, which is a much less robust, I believe, fail safe?

5 Admiral Correll: It's not a matter of subject matter
6 expertise for me in the STRATCOM commander. I do pay very
7 close attention to the intel associated with that, and will
8 be happy to work with the subject matter experts to arrange
9 a classified briefing for you or the committee.

10 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, sir.

11 Admiral Correll: Thank you, Senator.

12 Chairman Fischer: Thank you, Senator Reed. Senator
13 Cotton, you are recognized

14 Senator Cotton: Admiral Correll, welcome, and
15 congratulations on your nomination, and thank you and your
16 wife for your decades of service to our nation.

17 I thought nuclear testing might be a hot topic of
18 discussion this morning. I'll put aside the obvious
19 benefits of such testing to ensure the stockpile is fully
20 prepared and ready for any contingency. But in general,
21 tests of all kinds, whether nuclear or conventional, don't
22 just provide those benefits, but also can send a strong
23 message of resolve and deterrence.

24 We saw the exact opposite effect at times during the
25 last administration when President Biden canceled routine



1 tests of our Minuteman 3 missiles to avoid, supposedly,
2 escalating tensions with China or Russia. Could you speak
3 to me, in your best military advice, about the impact of a
4 successful weapons test, whether nuclear or conventional, on
5 our adversaries and maintaining that regular testing
6 schedule

7 Admiral Correll: That regular testing schedule --
8 thank you for the question, Senator. If confirmed, the
9 STRATCOM commander is responsible for the requirements
10 associated with accuracy and effectiveness of the weapons,
11 and that then drives the services and other subject matter
12 experts' analysis of the testing required to meet those
13 objectives.

14 So, I agree fully with you. It is a really, really
15 important aspect of demonstrating the reliability and
16 credibility of our nuclear deterrent, and that's an
17 essential attribute for deterrence particularly in this era.

18 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

19 Critics of our nuclear arsenal often claim that it
20 costs too much and we never use them. I like to rejoin that
21 we use our nuclear weapons every single day, and we have for
22 80 years. Although we have not detonated a nuclear weapon
23 in combat for 80 years, the very existence of them and at
24 their high state of readiness every, every single day for 80
25 years has deterred the kind of major conflict we saw twice



1 in less than 20 years in the 20th century.

2 Do you agree with me, Admiral, on the absoluteness
3 necessity of both maintaining and modernizing our arsenal to
4 preserve this deterrent effect?

5 Admiral Correll: I agree, Senator.

6 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

7 Do you also agree with me, given this remarkable run of
8 80 years without a general global war, after having two of
9 them in 20 years, that we don't actually spend all that much
10 money on our nuclear forces?

11 Admiral Correll: I agree with you, Senator, and I
12 would echo and foot stamp your point with respect to our
13 nation's deterrent gets exercised every single day. And the
14 credibility associated with that prevents war.

15 Senator Cotton: And I think I'm right, just
16 ballparking it, that we spend about 5 percent of our total
17 military budget, all in, on our nuclear arsenal, maybe a
18 little more at the height of modernization, maybe a little
19 less outside of it. Is that a fair estimate?

20 Admiral Correll: That's a fair estimate, Senator.

21 Senator Cotton: Do you think 5 percent plus or minus a
22 little bit, is a reasonable expenditure to avoid global
23 world war?

24 Admiral Correll: I agree, Senator.

25 Senator Cotton: I agree too. Another thing that's



1 remarkable, if you look over the last 80 years is that there
2 aren't more nuclear states, especially nuclear states and
3 regions that have deep tensions and/or nations are often at
4 daggers drawn. Do you believe that our nuclear arsenal and
5 the extended deterrent that we provide to our allies has
6 contributed to the relative lack of nuclear proliferation
7 since 1945?

8 Admiral Correll: I agree. And I would say it's an
9 essential element of our nuclear proliferation strategy of
10 those partnerships.

11 Senator Cotton: Yeah. Our nuclear weapons and
12 modernizing our nuclear weapons are an essential element of
13 our counterproliferation strategy.

14 Admiral Correll: Yes, Senator.

15 Senator Cotton: And it's a good thing that we don't
16 have dozens of nations thinking, "I better get nukes before
17 the people that hate me across the border get nukes."

18 Admiral Correll: Yes, Senator.

19 Senator Cotton: Thank you, Admiral.

20 Chairman Fischer:

21 Thank you, Senator Cotton. Senator Hirono, you are
22 recognized.

23 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Madam Chair.

24 Welcome, Admiral. Congratulations on your nomination.
25 I want to start with two initial questions that I ask of



1 every nominee to ensure their fitness to serve. So, I'll
2 ask you, since you became a legal adult, have you ever made
3 unwanted request for sexual favors, or committed any verbal
4 or physical harassment of a sexual nature?

5 Admiral Correll: No, Senator.

6 Senator Hirono: Have you ever faced discipline or
7 entered into settlement relating to this kind of conduct?

8 Admiral Correll: No, Senator.

9 Senator Hirono: So, the President made, what I think
10 it was, a surprise announcement while he was going to meet
11 with President Xi. So, this has to do with saying that we
12 should resume nuclear testing, and the last time we, the
13 U.S., conducted nuclear tests was in 1992. And would
14 resumption of the kind of testing that he's talking about
15 apparently require an EIS?

16 Admiral Correll: I'm not familiar with the term EIS?

17 Senator Hirono: Oh, environmental impact statement.

18 Admiral Correll: Oh, I'm -- that's not a matter of
19 expertise for me, Senator.

20 Senator Hirono: Well, I think under the National
21 Environmental Policy Act, NEPA, the resumption of nuclear
22 testing because of the environmental concerns, health
23 concerns, long-term impacts of such testing, that it would
24 require any EIS, which means that there is a comment period,
25 et cetera, before such testing can resume.



1 Let me ask you this then. We're told that the cost to
2 recapitalize the nuclear triad over the next 10 years is
3 \$946 billion. That is a huge cost just to recapitalize, as
4 I said, the nuclear triad. So, given that huge cost, do you
5 think that what we should do is resume nuclear testing,
6 which experts have estimated would cost \$125 million to \$150
7 million per test?

8 Admiral Correll: Senator, if confirmed in the role of
9 the STRATCOM commander, my role would be to provide military
10 advice. And I would look forward to working with the
11 committee and policy members to inform the way ahead with
12 respect to any testing, whether that's testing of our
13 missile systems or surety associated with the nuclear
14 stockpile.

15 Senator Hirono: I think that is going to be really
16 important because it appears that the -- I don't know what
17 thought processes the President went through and who he
18 talked to before he made this, what I would consider, a very
19 consequential announcement and how our adversaries, Russia
20 and China, would regard our resumption of testing, and may
21 push them to do even more testing from their standpoint.

22 Because we have the Stockpile Stewardship Program to
23 ensure the safety and reliability of our nuclear weapons
24 without explosive testing, and the program relies on
25 supercomputers simulations, non-explosive experiments, and



1 technology. We have a lot of technology that keeps us ahead
2 of our adversaries in terms of ensuring that our nuclear
3 stockpile is actually reliable.

4 So, do you think that resumption of testing on our part
5 would spur China, North Korea, Russia to more testing from
6 their standpoint? Could that result?

7 Admiral Correll: Senator, thank you for the question.
8 I wouldn't presume to predict a response on the part of
9 Russia or China. I, I look forward to supporting the
10 President's priorities and working with this committee, if
11 confirmed.

12 Senator Hirono: Don't you think we should really
13 contemplate and consider what the impact might be and what
14 the response might be by China, Russia, North Korea, if we
15 resume our testing? I'm not saying we shouldn't, but those
16 are considerations that should be assessed. Wouldn't you
17 agree?

18 Admiral Correll: I would agree that the subject matter
19 expertise with respect to how those countries might respond
20 to any changes in a test regimen. But I wouldn't presume
21 that the President's words meant nuclear testing.

22 Senator Hirono: Well, that's what he said.

23 Admiral Correll: I believe the quote was, "start
24 testing our nuclear weapons on an equal basis." Neither
25 China or Russia has conducted a nuclear explosive test, so



1 I'm not reading anything into it or reading anything out to
2 it --

3 Senator Hirono: Yeah. So, again, which --

4 Admiral Correll: -- that points out that kind of
5 decision is important.

6 Senator Hirono: Excuse me, Admiral, what kind of
7 thought process has the President went through before he
8 made, I would say, a consequential announcement. Thank you,
9 Madam Chair.

10 Admiral Correll: Thank you, Senator.

11 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Senator Hirono. Senator
12 Rounds, you were recognized.

13 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Madam Chair.

14 Admiral, first of all, thank you for your service.
15 Thank you to your family for their sacrifice as well, as you
16 have deployed on multiple occasions, and we appreciate your
17 offer to continue that service.

18 In my office, we talked about spectrum, and I warned
19 you that that was going to be an item that I was going to,
20 no surprise to the rest of the committee here, follow-up on
21 it right now. As we discussed in my office, forcing the
22 department to vacate or share in the suboptimal manner, the
23 3.1 to 3.45 gigahertz, and the 7.4 to 8.4 gigahertz bands of
24 the spectrum would have a very negative impact on our
25 warfighting capabilities, including homeland defense



1 missions, force protection for our troops overseas, and our
2 strategic communications. How important is spectrum to U.S.
3 nuclear deterrence?

4 Admiral Correll: Senator, it's vitally important. And
5 I recall the words that Admiral Caudle used in his testimony
6 when asked about this, speaking from the Navy and the
7 department's perspective. And he said the impact of
8 vacating would be, the quote was \$200 billion. He said
9 infinity. So, much greater than that, and more than 100
10 years.

11 But, you know, obviously embellishing, but the point
12 being that it's a vital area of the spectrum for military
13 capabilities, and that includes command and control, and
14 missile defense.

15 Senator Rounds: Yeah. Let's follow-up on that just a
16 little bit, because I agree with that. And Admiral Caudle's
17 comments were that the cost of moving the assets, the Navy
18 assets out of those protected bands, might as well be
19 infinity because the physics of the S-band are not
20 replicable in other bands. And clearly, you agree with
21 Admiral Caudle's analysis on it.

22 In your professional military opinion, how might
23 forcing commercial high power wireless providers into the
24 department's S-band impact our early warning radars?

25 Admiral Correll: Senator, that would have a negative



1 impact. And I'd be happy to follow-up with you and the
2 committee in a classified setting to discuss the details
3 associated with that.

4 Senator Rounds: I recognize that a lot of this that
5 we're talking about is classified, but the public needs to
6 understand, and this is the only way we can do it, is to
7 have folks that have the ability to share it, how critical
8 it is that we protect certain parts of the spectrum that
9 some people would prefer to release for commercial
10 operation. I just simply want your analysis of how serious
11 that is.

12 Admiral Correll: It's incredibly serious to the point
13 of significantly, dramatically increasing the risk with the
14 ability to provide assured command and control, and the
15 operation of our missile defense systems for the nuclear
16 mission.

17 Senator Rounds: If confirmed, will you let your chain
18 of command and Congress know if you believe any interagency
19 decisions regarding spectrum would have a negative impact on
20 the department's warfighting capabilities and nuclear
21 deterrence?

22 Admiral Correll: Yes, Senator.

23 Senator Rounds: It would be speaking truth to power.

24 Admiral Correll: Yes, Senator.

25 Senator Rounds: Okay. Earlier this year, General



1 Cotton testified to this committee that he believes 145 B-
2 21s are needed to support STRATCOM. Do you agree with this
3 assessment?

4 Admiral Correll: I agree with General Cotton's
5 assessment, and I believe he's been on the record saying
6 between 140 and 150 B-21s, and the services position has
7 been at least 100. So, that recognizing be a continuing
8 conversation,

9 Senator Rounds: Recognizing that some parts of our
10 capabilities take a long time to get established, and they,
11 in a lot of cases, go over budget. In this particular case,
12 is it still true that the B-21 is not only on time, it is on
13 budget as well?

14 Admiral Correll: The B-21 is one of the strongest
15 performing large acquisition programs we have, and I agree
16 it's on time and on budget.

17 Senator Rounds: Thank you.

18 Given the growing potential for a multi theatre
19 conflict, if we get into it with China, we're going to have
20 Russia right there as well or the other way around. If we
21 get into it with Russia, we're going to have China right
22 there as well. Given the potential for that type of a multi
23 theatre conflict involving near-peer adversaries, what steps
24 would you take to prepare Strategic Command to deter two
25 nuclear peer adversaries?



1 Admiral Correll: Thank you for the question, Senator.
2 And, if confirmed, I would continue the emphasis on our
3 exercise program. I wish every American citizen could see
4 our professionals in execution, both our civilian
5 professionals and our military professionals.

6 But as Senator Cotton referred to our nation's
7 strategic deterrent is in execution and practice every day.
8 To that end we conduct somewhere north or south of
9 approximately 400 command and control exercises per year.
10 I've personally participated in more than 100, and we will
11 continue to do that to assure our capabilities and the
12 ability.

13 Job one for the STRATCOM commander is to preserve
14 decision space for National Command Authority, and then
15 together with fellow combatant commanders and the chairman,
16 provide options, should they be required.

17 Senator Rounds: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

18 Chairman Fischer: Thank you, Senator Rounds. Senator
19 Kaine, you are recognized.

20 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Madam Chair. And Admiral
21 Correll, congratulations on your nomination. I look forward
22 to supporting you, and I enjoyed our visit yesterday.

23 Before I have a question or two for you, I just want to
24 put on the record for my colleagues a deep concern about the
25 news that broke yesterday; that the Pentagon was briefing



1 Senate Republican colleagues about actions in the Caribbean
2 Pacific, and potentially, in Venezuela, without inviting
3 Democrats to that briefing.

4 That, in my mind, is starting to amount to a
5 troublesome pattern. At the beginning of the year, most of
6 us were denied the opportunity to meet with the nominee for
7 Secretary of Defense before his confirmation hearing. Many
8 of us have directed inquiries to the Pentagon asking basic
9 questions that are appropriate for the oversight role of
10 this committee. And on the Democratic side, we don't get
11 answers.

12 Most recently, on the 10th of September, 25 of us
13 directed questions to the Pentagon about basic questions
14 regarding the strikes that have been in the news, legal
15 authority, evidence that they were, in fact, narco
16 traffickers. Who is targeted? Why strike rather than
17 interdict? We have not been given answers to those
18 questions.

19 The news yesterday followed recent news that Pentagon
20 officials have been instructed not to communicate directly
21 with members of Congress, except through the Congressional
22 Liaison Office, which has not been the case in the past.
23 And there's also been news in recent days that military
24 officials connected to the strikes that have been referred
25 to are being asked to sign non-disclosure agreements.



1 This is very, very troubling. This committee is a
2 nonpartisan and a bipartisan committee. I've been on it now
3 for more than 12 years. This year, when we voted the NDAA
4 out of Committee, the vote was 26 to 1. And that's usually
5 what it is virtually every year. We're not Democrats and
6 Republicans on this committee. We support the military in a
7 nonpartisan and bipartisan way to the best of our ability.
8 And if we are going to provide that support in a nonpartisan
9 and depoliticized way, we need to be respected in a
10 nonpartisan, depoliticized way.

11 I don't speak for anybody else on this committee other
12 than me, but I work my tail off on this committee. This is
13 the dominant responsibility I have as United States Senator.
14 I represent a state that has more military equities than
15 most. I'm a military dad. I don't deserve to be treated
16 like an annoyance, an obstacle, or an enemy by the Pentagon
17 in order to depoliticize the military.

18 And that's what we should be doing. Every member of
19 this committee should be treated with equal respect by the
20 Pentagon in terms of answering questions, providing
21 information, and there shouldn't be an easy pass lane for
22 some and an obstacle for others. And I just wanted to state
23 that, and I hope my colleagues will support me in that going
24 forward.

25 I wanted to ask you this, Admiral Correll, that you've



1 had a pretty unique set of experiences before being
2 nominated for this position. And you know the position very
3 well, but in particular, you've had some significant
4 experience on the intel side of our military operation. So,
5 given your experience working with the intelligence
6 enterprise, and especially under Title 50 authorities, how
7 would you leverage that intel background to enhance
8 STRATCOM's ability to integrate intelligence into strategic
9 planning and action?

10 Admiral Correll: Thank you, Senator, and I very much
11 enjoyed our office call, and I appreciate your time. I
12 guess the way I would answer that is to say, just to
13 emphasize the importance of the insights that the intel
14 community provides across government. And if confirmed as
15 the STRATCOM commander, I would continue to pay very, very
16 close attention to those insights.

17 As part of my operational experience, you reference, I
18 do have quite a bit of deep experience working with the
19 intel community. And I think combining the capabilities of
20 the intel community with the military can provide much more
21 effective and a broader range of options, you know,
22 providing options to National Command Authority, where the
23 risk is increasing. And that's where I would say you know
24 via pretty, pretty important aspect where my background is
25 helpful as I contemplate.



1 Senator Kaine: One last question. I asked you about
2 intelligence. So, now I'm going to ask you about artificial
3 intelligence. You said something as we talked the other
4 day, that AI, the way you framed it, it can generate a data
5 advantage, which leads to a decision advantage, which
6 results in a warfighting advantage. Could you briefly
7 elaborate?

8 Admiral Correll: Yes, Senator. The technology, we
9 need to be very deliberate. A human will always be in the
10 loop, and that will be the decision-maker, but the ability
11 to manage vast quantities of data and provide decision-ready
12 information is going to provide a significant warfighting
13 advantage to the country that gets that most right and takes
14 the best advantage of it.

15 Chairman Fischer: Thank you, Senator Kaine. Senator
16 Tuberville, you are recognized.

17 Senator Tuberville: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank
18 you, Admiral. Congratulations, and thanks for the
19 dedication from you and your family for years of service.

20 As part of the One Big Beautiful Bill that was passed
21 in the law this summer, \$24 billion was given to the
22 Department to fund the initial phase of President Trump's
23 ambitious and needed missile defense initiative, Golden
24 Dome. My State of Alabama is a leader in missile defense
25 technology, and will hopefully play a large part in this.



1 While STRATCOM has no formal role in the development of this
2 system, it will undoubtedly be affected by this new
3 architecture. In your opinion, what capabilities does the
4 Golden Dome system bring to your toolbox as STRATCOM?

5 Admiral Correll: I fully support the Golden Dome way
6 ahead. STRATCOM is in close collaboration and partnership
7 with General Guetlein as he leads that effort. General
8 Cotton's responsibility as the Commander of U.S. Strategic
9 Command where it intersects with Golden Dome is in missile
10 warning and threat assessment. And he shares that
11 responsibility with the other geographic combatant
12 commanders.

13 So, in my role, if confirmed, in providing best
14 military advice, I'd be working with General Guillot,
15 SPACECOM Commander and General Guetlein, to inform the
16 architecture and the way ahead with that. One of the really
17 important aspects of that is the space sensor layer and the
18 ability to detect and track those novel missile systems I
19 referred to be before; fractional orbital bombardment
20 capabilities advanced crews or hypersonic missiles, and the
21 hypersonic glide vehicles.

22 Senator Tuberville: Thank you.

23 Nuclear Command Control, and Communication systems,
24 otherwise known as NC3, are essential for operations of our
25 nuclear arsenal. Today, many of these systems haven't been



1 updated in decades. In this new role, the entire NC3
2 enterprise belongs to you. Where does this modernization
3 list on your priority list, and how do you plan on
4 accomplishing this mission?

5 Admiral Correll: Its priority is right up there as
6 number one priority with transitioning from the capabilities
7 we have to the capabilities we need going forward. That's
8 all three legs of the triad, plus nuclear command, and
9 control. General Cotton has been laser-focused on that, and
10 I'll continue that focus going forward.

11 There is a solid roadmap for delivering capabilities
12 over the next three years, and we'll continue to execute
13 that roadmap. And would just offer to any member of the
14 committee be happy to provide brief in a classified setting
15 on the details specific details associated with that.

16 Senator Tuberville: Thank you.

17 Keeping with the same topic of the NC3 system and its
18 vulnerabilities, cyberattacks are one of the greatest
19 threats to not only our national security sector, but to our
20 nation. Do you believe that the NC3 is sufficiently
21 protected from the cyberattacks from both state and non-
22 state actors?

23 Admiral Correll: It's sufficiently protected, Senator,
24 but we can't take our eye off the ball. We've got to
25 continue to invest in capabilities and match the threat as



1 it advances. Senator Kaine referred to AI. That's one of
2 the areas where AI can be really helpful in terms of big
3 data and analyzing patterns of traffic flow on any
4 particular network can give you insights into where the
5 traffic might not be occurring as you expect it, and alert
6 an operator to take a look for follow on action. But that
7 sensing, and monitoring of the network itself, and the
8 ability to detect sophisticated adversary on activity on
9 that is really, really important. And we'll continue to
10 stay focused on that.

11 Senator Tuberville: You know, when you were in my
12 office the other day, you mentioned how important the
13 acquisition reform and strengthening the defense industrial
14 base is to STRATCOM. Can you describe ways you can help the
15 department reform our system for developing and procuring
16 weapons systems, while positioning our defense industry base
17 to compete with our near-peer nuclear adversaries?

18 Admiral Correll: I think, as you know, if confirmed as
19 STRATCOM commander, one of my most important
20 responsibilities is to speak with precision about challenges
21 and then unleash the innovation that's in our economy to
22 come back with recommended solutions.

23 Our deputy secretary has talked about how we advance
24 the ecosystem to encourage innovation and more rapid
25 delivery of capabilities. And I'm not an acquisition



1 professional expert, but I fully support the initiatives
2 that he's embarked with the department to advance that. And
3 I would anticipate working very closely with the services so
4 that we have a common view of the challenges in terms of
5 those challenges and possible innovative solutions along
6 with Secretary Duffy's team for which is acquisition and
7 sustainment within the department.

8 Senator Tuberville. Thank you.

9 Chairman Fischer: Thank you, Senator Tuberville.

10 I'd remind my colleagues on this committee that we put
11 into place the framework to get the wheels turning on what
12 was then later named Golden Dome. So, we've been supportive
13 of that on this committee and in Congress with the NDAA
14 before we got the term Golden Dome. So, thank you, Senator
15 Tuberville. Senator King, you are recognized.

16 Senator King: Thank you, Madam Chair. Admiral,
17 welcome to the committee.

18 Several times, you've talked about the exercises that
19 go on at STRATCOM in terms of a potential of a hypothetical
20 nuclear strike. I participated in two of those exercises.
21 One of the most profound experiences of my life. My
22 understanding is that no President since Ronald Reagan has
23 participated in one of those exercises. Is that the fact?

24 Admiral Correll: Senator, I'll follow-up with you. I
25 believe it's since President Carter in 1977.



1 Senator King: Okay. But still --

2 Admiral Correll: It's been a long time.

3 Senator King: A lot of Presidents since that time. I
4 don't understand why that doesn't occur. If I were
5 President, I wouldn't want the first time I was in that room
6 to be real. And I hope that you might -- you used the term
7 National Command Authority, that's the President, and I hope
8 you might pass up the line that this is an experience the
9 President, any President, should have early on in their
10 term.

11 Secondly, we've been talking about this phrase the
12 President used yesterday. I feel like we're doing Talmudic
13 analysis here of the words because of other countries
14 testing programs; "I've instructed the Department of War,
15 department of Defense to start testing our nuclear weapons
16 on an equal basis." Are any other countries doing explosive
17 testing of nuclear warheads?

18 Admiral Correll: Senator, one, thank you for the time
19 in your office. I really appreciate your time and the
20 conversation. To my knowledge, the last explosive nuclear
21 testing was by North Korea, or DPRK, and that was in 2017,
22 to be publicly controlled.

23 Senator King: But Russia and China have not done
24 explosive testing that we know of. Is that correct?

25 Admiral Correll: No. For China, last publicly



1 acknowledged test was in 1996.

2 Senator King: He then goes on, "This process will
3 begin immediately --" I'm sorry, "we are testing our nuclear
4 weapons on an equal basis." It could be that what he is
5 talking about is delivery systems. Is that not correct that
6 because they're testing, I think this isn't -- we just
7 recently we learned about the new "Skyfall" Russian missile.
8 Is that a reasonable interpretation of what he is saying
9 rather than explosive testing of weapons?

10 Admiral Correll: I don't have insight into the
11 President's intent. I agree that that could be an
12 interpretation.

13 Senator King: Well, we hope that that's clarified in
14 coming days.

15 NC3, there's been a lot of discussion about it. You've
16 already talked about how important it is. I can guarantee
17 that at this very moment, there are attacks underway on our
18 NC3 system. My question is, not only are we defending, do
19 you do a regular Red Team-kind of exercise? Do we hire
20 people to try to break into our NC3 system in order to tell
21 us our vulnerabilities? My experience is CIOs will always
22 tell you everything's fine, boss, until somebody shows that
23 it isn't. Is Red Teaming part of the process here?

24 Admiral Correll: It is part of the process. In a
25 classified setting, I'd be happy to follow-up with you. And



1 I agree that's a really important aspect of challenging
2 ourselves and making sure we're -- you know, assume that the
3 adversary is as capable as we are, and then are we
4 accounting for that? That's an important aspect of
5 understanding our vulnerabilities.

6 Senator King: Thank you.

7 One of the lesser-known responsibilities of STRATCOM is
8 electronic warfare. Talk to me about where we stand in
9 terms of the responsibilities analysis. My sense is that
10 this is an area where we perhaps aren't where we ought to
11 be.

12 Admiral Correll: Senator, my experience is the joint
13 force is laser-focused on electronic warfare. General
14 Cotton, as the Commander of STRATCOM, is responsible for
15 reporting on training and understanding of the
16 electromagnetic spectrum capabilities within the joint
17 force, and then, advocacy for developing electromagnetic
18 spectrum capabilities.

19 There's a rich body of lessons learned associated with
20 the Russia/Ukraine conflict that is being applied within the
21 joint force and needs to continue to inform the way ahead.
22 We're not where we need to be, but we're focused on it and
23 making progress.

24 Senator King: One final question.

25 The whole nuclear enterprise that we've discussed here



1 today is based upon the principle of deterrence. That's the
2 cornerstone of our entire defense strategy. It strikes me
3 that we need to be taking account of new weapon systems, for
4 example, a missile, a Moorhead that could be in space over
5 Washington, which makes the time instead of 26 or 30
6 minutes, about 5 minutes. Is that part of the strategic
7 analysis? That could change our calculus, it seems to be,
8 in some fundamental ways?

9 Admiral Correll: That is part of the strategic
10 analysis and part of the requirements associated with our
11 assured command and control for our strategic systems. And
12 the three legs of the triad are complimentary and
13 collectively contribute to the overall deterrent effect.
14 And one of the really, really important aspects of that is
15 assured capability to respond. And that has not been put at
16 risk.

17 Senator King: I'm out of time. I appreciate your
18 answers. I think for the record, we'll talk further about
19 Sentinel and where that stands.

20 [The information referred to follows:]

21 [COMMITTEE INSERT]



1 Senator King: Thank you very much, Admiral.

2 Admiral Correll: Thank you, Senator.

3 Chairman Rischer: Thank you, Senator King. Senator
4 Sheehy, you are recognized.

5 Senator Sheehy: Thanks, Senator King. Those were
6 great questions. I think they were right on target. How
7 old is the design for the Minuteman 3 missile system?

8 Admiral Correll: The Minuteman 3 was initially fielded
9 in the 1960s.

10 Senator Sheehy: Okay. So, probably older than both of
11 us, and most people here, I think so.

12 Admiral Correll: Maybe not me, Senator.

13 [Laughter.]

14 Senator Sheehy: Well, you, you look young, so we'll --
15 so, how often do we test new airplanes?

16 Admiral Correll: All new airplanes undergo a rigorous
17 testing program before they're certified for flight
18 operations.

19 Senator Sheehy: And how often are we testing our
20 submarines and our spacecrafts?

21 Admiral Correll: In essence, we operate them every
22 day, if you want, if -- think about that as reinforcing
23 their capabilities.

24 Senator Sheehy: And after we put a plane or a
25 submarine through relatively routine maintenance period, do



1 we conduct sea trials and tests on that vessel or aircraft
2 afterwards?

3 Admiral Correll: Absolutely.

4 Senator Sheehy: So, essentially, we're constantly
5 testing our aircraft, and our submarines, and our rockets,
6 and our space infrastructure. Would that be accurate?

7 Admiral Correll: I would agree with that
8 characterization.

9 Senator Sheehy: And when was the last time we
10 conducted a full-scale test of our nuclear capability?

11 Admiral Correll: We have a rigorous testing program
12 with our nuclear capabilities and that occurs by -- with and
13 through the services. And every leg of the triad is tested
14 rigorously. And I have absolute confidence in, you know,
15 that those systems will perform if wherever we ever need
16 them to perform.

17 Senator Sheehy: But when was the last time we tested a
18 nuclear weapon?

19 Admiral Correll: An actual nuclear weapon? I'd have
20 to take that as a look-up and get back to you. But we
21 haven't tested one since we ratified -- at least since we
22 ratified the Limited Test Ban Treaty in 1963,

23 Senator Sheehy: Which is a good thing. I'm glad we
24 ratified that treaty, and I agree with it. But we
25 essentially test every other system we have constantly in a



1 full-scale test environment. And models are great, software
2 systems are fantastic, but the end of the day, as you well
3 know, is a submariner, King Neptune is a very unforgiving
4 lord. And things go wrong at the bottom of the ocean.
5 Things go wrong at the edge of space, in space, in the air.
6 And models all always tell us things will go great, and
7 experts tell us opinions. Unfortunately, sometimes physics
8 tells us otherwise.

9 So, I think much ado is being made about the
10 President's comments yesterday, which simply are saying a
11 lot of other countries are conducting nuclear tests of
12 various kinds, whether they be delivery vehicle tests,
13 aircraft test, or full-scale explosions. And on an equal
14 basis, I have instructed the Department of War to start
15 testing on nuclear weapons on an equal basis. That doesn't
16 mean we're going to start blowing up nukes outside of Las
17 Vegas every other day. It doesn't mean we're going to be
18 dropping nukes over Fiji. It means we're going to be
19 testing on an equal basis.

20 And I don't think that's at all an unreasonable
21 position to take for the commander-in-chief of the largest
22 military in the world that's operating 60-year-old missile
23 systems in my state against an adversary that is innovating
24 hypersonic glide vehicles, very maneuver drones, perhaps
25 even orbiting nukes that we hopefully don't think they're



1 there, but they very well may be, that are going to
2 absolutely test the very fabric of our nuclear
3 infrastructure.

4 So, I understand the concerns of -- we don't want to
5 provoke a nuclear war, but we also have trusted and
6 everybody else in the world that they're going to abide by a
7 treaty that we signed 60 years ago. And I think as we've
8 seen with other people who've signed treaties for, they
9 oftentimes don't abide by them, and they are focused on
10 undermining us every way we can. So, I think testing every
11 component of our nuclear triad, which we do to a certain
12 extent, but ensuring we're testing on an equal basis is an
13 extremely reasonable ask of our military. And I think it's
14 the least we can do.

15 So, spectrum is going to be the trenches of the 21st
16 century battlefield space is the ultimate high ground.
17 We've had a few discussions about spectrum here, but what is
18 going to be your strategy as commander here to ensure that
19 we have spectrum dominance, both domestically and on any
20 battlefield in the 21st century?

21 Admiral Correll: We've got to continue along all
22 efforts to advance our spectrum capabilities. That includes
23 world-class test ranges, modeling, and simulation, and
24 testing ourselves against the most exquisite capabilities
25 that are out there. And that's where the joint force is



1 headed.

2 With respect to your comments on testing, I agree with
3 how you frame that and the sentiment that you expressed. If
4 confirmed as the STRATCOM commander, I would continue to
5 look to support the President's directives and work with
6 this committee in a very transparent way on the way ahead.

7 Chairman Rischer: Thank you, Senator Sheehy. Senator
8 Kelly, you are recognized.

9 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Madam Chair. Admiral, great
10 to see you again. Enjoyed our talk in my office yesterday.

11 The strategic environment is evolving rather rapidly,
12 and we're seeing some novel missile systems such as
13 hypersonic glide vehicles, reentry vehicles, that can
14 maneuver obviously at hypersonic and other speeds
15 drastically.

16 These systems will drastically compress decision
17 timelines and challenge some of the traditional early
18 warning systems that we currently have in place, and also
19 challenge the ability to track and intercept. So, these
20 technologies are altering not just how quickly a strike
21 could unfold, but how we think about deterrence and how we
22 think about escalation control in a crisis.

23 So, Admiral, how do you assess the future of these
24 novel missile threats? And if confirmed, how would you
25 posture U.S. Strategic Command to adapt and deter an



1 environment where speed, maneuverability, and ambiguity
2 increasingly defined strategic competition?

3 Admiral Correll: Thanks, Senator. I really enjoyed
4 our time and our discussion as well. I guess the way I
5 would answer that is, you know, we're safe, secure,
6 effective, and credible today, but as you highlight, the
7 security environment is advancing. And those novel missile
8 systems represent a threat that we have to account for.

9 I mentioned previously that one of the ways I think
10 about it is make the targeting problem too hard. So, their
11 operational approaches and tactics, techniques, and
12 procedures that we can use with existing capabilities to
13 maximize our effectiveness in that environment. Ultimately,
14 we need to advance our space-based sensor capability and
15 other sensing capabilities to detect and track those
16 systems.

17 But today, as it stands today, I have, you know,
18 absolute confidence in our ability to survive any kind of
19 preemptive attack from those systems and be ready to provide
20 the President with options for response, working together
21 with fellow combatant commanders and the chairman from
22 conventional up to strategic

23 Senator Kelly: How well postured are we, without
24 sharing anything that could be classified, to handle an ICBM
25 over the South Pole with a hypersonic light vehicle



1 detection. I mean, at this point, we're talking not the
2 ability to intercept it, just to detect it.

3 Admiral Correll: Yes, Senator, I would I be happy to
4 follow-up with in our classified setting.

5 Senator Kelly: All right. And also, I want to touch
6 briefly on electronic warfare and the electromagnetic
7 spectrum. We talked a little bit about that in my office.
8 So, we're seeing Ukraine, how both sides are employing
9 jamming, spoofing signal denial to disrupt communications,
10 precision targeting, and command and control, often in real
11 time.

12 So, given that reality, what lessons should we draw
13 from Ukraine about fighting and surviving in a degraded or
14 denied electromagnetic environment? And more specifically,
15 if confirmed, how do you see the future of electronic
16 warfare and counter-electronic warfare evolving under your
17 command at U.S. Strategic Command?

18 So, how do you take what we're seeing in Ukraine, our
19 adversaries could apply some of those techniques to
20 strategic forces, and what's your thoughts on that?

21 Admiral Correll: My thoughts are that it's an
22 incredibly rich learning environment for what we've seen and
23 the pace of the agility needed, the move and counter move
24 with respect to contesting the electromagnetic spectrum is
25 occurring on, you know, almost a daily basis during that



1 conflict. And it really challenges the ability to take and
2 hold territory. And so, that's part of the conversation
3 going on within the joint force is what capabilities for the
4 future and what operational concepts are going to be
5 successful in that kind of environment.

6 Senator Kelly: Right. Thank you. And thank you,
7 Madam Chair.

8 Chairman Rischer: Thank you, Senator Kelly. Senator
9 Cramer, you are recognized.

10 Senator Cramer: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you,
11 Admiral, for your service, you and your wife, for your
12 service and your willingness to continue it. We need you
13 badly. And I like everyone else, I appreciated very much
14 and enjoyed our discussion yesterday in my office.

15 Since we've been talking about old missiles and we're
16 excited for the new ones, for sure, in North Dakota and at
17 that, Minot. But as you know, Minot is also the last of the
18 bases will be to receive the Sentinel. As we transition
19 from Minuteman 3 to Sentinel. What steps are being made to
20 ensure that there's no gap, that we have continuous alert
21 coverage, you know, personnel readiness, all of that while
22 Sentinel is being constructed?

23 Admiral Correll: Thank you, Senator, and I, too,
24 enjoyed our conversation and appreciated your time. If
25 confirmed as STRATCOM commander, one of my most important



1 responsibilities that I see with respect to the transition
2 from what we have to what we need in the future is
3 understanding where the risks are within the portfolio and
4 where additional risks might manifest themselves. And
5 communicating that with precision together with the services
6 to make sure that we're accounting for it.

7 As we transition, the other factor associated with that
8 is the strategic environment. And as the strategic
9 environment evolves, any kind of adjustments to our
10 strategic posture that would be required to provide advice
11 with respect to that. And so, understanding the margin in
12 the system of what we have and where the risks might come
13 from, and then making sure that we account for it across the
14 entire triad of capabilities.

15 And I would be happy to follow-up in a classified
16 setting with details associated with that. But I'm
17 comfortable with where we are. We need to continue to keep
18 the pressure on to pull new capabilities to the left and
19 deliver sooner. But, you know, the services are very
20 focused on understanding where the margin is and how our
21 systems are operating, and STRATCOM is as well.

22 Senator Cramer: Well, along the same lines, would it
23 be acceptable, in your mind, any situation to reduce the
24 nation's ICBM count below 400? Because there's a lot of
25 talk about that. And what would be the downside, and what



1 are the benefits of all 400?

2 Admiral Correll: Based on the strategic environment,
3 my military advice would be not to reduce the numbers. And
4 in a classified setting, be happy to have that conversation.
5 It really comes back to this complimentary nature. The
6 whole is much greater than the sum of the parts. And each
7 leg of the triad has unique attributes that are really
8 important.

9 With respect to our Minuteman 3 system, its
10 availability since the 1960s, 24/7, 365, ability to retarget
11 and hold at risk. You know, what's required, again, for
12 that operational flexibility and providing the max range of
13 options to the President is really, really important
14 together with the other legs of the triad.

15 Senator Cramer: Well, not to be outdone by the age of
16 missiles, we have some really old airplanes too at Minot.
17 As you know, we have two of the three legs of the nuclear
18 triad. The B-52s have been around longer than you, and the
19 B-52s are due for modernization as well and the engines. We
20 appreciate that the new helicopters are coming to replace
21 the very old Hueys as well.

22 Obviously, modernization's important in Minot. But you
23 talked a little earlier with Senator Rounds about B-21s, we
24 talked a little bit about the number up above 100. It's
25 becoming pretty common speak, obviously, but maybe you could



1 speak a little bit to the B-52, whether we get to replace
2 them someday with B-21s? It's not on the docket now, or the
3 importance of that machine as again, through this transition
4 of modernization.

5 Admiral Correll: Thank you, Senator, and I absolutely
6 agree with your point with respect to the B-52s and its
7 essential nature to our strategic deterrence. And in a
8 classified setting, I could get into details. That
9 modernization is really important. The new engines
10 associated with that are ongoing for that are world class
11 coming from Rolls Royce.

12 Essentially, it's an old airplane, but it's a new
13 airplane because every piece internal to that aircraft has
14 been replaced over time. And that's part of that
15 modernization for the avionics and those engines. And
16 there's some incredible technology being applied by Rolls
17 Royce in terms of data for those engines that is almost
18 certainly going to improve the readiness rate of those of
19 those aircraft going forward.

20 Senator Cramer: Appreciate that. I would just add I
21 mean, one of these that encourages me about the B-21 is it
22 does seem to have a frame that's durable, and that has
23 multiple opportunities. I'm a little tired of building one
24 airplane that can only do one thing and then have to build
25 another one to do the next thing. So, anyway, thanks for



1 listening. Thank you, Admiral.

2 Chairman Fischer: Thank you, Senator Cramer. Senator
3 Rosen, you are recognized.

4 Senator Rosen: Thank you, Senator Fischer, Senator
5 Reed for holding this hearing. Admiral Correll, your wife's
6 here today, and to your family, thank you for your service
7 to our nation and for your willingness to continue that
8 service.

9 So, I want to talk a little bit about nuclear testing
10 in Nevada. As everyone knows, the Nevada test site, now
11 known as the Nevada National Security Site, NNSS, was ground
12 zero for the majority of the United States explosive nuclear
13 testing from 1951 to 1992. During this era, which we must
14 not return to, millions of people and acres of land were
15 contaminated by radiation. And my State of Nevada is still
16 suffering the consequences.

17 Since President George H.W. Bush signed the testing
18 moratorium in 1992, the Nevada National Security Site has
19 safely conducted non-exclusive experiments to certify the
20 reliability, the safety, the effectiveness of our nuclear
21 stockpile.

22 So, let me be clear, what we are doing in Nevada is
23 working for decades. The directors of our national
24 laboratories, the commander of U.S. Strategic Command, the
25 secretaries of defense and energy, including through the



1 entire time of the first Trump administration, and again,
2 this year, have certified the military effectiveness of our
3 stockpile.

4 Nonetheless, President Trump last night took the
5 reckless, irresponsible, and dangerous step to declare that
6 we will resume explosive nuclear testing despite no
7 evidence, no evidence supporting the need to do so. If this
8 resumption happens, the amount of radiation exposure and
9 destruction would be felt across the country and around the
10 world. Make no mistake, this would be devastating and
11 catastrophic.

12 So, I'm going to be crystal clear. I will not let this
13 happen. Not on my watch. I will do everything I can in my
14 power as a Senator, as a United States citizen, to put a
15 stop to this and protect families in my State of Nevada.

16 So, Admiral Correll, can you clarify what you told the
17 committee earlier this morning and clearly tell us, in your
18 expert opinion, are explosive nuclear tests necessary? Yes
19 or no?

20 Admiral Correll: Senator, I'd be happy to schedule a
21 follow-on briefing in a classified setting to have a
22 discussion about testing in the STRATCOM commander's role.
23 And if confirmed, my role would be to provide the
24 requirements for the accuracy.

25 Senator Rosen: Do you think then we're not meeting our



1 -- you do not feel confident with the tests that our
2 national labs and what we're doing at the test site, that
3 the tests that we've been doing since 1992, when we stopped
4 that above and below ground nuclear testing, have not been
5 adequate enough to ensure the integrity of our nuclear
6 arsenal.

7 Admiral Correll: The adequacy and efficacy of the
8 nuclear weapons stockpile is certified on an annual basis.

9 Senator Rosen: And you trust in those tests?

10 Admiral Correll: And it was certified satisfactorily.
11 And I do trust that assessment

12 Senator Rosen: And the subject matter experts, the
13 President on national security implications. And let me
14 tell you that we like to say in Nevada, what happens in Las
15 Vegas stays in Vegas. But if you start those explosive
16 nuclear tests, I can tell you that every bit of air, every
17 bit of groundwater, every bit of soil across these United
18 States will be contaminated with radiation, and everyone in
19 this country will suffer, not just the people of Nevada.

20 So, how would you counsel the President on this issue
21 of resuming explosive nuclear tests?

22 Admiral Correll: Senator, I would provide my best
23 military advice in a private in a private setting and
24 classified setting.

25 Senator Rosen: So, I know you're not there yet, and



1 you've had a career working in all of this, worked very hard
2 and have so much knowledge. I look forward to really
3 working with you and working to move all of these issues
4 forward. I just want to be sure that you agree with data-
5 informed assessments, and that there really isn't a
6 technical or strategic justification for resuming what might
7 be a great photo-op of a mushroom cloud over the Western
8 United States.

9 Admiral Correll: Senator, I've always been driven by
10 data, and to the best of my ability, provide forthright and
11 candid advice. And I commit that that will not change going
12 forward. And thank you for the question.

13 Senator Rosen: Thank you. I look forward to setting
14 up that meeting in the SCIF to discuss this further. Thank
15 you.

16 Admiral Correll: Thank you, Senator.

17 Senator Rosen: Thank you, Senator Rosen. Senator
18 Warren, you were recognized.

19 Senator Warren: Thank you, Madam Chairman, and I want
20 to say thank you to Senator Rosen. I want to follow-up, but
21 it's clear you're not going to answer much here in an open
22 setting, but I'd like to join you when the meeting goes to
23 the SCIF to understand the seriousness of this moment and
24 what it means for our nation.

25 Last night, the President may have launched us on a



1 path of a new arms race when he announced that we should
2 base our testing of nuclear weapons on what other countries,
3 including states like North Korea do to terrorize the world.
4 At the same time, the Trump administration is cracking down
5 on independent oversight and reporting at the Pentagon.
6 This should be a flashing red light for this committee and
7 for our constitutional oversight duties.

8 This is billions, even trillions of taxpayer dollars
9 that we're talking about, and the safety and security of the
10 people, and the land of the United States itself. We need
11 independent assessments for what's happening here, and we
12 need someone who's going to be candid with us about both
13 their assessment and the facts about what's going on.

14 So, if I can, I'm going to ask some other questions
15 that I think we can answer appropriately in this setting. I
16 want to say congratulations on your nomination. As the
17 commander of the U.S. Strategic Command, it's going to be
18 your job to manage our current and future nuclear arsenal.
19 The Congressional Budget Office estimates our plans to build
20 new nuclear weapons will cost \$946 billion just over the
21 next 10 years. That's almost \$1 trillion, and that's just
22 an estimate.

23 Systems like Sentinel, the Land-based Nuclear Missile
24 Program, have turned out to cost almost double their
25 original estimates given to Congress. And that doesn't just



1 cost taxpayers, it jeopardizes our national security.
2 Ballooning costs have forced the Air Force to consider
3 postponing and scaling back its next generation tanker, air
4 lifter, and next generation air dominance fighter programs.

5 The military services are responsible for acquisition
6 programs, but as the STRATCOM commander and member of the
7 Nuclear Weapons Council, you are responsible for overseeing
8 the nuclear weapons program, and your military advice here
9 is going to be very influential.

10 Vice Admiral Correll, would you agree that it's
11 important for military planning to have an accurate estimate
12 of how much a new nuclear weapon will cost and when it will
13 be delivered?

14 Admiral Correll: Yes, Senator.

15 Senator Warren: You agree? We need those basic facts.
16 Look, we need to know how much things cost, but the Air
17 Force provided Congress with a rosy cost estimate for
18 Sentinel, which turned out to cost an extra \$60 billion over
19 their estimate. And they did this while declaring, "There
20 was no more margin to extend Minuteman 3," the program that
21 Sentinel is replacing past 2036. Well, turns out that
22 wasn't true either.

23 As the Government Accountability Office revealed last
24 month, the military believes we can extend Minuteman 3
25 through 2050. So, here we have at this crucial program, the



1 dollar figure was wrong and the time was wrong on it. We
2 need to take an honest look at these programs and not shield
3 them from independent oversight.

4 Vice Admiral Correll, do you commit to ensuring that
5 STRATCOM will not stand in the way of any independent
6 studies or independent recommendations on Sentinel, or any
7 other program moving forward?

8 Admiral Correll: Senator, I commit to providing my
9 best military advice in a candid and forthright matter to
10 the Department and to this committee.

11 Senator Warren: I appreciate that. It's sorely
12 needed.

13 Think tanks influential with the administration want to
14 add to the Sentinel program by making it mobile. They claim
15 it's going to save money, but history and other analysts
16 indicated is much more likely it will increase cost and
17 complexity. And what would we get for wasting billions of
18 dollars, more nuclear weapons being driven through American
19 cities and towns.

20 Vice Admiral Correll, if you were told to consider a
21 Sentinel option again, and your military analysis showed
22 that it would add cost or complexity, will you commit to
23 sharing those results as part of your military advice with
24 Congress?

25 Admiral Correll: I would commit to that. And that



1 would be with and through the Department.

2 Senator Warren: Okay. I appreciate that. It is more
3 critical now than ever before, that we have military leaders
4 who are willing to be honest with Congress about our
5 national security. Thank you, Madam Chair.

6 Chairman Fischer: Thank you, Senator Warren. Senator
7 Slotkin.

8 Senator Slotkin: Thank you, Senator. Welcome, and
9 congratulations on the nomination, to you and your family.

10 And you are getting a little preview of how dicey your
11 job is going to be with the President's announcement, like,
12 18 hours before you came up here. So, I can imagine your
13 poor staff there, their briefs changed from last night to
14 today. You know, I think anyone who's coming up here to
15 take an important position like the head of STRATCOM in
16 charge of 41,000 people, it's an extremely big deal. Out of
17 a military of 1.3 million people, we only have 38 four-star
18 generals. I think it's a very rare thing to be a four-star
19 in the U.S. military. And it's hard to notice that we are
20 losing four stars, three stars, and even two stars in a
21 pretty unusual way over the last nine months.

22 Just in those months, we have lost the Chairman of the
23 Joint Chiefs, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, the Vice
24 Chief of Staff of the Air Force, the Vice Chief of Staff of
25 the Army, Chief of Naval Operations, Commander of CYBERCOM,



1 and Director of NSA, Commander of SOUTHCOM Command,
2 Commandant of The Coast Guard, the SMA to the SECDEF, the
3 director of DIA, Naval Special Warfare Commander, top Army
4 lawyer, the top Air Force lawyer representative to NATO, the
5 Joint Staff Director of J5, the Joint Staff of J3, and the
6 Chief of Naval Research. By my count that is 17 GOF0s
7 general officers who have been removed from their positions
8 or retired early in nine months.

9 I'm a former CIA officer. So, we used to look at other
10 foreign militaries and make assessments on them. If I saw
11 17 general officers removed from their positions in a
12 foreign military, we would call that a purge. That's the
13 technical definition, when a new leader comes in and just
14 cleans house. The places where we've looked at these kinds
15 of things are places like China, right, where they remove
16 large numbers of officers at one time.

17 I used to work on a rock, they would do the same thing.
18 It is very clear that the Secretary of Defense is trying to
19 reshape the department in ways that are very different than
20 previous administrations. And he is critical of anyone who
21 takes issue with him, his leadership, or decision-making of
22 him or the President.

23 Now, you've repeated many times, rightly, that your job
24 will be to give best military advice, but what we are seeing
25 over and over in black and white is that when people in



1 similar positions give their best military advice, they get
2 removed. If that military advice is somehow not in line
3 with the thinking of this President and the secretary, you
4 get, you get fired.

5 So, there's going to come a moment. I don't know when
6 it's going to be, I hope you never have it, but there will
7 be a moment behind closed doors, not when the lights are on
8 and the hearing's going on, when you will have that really
9 existential decision you will have to make; "Do I give my
10 best military advice and tell people news they don't want to
11 hear, information they don't want to hear, or will I just go
12 along to get along to make sure that my bosses are happy and
13 I don't rock the boat?"

14 You swore an oath over and over your whole career to
15 the Constitution. Not to any one man, not to one President,
16 but to the Constitution of the United States. So, can you
17 say with conviction, when your moment comes, because it's
18 coming, you're behind closed doors, and you have that moral
19 and professional obligation to make that you at risk knowing
20 that your job is at risk, you will say the right and best
21 military advice based on facts and not just what Secretary
22 Hegseth wants you to say?

23 Admiral Correll: Senator, over the course of my
24 career, I've adhered to that principle, and I will adhere to
25 that principle going forward consistent with my oath to the



1 Constitution.

2 Senator Slotkin: Well, we are counting on it, and
3 we've had every single nominee come up and say the same
4 thing. I've asked this question to pretty much every single
5 nominee that that's come up before me. But those moments
6 are happening, and I think we can see just by the sheer
7 number 17 general officers removed in nine months that you
8 will have that career-defining moment.

9 And because your job involves nuclear weapons, there
10 couldn't be a more important set of issues to work on when
11 it comes to sort of moral decision-making. We are counting
12 on you, the young folks who work for you. Those 41,000
13 people are counting on you to make the right decision when
14 the doors are closed. So, thank you, and I encourage you
15 all of Godspeed.

16 Chairman Rischer: Thank you, Senator Slotkin.

17 Admiral, seeing no other of my colleagues here, I thank
18 you for being here today. I thank you for responding to the
19 questions as they were presented to you. And with that, I
20 declare the hearing closed.

21 [Whereupon, at 11:03 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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