

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATIONS OF: MR. BRADLEY D. HANSELL TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY; MR. EARL G. MATTHEWS TO BE GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE; MR. DALE R. MARKS TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR ENERGY, INSTALLATIONS, AND ENVIRONMENT; AND HONORABLE BRANDON M. WILLIAMS TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF ENERGY FOR NUCLEAR SECURITY

Tuesday, April 8, 2025

Washington, D.C.

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1 TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATIONS OF: MR. BRADLEY D. HANSELL TO BE
2 UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY;
3 MR. EARL G. MATTHEWS TO BE GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT
4 OF DEFENSE; MR. DALE R. MARKS TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF
5 DEFENSE FOR ENERGY, INSTALLATIONS, AND ENVIRONMENT; AND
6 HONORABLE BRANDON M. WILLIAMS TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF
7 ENERGY FOR NUCLEAR SECURITY

8
9 Tuesday, April 8, 2025

10
11 U.S. Senate

12 Committee on Armed Services

13 Washington, D.C.
14

15 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:38 a.m. in
16 Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Roger
17 Wicker, chairman of the committee, presiding.

18 Committee Members Present: Senators Wicker
19 [presiding], Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan,
20 Cramer, Scott, Tuberville, Mullin, Budd, Schmitt, Banks,
21 Sheehy, Reed, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono,
22 Kaine, King, Warren,

Peters, Rosen, Kelly, and Slotkin.

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

3 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, and I welcome our four
4 witnesses, and their families. And I thank them for being
5 here this morning, and a guest or two.

6 Mr. Brandon Williams has been nominated to be Under
7 Secretary of Energy for Nuclear Security, and the
8 Administrator of the National Nuclear Security
9 Administration, NNSA. As the Administrator, Mr. Williams
10 would be responsible for rebuilding and modernizing our
11 long, neglected nuclear weapons stockpile.

12 Failure here is not an option. Over the past several
13 years, we've watched as Russia, China, and North Korea have
14 rapidly expanded their nuclear arsenals and developed new
15 types of weapons, weapons for which we are so sorely
16 unprepared.

17 The committee is focused on ensuring that the
18 Department of Defense and the NNSA deliver results. As the
19 Congressional Strategic Posture Commission made clear,
20 modernizing our country's nuclear deterrent is a national
21 imperative. I look forward to hearing how Mr. Williams
22 intends to pursue this objective.

23 Mr. Bradley Hansell has been nominated to be Under
24 Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security. In
25 addition to serving as the Secretary of Defense's principal

1 advisor on intelligence, counterintelligence security, and
2 law enforcement matters, the Under Secretary is tasked with
3 protecting the Department's most sensitive information from
4 our adversaries. This includes ensuring the provision of
5 timely and accurate intelligence to our forces, overseeing
6 the security clearance vetting process, guarding against
7 insider threats, and protecting our industrial base from
8 China's aggressive campaign of espionage and theft.

9 Mr. Hansell served as a Naval officer and an Army Green
10 Beret. During his distinguished career in uniform, he saw
11 firsthand that quality intelligence is crucial to executing
12 the mission. That experience and his work in the private
13 sector gives me confidence he will do an excellent job. I
14 look forward to hearing Mr. Hansell outline his priorities
15 for our intelligence and security enterprise.

16 Mr. Earl Matthews has been nominated to be the General
17 Counsel of the Department of Defense. He has a
18 distinguished career as a judge advocate in the Army Reserve
19 and the Army National Guard, serving as the senior
20 headquarters staff judge advocate for the DC National Guard.
21 Mr. Matthews also brings extensive civilian government
22 experience. He worked for Secretary Mattis in 2017 before
23 moving over to the Army General Counsel office where he
24 served as acting General Counsel of the Army.

25 President Trump and Secretary Hegseth have taken bold

1 in this series, steps to reform the Department of Defenses.
2 As we all know, purposeful and thoughtful reform requires
3 purposeful and thoughtful lawyers. I'm confident that Mr.
4 Matthews possesses both qualities. I look forward to
5 hearing his opinion about what the DOD Office of General
6 Counsel is doing right, and I want to hear his ideas for how
7 he would do things differently.

8 Mr. Dale Marks has been nominated to be the Assistant
9 Secretary of Defense for Energy, Installations, and
10 Environment, a role which ensures the operational readiness
11 and resiliency of the Department of Defense. If confirmed,
12 Mr. Marks would oversee the management of military
13 installations and infrastructure; the bedrock of the safety
14 and well-being of service members and their families.

15 This critical position will play a key part in the
16 implementation of several reforms from last year's NDAA.
17 Among them are the mandate retire requiring the minimum 4
18 percent plant replacement value for DOD facilities. Let me
19 repeat that. Among them are the mandate in the NDAA
20 requiring a minimum 4 percent plant replacement value for
21 DOD facilities, leveraging of area-wide contract
22 authorities, and a review of Biden era green energy policies
23 that focus more on climate change than on combat lethality.
24 I look forward to hearing from Mr. Marks about how he
25 intends to tackle these important issues.

1 So, we have a lot to talk about today, and I turn to my
2 friend and colleague, Ranking Member Reed.

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

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

4 Welcome, gentlemen. Congratulations on your
5 nominations. I'd also like to welcome your families and
6 friends who are here today in support of you, as they have
7 been throughout your life. I also want to recognize
8 Representative Pfluger who will introduce Mr. Marks and Mr.
9 Matthews momentarily. Thank you, sir.

10 Mr. Williams, you've been nominated to be the Under
11 Secretary of Energy for Nuclear Security and Administrator
12 of the National Nuclear Security Administration, or NNSA.
13 If confirmed, you'll be responsible for the programs and
14 personnel responsible for modernizing and overseeing our
15 nuclear stockpiles and production facilities.

16 I'm concerned that the Trump administration has already
17 undermined this mission. Last month, nearly 200 NNSA
18 nuclear engineers were abruptly fired, then hastily rehired.
19 Another 150 employees took the deferred retirement option.
20 Just last week, more than 8,500 employees at the Department
21 of Energy, about half of the entire workforce, were
22 identified by the Office of Management and Budget to be
23 fired, including 500 NNSA employees. The potential damage
24 to the NNSA and the threat to the safety of all Americans
25 should be alarming.

1 Mr. Williams is a former Congressman, Navy veteran, and
2 entrepreneur. I would like to know how you will approach
3 this challenge, and how you'll work to protect the vital
4 workforce of the NNSA.

5 Mr. Hansell, you have been nominated to be Under
6 Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security. If
7 confirmed, you'll have a dual-hat role as the principal
8 intelligence advisor to the Secretary of Defense and the
9 Director of Defense Intelligence in the Office of the
10 Director of National Intelligence.

11 The complexity of the global threat environment we face
12 is unprecedented. China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and
13 many other actors pose serious challenges on national
14 security, and you'll be responsible for ensuring the defense
15 intelligence enterprise is equipped with the resources and
16 capabilities it needs to meet these challenges. These are
17 immensely complicated networks that we face, but your
18 experience in the Navy, Army, and the private sector will be
19 of valuable in such a complex position.

20 Mr. Hansell, I welcome your thoughts about how you
21 intend to foster your transformation within the intelligence
22 enterprise, and ensure that the military has timely and
23 accurate information to defend the nation.

24 Military leaders often say that America's network of
25 allies and partners is our greatest asymmetric advantage

1 over our global competitors. If confirmed, you'll be in
2 charge of managing and facilitating our intelligence
3 relationships with foreign military partners.

4 I fear that many of the actions taken to the President
5 and just avoidance such as cabinet members discussing
6 classified information on Signal to eliminating foreign
7 assistance to placing tariffs on many of our closest allies
8 undermines these longstanding relationships, and makes it
9 less likely that they will trust us with their most
10 sensitive information. I hope you'll lay out your plan for
11 ensuring that our network of allies and partners remain
12 strong.

13 Mr. Matthews you have been nominated by to be the
14 General Counsel of the Department of Defense. The General
15 Counsel serves as the chief legal officer of the Department
16 of Defense, and as the primary legal advisor to the
17 Secretary of Defense.

18 If confirmed, you would provide legal advice and
19 counsel on the full scope of Defense Department missions and
20 responsibilities, including the roles and functions of the
21 military, contracting and acquisitions, military healthcare,
22 law of armed conflict, military justice. And, more frankly,
23 I am concerned about the legality of certain activities the
24 Trump administration has ordered the military to execute
25 over the past several months. Public trust in the military

1 can never be taken for granted, and civilian control of the
2 military is a sacred duty that must be carried out
3 responsibly.

4 Mr. Matthews, you have extensive experience as a judge
5 advocate in the U.S. Army and the Army National Guard, and I
6 expect you to always exercise independent professional
7 judgment, and to give your best legal counsel to the
8 Secretary of Defense even if, or especially, if that advice
9 is not what they would want to hear. I would like to know
10 how you'll plan to demonstrate this ethos and represent all
11 service members with the professionalism they deserve.

12 Finally, Mr. Marks, you have been nominated to be
13 Assistant Secretary of Defense for Energy, Installations,
14 and Environment. If confirmed, you'll oversee the defense
15 Department's physical footprint, provide management of
16 military installations worldwide, and coordinate
17 environmental safety and occupational health programs.

18 Your extensive background in the U.S. Air Force,
19 managing infrastructure, testing, logistics, and other
20 issues should serve you very well. There are a number of
21 significant challenges you'll need to address. In
22 particular, military construction has been underfunded for
23 many years, forcing service members and defense civilians to
24 manage their missions with inadequate infrastructure.
25 Similarly, enlisted barracks in the military housing

1 privatization initiative require greater oversight to meet
2 the standards that our service members and military families
3 deserve. These are issues that this committee has addressed
4 extensively over the years.

5 Further, as extreme weather and growing energy demands
6 impeded readiness, you'll need to pursue new ways to improve
7 the resilience of military installations and support
8 operational energy programs to extend the capabilities of
9 our warfighters. Mr. Marks, I welcome your thoughts on how
10 you'll address each of these interrelated challenges.

11 I thank the nominees, again, for your willingness to
12 serve our nation. I look forward to your testimony. Thank
13 you very much, Mr. Chairman.

14 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Reed. I very much
15 appreciate that. Mr. Matthews, I see that one of my good
16 friends and colleagues from the House of Representatives
17 August Pfluger has humbled himself to come over here to the
18 United States Senate and introduce you. We very much
19 appreciate the effort of Representative Pfluger, and I now
20 turn to him for whatever remarks he may make.

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. AUGUST PFLUGER, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE
2 FROM TEXAS, 11TH DISTRICT

3 Mr. Pfluger: Thank you, Chairman Wicker, and Ranking
4 Member Reed, and all the distinguished members of this
5 committee for allowing me to be here today.

6 It truly is an honor to introduce my dear friend and
7 former colleague from the National Security Council staff,
8 Earl Matthews. Earl is President Trump's nominee to be the
9 next General Counsel of the Department of Defense, and I
10 wholeheartedly believe that he is the right person at the
11 right time with the right skillset to fill this critical
12 national security role. And I would urge his swift
13 confirmation.

14 I've known Earl for six years now, and we first met
15 when he was the senior director for defense on the National
16 Security Council, and he took a chance on hiring me. Do not
17 let that in any way cloud your judgment on him. He is a
18 great person. But during this time, I've witnessed Earl's
19 successful leadership capabilities firsthand as he led a
20 handpicked 11-person team of civilian and military
21 professionals charged with advancing the President's defense
22 policy agenda through the interagency.

23 And, in fact, Earl, was instrumental in establishing
24 the U.S. Space Force, one of the most visionary and
25 transformative decisions for our national security. And

1 despite facing significant resistance within the Pentagon
2 Bureaucracy, Earl led the charge on behalf of President
3 Trump to make this vision a reality.

4 Earl's story is one of resilience, one of dedication,
5 and service. Born in Philadelphia into a family with a
6 proud generational tradition of military service, he faced
7 adversity early in life when he lost his mother shortly
8 after his birth. He was raised by his maternal aunt,
9 Marietta, a retired Pennsylvania government employee, whose
10 guidance and support undoubtedly shaped the man he is today.

11 She is here today alongside her husband and so many of
12 Earl's family members and friends and they're that they are
13 here to show their unwavering support. They're directly
14 behind us. I can't think of a more proud and affirming
15 statement than to have your own family and your own friends
16 at a confirmation hearing of this importance.

17 I can say without a reservation that there is no one
18 more qualified or more deserving to serve as General Counsel
19 of the Department of Defense than Earl Matthews, who has
20 served with character, with integrity, and with dedication
21 that is worthwhile of our great national security enterprise
22 and of the Department of Defense.

23 Chairman, Ranking Member, thank you for allowing me to
24 introduce my good friend, someone who is incredibly
25 qualified to fill this position. And I yield back.

1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Representative Pfluger.
2 We very much appreciate it, and thank you for pointing out
3 the friends and family members who are present. We welcome
4 them and hope that they enjoy the hearing. So,
5 Representative Pfluger, you are free to go. You're welcome
6 to stay, but I know you're very, very busy. We do
7 appreciate your input.

8 And I now turn to my distinguished colleague, Senator
9 Scott, who I understand will be saying some words of support
10 for Mr. Marks. So, Senator Scott, you are recognized.

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. RICK SCOTT, U.S. SENATOR FROM
2 FLORIDA

3 Senator Scott: Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed,
4 and members of this committee. It's a great honor to
5 introduce Mr. Dale Marks to be the next Assistant Secretary
6 of Defense for energy installation environment. I'll also
7 like to recognize his wife Patty and his son Tony, who are
8 here to support Mr. Marks.

9 This role is crucial in ensuring the readiness of our
10 military installations success of our energy policies, and
11 the resilience of our services. And in Mr. Marks, President
12 Trump chose a leader who could deliver for Americans and for
13 the men, women, and families of our armed forces.

14 Mr. Marks is a former fighter pilot and a combat
15 wounded veteran. After his distinguished military career,
16 he continued his service in a civilian capacity where he
17 rose to the ranks of the senior executive service. He's
18 currently serving as the executive director of the 96-Test
19 Wing Air Force Material Command at Eglin Air Force Base in
20 the great state of Florida.

21 In and out of uniform, Dale has demonstrated his
22 ability to build teams, promote accountability, and make
23 decisions, prioritizing long-term success. The issues that
24 the Department of Defense face are not just military
25 challenges, they're leadership and oversight issues. This

1 position is essential to ensuring that our military
2 installations remain strong, our energy policies support
3 mission success and our environmental strategies enhance,
4 not hinder operational readiness and support peace through
5 strength at a time when global energy security and resilient
6 infrastructure are paramount.

7 We need a leader who understands both the strategic and
8 operational challenges facing our military and the
9 implications of high-level decisions to the folks on the
10 ground. Mr. Mark's professional record, broad expertise,
11 deep experience, and proven commitment to our nation, make
12 him exceptionally well qualified for this position, working
13 with President Trump, the Secretary of Defense, and the
14 entire administration. He will keep our forces ready and
15 prepared to protect and serve.

16 I urge this committee to fully consider and support his
17 nomination, and look forward to his testimony today.
18 Congratulations.

19 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very, very much, Senator.
20 We, appreciate it. And now we will hear opening statements
21 by each of our nominees, and without objection, we will take
22 them in the order of Mr. Williams, then Mr. Hansell, then
23 Mr. Matthews, and finally, Mr. Marks. So, Mr. Williams,
24 you'll recognized for your opening statement, sir.

25

1 STATEMENT OF HONORABLE BRANDON M. WILLIAMS TO BE UNDER
2 SECRETARY OF ENERGY FOR NUCLEAR SECURITY

3 Mr. Williams: Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed,
4 thank you for inviting me to be considered by this committee
5 for this important position. And also, thank you, Senator
6 Fischer. I know that the mission of the NNSA is near and
7 dear to your heart as well as you Senator King. Thank you,
8 all of the distinguished members of this critically
9 important committee. It's truly an honor to appear to
10 appear before you today.

11 I'd like to offer my appreciation to President Trump
12 for nominating me. I'm honored and grateful to be
13 considered, and if confirmed, I will work diligently to
14 strengthen the capability, credibility, and communication of
15 our strategic deterrence. I share the President's
16 commitment to peace through strength and look forward to
17 serving on our energy Secretary Rights leadership.

18 I would like to recognize my family who could attend
19 today's hearing. First, my beloved wife, Stephanie of 32
20 years as a Navy Ensign. I asked her father an Army colonel
21 with three bronze stars and two Vietnam combat tours if I
22 could have his daughter's hand in marriage. Stephanie has
23 outranked me ever since.

24 As a child, she lived in Germany during her father's
25 battalion command, which protected the most critical

1 territory in Europe, the Fulda Gap. Stephanie experienced
2 firsthand the Soviet threat and the specter of nuclear war.
3 I can say that we both have a visceral understanding of the
4 importance of strategic deterrence. I'm pleased also that
5 my son Marshall, our son Marshall, could be present today.

6 At the Department of Energy, the National Nuclear
7 Security Administration has functioned in relative obscurity
8 for many decades but has recently been thrust back into the
9 public consciousness. In my estimation, the men and women
10 of the NNSA comprise one of the greatest scientific and
11 engineering organizations in human history. They are
12 exceptional machinists, technicians, marksmen, logisticians,
13 engineers, computer and data scientists, physicists, and
14 weapons designers.

15 This workforce, since the Manhattan Project, continues
16 to ensure the safety, security, reliability, and
17 effectiveness of our nuclear stockpile. If given the
18 opportunity to lead this extraordinary organization, I will
19 do so humbly, in the shadow of great Americans like Admiral
20 Rickover, Ernest Lawrence, and Robert Oppenheimer.

21 I have watched many hours of questioning and testimony
22 from this committee, and I know that you're aware the hour
23 is late and the need is urgent to restore our nuclear
24 weapons enterprise. During your hearings, I've repeatedly
25 heard the concerns of our military commanders, of our

1 strategic forces. This committee has provided critical
2 bipartisan leadership and keen foresight to respond to the
3 growing threat from China, Russia, and others.

4 You have set in motion the necessary modernization
5 efforts. Respect is also due to my colleagues and my
6 friends in the House of Representatives. As a member of
7 Congress, I served as the chairman of the Energy
8 Subcommittee for the Science Space and Technology Committee,
9 where I had oversight over our prestigious DOE National Labs
10 and was privileged to visit many of them.

11 Independent of my committee obligations, I actively
12 sought briefings from NNSA leadership and staff on the
13 challenges and needs of maintaining and strengthening our
14 strategic deterrence posture. I am aware of the many
15 historic challenges that NNSA now faces. Again, it's with
16 humility that I ask to be entrusted with this important
17 mission.

18 I am deeply committed to America's strategic
19 deterrence. In May, 1989, I witnessed firsthand the student
20 protests in Tiananmen Square, and later that fall, enrolled
21 in an introductory class on strategic deterrence and soon
22 volunteered for nuclear submarine duty. During my nearly
23 six years of Navy Service, I made six strategic deterrence
24 patrols in the Pacific, aboard the ballistic missile
25 submarine, USS Georgia. On board, I served as the strategic

1 missile officer, nuclear weapons safety officer, nuclear
2 weapons security officer, and nuclear weapons radiological
3 controls officer. I was responsible for the launch codes on
4 Georgia, and for thousands of hours, I supervised the
5 submarine's nuclear reactor and engine room operations.

6 I then completed a master's degree at the Wharton
7 School in Operations and Finance, and later co-founded a
8 software company dedicated to modernizing industrial
9 manufacturing. My mission, if confirmed by this esteemed
10 body, is to accelerate the restoration of our nuclear
11 weapons enterprise, rebuild trust with Congress, and within
12 NNSA's customers, the Department of Defense, STRATCOM, the
13 Department of State and others, and prioritize strengthening
14 the relationships with our nuclear assurance partners
15 overseas.

16 The U.S. Department of Energy and NNSA will continue to
17 meet the strategic defense mission of this nation and of our
18 allies as the world grows more perilous through nuclear
19 proliferation. If confirmed, I will work to keep nuclear
20 materials out of the hands of bad actors and to protect
21 Americans at home from nuclear terrorism.

22 I am truly humbled to be considered, and look forward
23 to answering your questions.

24 [The prepared statement of Mr. Williams follows:]

25 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very, very much,
2 Representative Williams. Mr. Hansell.

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1 STATEMENT OF MR. BRADLEY D. HANSELL TO BE UNDER
2 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY

3 Mr. Hansell: Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and
4 distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the
5 opportunity to appear before you today and for your
6 consideration of my nomination to be the Under Secretary of
7 Defense for Intelligence and Security.

8 I would like to thank President Trump, and Secretary
9 Hegseth, for the trust and confidence they have placed in
10 me. Nearly five years ago, I was honored by this
11 committee's strong bipartisan support for my nomination to
12 be the Deputy Under Secretary. While the full Senate was
13 not able to hold a floor vote before the election, I'm here
14 today to earn your broad support for my nomination as the
15 Under Secretary.

16 My first inspiration to serve this country started with
17 those in my family who served before me. For three
18 generations, my family has sworn to protect and defend the
19 constitution. I will always recall my grandfather's pride
20 when speaking about his service as a young sailor in the
21 Pacific. Both of his sons became Naval officers, and both
22 of my brothers, here today, currently serve. Michael is a
23 civilian with the Navy, and my brother Brian, currently
24 commands in the Marine Corps F-35 Squadron.

25 My commitment and passion for service deepened with my

1 own as both a Naval officer and an Army Special Forces
2 officer. One of the most powerful driving factors of my
3 life came from the privilege of commanding soldiers in
4 combat. I felt there existed as social contract that some
5 of the most impressive men and women of our country would do
6 what is asked when it's asked with incredible risk to their
7 own lives.

8 In return, their leaders hold the secret responsibility
9 to do everything in their power to ensure, when necessary,
10 it's the right decision and every possible advantage is
11 afforded to them. My role to fulfill this responsibility in
12 uniform ended after being wounded in Afghanistan. I am
13 beyond grateful for the opportunity, if confirmed, to work
14 tirelessly in support of that same contract and with it, the
15 warfighter.

16 I would like to thank my truly exceptional wife who's
17 with me today, who impresses me every day in her own right
18 for her willingness to sacrifice in support of this cause,
19 as well as Connor, our 1-year-old son, who we hope someday
20 gets to feel the joy of serving a cause greater than
21 himself.

22 I believe the combination of experiences in my career
23 have made me uniquely qualified to drive meaningful impact
24 in this role. My deep understanding of intelligence ranges
25 from the tactical to strategic level. As a Green Beret, my

1 team conducted the entire intelligence cycle to include the
2 development and utilization of intelligence sources, which I
3 then relied on when planning and leading combat missions. I
4 know the value of getting it right and the human price of
5 getting it wrong.

6 As a senior director on the NSC staff, I leveraged
7 intelligence in the formulation of policy, and led efforts
8 in my portfolio to address the responsiveness of the IC and
9 foundational coordination challenges between IC components
10 in the private sector. I leveraged my leadership and
11 business operations expertise to advise companies on
12 improving performance as a leader in BCGs public sector
13 practice. I also had the opportunity to apply industry best
14 practices to the very unique government domain, as we
15 partnered with leaders in both the DOD and the IC to address
16 their challenges.

17 Effective management of the defense intelligence and
18 security enterprise is essential, and we must align efforts
19 to maximize effects down range and return on our investment.
20 This includes ensuring we have the right technology and
21 organizational structure in organizational structure to
22 enable our personnel, some of America's best to increase
23 their impact in today's operational environment.

24 And to position the enterprise for the rapidly changing
25 landscape of the future, we must better enable intelligence

1 to inform department investments effectively matching
2 capabilities with threats with program costs exceedingly
3 high, and the cost of misallocation on the modern
4 battlefield even higher. The premium on intelligence
5 effectively informing the entire acquisition lifecycle is at
6 an all-time high.

7 Lastly, we must ensure the Department has all the tools
8 required to most effectively compete along the full
9 continuum of conflict. Our adversaries are increasingly
10 conducting malign activity below a threshold that has
11 traditionally triggered a military response. Enhancing our
12 irregular warfare capabilities will allow us to provide risk
13 informed options to better compete short of armed conflict
14 and reestablish deterrence in line with the Secretary's
15 priority. I believe offensive cyber capabilities and an
16 increased focus on Defense HUMINT are areas for opportunity.
17 Finally, offensive counterintelligence efforts are essential
18 and imposing a cost on our adversaries.

19 If confirmed, I look forward to implementing these
20 efforts, and serving the amazing men and women of the
21 enterprise to support the Secretary's priorities. In
22 closing, I'm deeply committed to working with this committee
23 and with Congress to provide information needed to carry out
24 oversight responsibilities.

25 Thank you for your time today and consideration of my

1 nomination. I look forward to your questions.

2 [The prepared statement of Mr. Hansell follows:]

3 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Mr. Hansell.
2 Thank you for your service, and as a matter of fact, you
3 were severely injured in combat in Afghanistan, and it's
4 somewhat of a miracle that you're here. And we commend you
5 for your service, and we are we commend those caregivers,
6 and medical personnel that helped you recover. So, thank
7 you for your testimony.

8 Mr. Matthews, you are next, and you're recognized.

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1 STATEMENT OF MR. EARL G. MATTHEWS TO BE GENERAL
2 COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

3 Mr. Matthews: Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed,
4 and distinguished members of the committee, good morning.
5 Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as
6 the President's nominee to serve as the General Counsel of
7 the Department of Defense. It is a high honor and distinct
8 privilege to be considered for this role.

9 I'm sincerely grateful for the kind introductory
10 remarks of my dear friend, Congressman August Pfluger. I'm
11 also deeply appreciative of the many friends and family
12 members present today. In support of my nomination, I do
13 want to recognize my wife, Tyra, whose love and support is
14 instrumental to me being here today. I also must give
15 special recognition to my aunt, Marietta Matthews, Alston,
16 my mother's sister, who raised me as her own child, upon my
17 mother's death when I was less than one month old.

18 I'm deeply grateful to President Trump for the special
19 trust and confidence he has reposed in me by my nomination.
20 I'm also thankful to the Secretary of Defense, Pete Hegseth,
21 for his continued support and trust. If confirmed by the
22 Senate, my lodestar will be to ensure that the military and
23 policy objectives of the President and the Secretary of
24 Defense are achieved in a manner consistent with the
25 Constitution and laws of the United States.

1 My commitment to you, if confirmed, is that the DOD
2 enterprise writ large will receive timely and accurate legal
3 advice and counsel to ensure that all activities and
4 operations of the Department are conducted in accordance
5 with applicable law, including the Law of Armed Conflict
6 relative to the conduct of combat operations.

7 My commitment to the role for which I have been
8 nominated is undergirded by my family's long lineage of
9 service to the United States. Our legacy of military
10 service dates back to the Civil War. At least one member of
11 my family has served on active duty in uniform during every
12 conflict in which our country has participated from World
13 War I through the recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan,

14 I am named after my maternal grandfather, who was a
15 soldier in the United States Army. All three of my maternal
16 uncles served in the armed forces of the United States.
17 Both of my mother's older brothers served in combat during
18 the Vietnam War. One, my uncle, Norman Matthews, a retired
19 career non-commissioned officer in our United States Air
20 Force is with us here today. I spent my summers visiting my
21 Uncle Norman at various military installations across the
22 United States and gained an appreciation for military life.

23 As a boy, however, the male role model most present in
24 my life and the person who most shaped and influenced the
25 person that I am today was my uncle Russell B. Matthews. My

1 uncle Russ was an o-3-11 Marine who graduated from recruit
2 training at Paris Island as an 18-year-old in 1966, who
3 served a combat tour in the Republic of Vietnam.

4 After his four years in the Marine Corps, he returned
5 home to Philadelphia and spent a full career as an employee
6 of the United States Postal Service. He instilled in his
7 eldest nephew a love of books and a love of country. My two
8 uncles and other combat veterans in my inner city
9 Philadelphia neighborhood inspired me to want to serve our
10 country as they did. I applied for a reserve commission in
11 the Army JAG Corps in 1998 when I was a third-year student
12 at the Harvard Law School.

13 I joined our army because I believe in this fundamental
14 mission to fight and win the nation's wars. I have been a
15 member of both the profession of arms and the profession of
16 law for over 25 years. I spent over four of those years
17 deployed to combat or hazardous duty zones as a member of
18 the 22nd Civil Affairs Battalion attached to the 3rd
19 Infantry Division (Mechanized).

20 I crossed the berm from Kuwait into Iraq in March of
21 2003 and was one of the first Army lawyers to reach Baghdad
22 on April 8th of that year, 22 years ago today. I spent my
23 first tour in Iraq working under the Coalition Provisional
24 Authority to rebuild the Iraqi Judiciary post-Saddam, and I
25 served as a legal advisor at a detention facility in

1 Baghdad, where I saw Iraqi and third-country national
2 detainees being treated with humanity, dignity, and respect
3 as required by the Law of Armed Conflict, and that is the
4 standard for our forces.

5 I routinely interacted with the International Committee
6 of the Red Cross during my time in Baghdad. My first tour
7 in Iraq enhanced my understanding of the critical role
8 played by DOD lawyers and expanding and sustaining the rule
9 of law. I remain firmly and deeply committed to the rule of
10 law.

11 I have been privileged to serve as a judge advocate
12 during operational deployments to Bosnia, twice to Iraq, to
13 Afghanistan, and to the Horn of Africa. Additionally, I
14 have served a civilian tour in Afghanistan as an
15 intelligence officer, working closely with interagency
16 partners in support of the joint warfighter.

17 I have completed additional assignments as a military
18 lawyer in both the Office of the Judge Advocate General of
19 the Army, in the office of the legal counsel to the Chairman
20 of the Joint Chief of Staff. In the civilian capacity. I
21 have served as a career DOD attorney at the Defense
22 Intelligence Agency and as a senior political appointee in
23 my role as Principal Deputy General Counsel and acting
24 General Counsel of the Department of the Army, the largest
25 component within DOD.

Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Matthews. Mr. Marks.

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1 STATEMENT OF MR. DALE R. MARKS TO BE ASSISTANT
2 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR ENERGY, INSTALLATIONS, AND
3 ENVIRONMENT

4 Mr. Marks: Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and
5 distinguished members of this committee, it is an honor to
6 be considered for the role of Assistant Secretary of Defense
7 for energy installations and environment. I'm incredibly
8 humbled by the opportunity.

9 Thank you to Senator Scott for his gracious
10 introduction, unwavering support for the Florida Defense
11 communities where I've had the privilege of serving for the
12 past eight years. I'm deeply grateful to President Trump
13 for his trust and confidence in me. I especially want to
14 thank Secretary Hegseth for his laser-focused efforts on
15 behalf of our warfighters.

16 Three factors motivate me to serve this nation and its
17 men and women in uniform. The first is my faith and trust
18 in Almighty God and the provision of his endless grace in my
19 life. All glory is his. The second is my family, starting
20 with my beautiful wife, Patty, who has stood by my side
21 through far more than anyone should ever ask. My son, Tony,
22 also here today, who inspires me with his creativity and
23 perseverance daily.

24 And then my three other children who could not be here
25 today; Michelle, Kristen, and Robert, and their amazing

1 spouses. I am continually impressed by the servant leaders
2 they have become. And then of course, I must mention the
3 blessings of four grandchildren. I also want to thank my
4 many friends and colleagues who have helped me in my journey
5 to this moment.

6 The third factor is a deep and abiding love for our
7 great nation. I've spent more than half my life serving our
8 country, with almost a third of that deployed in combat to
9 some far-off land, even as the civilian in support of our
10 national defense. I've had the immense privilege of serving
11 tours at the Pentagon, combating commands, major commands,
12 and sub commands. And as I do today, leading at the
13 installation level, I've also served alongside all our
14 service partners and numerous allies to defend our nation.

15 It is a privilege to be asked to continue to serve in
16 this capacity. The Department of Defense under President
17 Trump is committed to achieving peace through strength.
18 This is our solemn mission. The strength and lethality of
19 our military is built not only on the weapon systems that
20 defend us, but also on the readiness of our service members
21 and their families to accomplish this mission.

22 And to that end, it confirmed, three fundamental
23 principles will guide me. I'm a fighter pilot. I have to
24 keep it simple. The first is to protect the mission. The
25 second is to take care of our people, and the third is to

1 partner for success. Protecting the mission means
2 addressing a wide range of emerging threats to the homeland
3 and our energy supply. We cannot reliably provide the
4 energy and fuel emission requires and expect to modernize
5 our facilities as well. If we continue to do things the
6 same way we always have.

7 Holding the status quo got us to where we are today.
8 So, it's going to take a new mindset and a new collective
9 approach to see different results. Many people believe
10 change is hard, and I would submit change is hard because
11 resistance to change is too easy. We must tackle these
12 incredibly difficult challenges to mission assurance with
13 expanded opportunities to enhance our readiness and
14 resilience while faithfully stewarding the natural resources
15 entrusted to us.

16 The second is taking care of our people. This is more
17 than just quality life. This, to me, is a readiness issue.
18 I know firsthand that our warfighters cannot deliver 100
19 percent of their effort to the mission if they're required
20 to deal with safety and health challenges in their homes.
21 They cannot wonder if the buildings they work in have
22 functioning plumbing or that the cyber-systems and
23 electricity are going to fail. I'm committed to fixing
24 these things now to ensure our critical installation assets
25 globally serve as a force enabler, providing a distinct

1 advantage to our warfighters over our adversaries.

2 Third is partnering for success. The DOD exists in
3 over 800 locations around the globe. This means we need to
4 be good community partners working with both our civic and
5 business leaders to improve the resilience of our military
6 installations inside and outside the fence line. These
7 partnerships promote the value of military installations and
8 strengthen communities and states through collaborative
9 planning and implementation in support of America's
10 military.

11 I commit that, if confirmed, I will work tirelessly to
12 apply these principles to prioritize limited resources to
13 enhance the warfighting capacity and lethality that will
14 deter and if called upon defeat our adversaries. Finally,
15 if confirmed, I will work with this committee and this
16 Congress to provide our armed forces with the capabilities
17 needed to defend and protect our homeland.

18 Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

19 [The prepared statement of Mr. Marks follows:]

20 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you to all of our witnesses for
2 their opening statements, and again, we very much thank the
3 family, and friends who have come to give you support.

4 We now must ask all of you a series of standard
5 questions. This committee poses to all civilian nominees.
6 So, if you would all turn on your speakers and just answer
7 together verbally.

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

10 [Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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

14 [Witnesses answer in the negative.]

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

22 [Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

23 Chairman Wicker: Do you agree to provide records,
24 documents, and electronic communications in a timely manner
25 when requested by this committee, its subcommittees, or

1 other appropriate committees of Congress, and to consult
2 with the requester regarding the basis for any good faith
3 delay or denial in providing such records?

4 [Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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

10 [Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

11 Chairman Wicker: And will you cooperate in providing
12 witnesses and briefers in response to Congressional
13 requests?

14 [Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

15 Chairman Wicker: And, finally, will those witnesses
16 and briefers be protected from reprisal for their testimony
17 or briefings?

18 [Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

19 Chairman Wicker: All right. That concludes those
20 questions, and I would note for the record, satisfactory
21 answers on the part of all four of our witnesses.

22 Okay. I got five minutes. Let's see how well I can do
23 here. Mr. Marks you mentioned facilities. Thank you for
24 doing that. I assume you noticed that I stressed the 4
25 percent requirement contained in the most recent NDAA, and

1 that I mentioned it actually twice. Did you notice that I
2 did sound -- do you think there's a reason that I read that
3 twice?

4 Mr. Marks: Senator, it's vitally important, and I
5 appreciate the conversation we had in your office as well.

6 Chairman Wicker: Okay. Well, if you're confirmed, and
7 I'm sure you will be, will you make sure, and will you
8 commit to this committee that you're going to follow that
9 requirement and actually tend to this?

10 Mr. Marks: Yes, Senator.

11 Chairman Wicker: I very much appreciate that.

12 Now, let's see. Mr. Hansell, let's talk about economic
13 warfare and irregular warfare. You might tell us what your
14 view is of exactly what that is. But I assume you believe
15 that we have a lot more to do in on this issue with regard
16 to our pacing challenge that the Chinese -- but do believe
17 it's time for one person to have the coordinating
18 responsibility for all of this economic warfare and
19 irregular warfare?

20 Mr. Hansell: Senator, I appreciate the question. It's
21 a rather large one. I certainly acknowledge that economic
22 security is national security, but relevant to my portfolio.
23 And what I think you're referencing is the aggressive malign
24 activity, short of armed conflict, that China is conducting.
25 Is the reason of why I've outlined in my opening statement,

1 one of my priorities of providing the Secretary more risk-
2 informed options to compete along the full continuum of
3 conflict. And that would certainly entail an increased
4 focus on irregular warfare.

5 And so, as to the structure, I'm not yet in the
6 Department and can't speak authoritatively about the best
7 structure, but I can tell you from my government experience
8 and the threat that the Chinese activity is incredibly adept
9 at exposing the seams in our government structure. And I
10 think we need very aggressive integrated coordination in
11 order to best leverage our capabilities. And I think that,
12 certainly, economic warfare, that would be an interagency
13 whole-of-government approach.

14 But within DOD itself, I do believe that, if confirmed,
15 my office would be -- I would advocate for my office to have
16 a leadership role in such coordination.

17 Chairman Wicker: Very good.

18 And I'm glad you'll look at that. And you, of course,
19 you cannot assume what you'll find when you get in there.
20 But let me just observe that the DOD has more than a dozen
21 players in this space. And I would hope that perhaps your
22 shop could take a lead role in coordinating all the
23 activities among more than a dozen organizations.

24 Now, Representative Williams, you've got one thing to
25 concentrate on, and that is modernizing our U.S. nuclear

1 weapon stockpile. And working with Chairman Fischer and
2 Ranking Member King in making this the largest civil works
3 project in the history of our government work.

4 I hope you will stay away from ill-advised attempts to
5 undermine the autonomy of the NNSA. Can I have your
6 personal assurance that you'll focus on modernizing the U.S.
7 nuclear weapons stockpile, and oppose any moves to undermine
8 the independence of NNSA, or distract from its core mission,
9 which I just outlined.

10 Mr. Williams: Chairman Wicker, thank you for the
11 question. Yes, I will certainly endeavor, should I be
12 confirmed, to produce the weapons of our strategic
13 deterrence. I'm deeply committed to that. I've been a
14 customer of those and care deeply about that mission.

15 Since the Atomic Energy Commission, going back to the
16 beginning, right after the Manhattan Project, civilian
17 control and independence of our nuclear weapons enterprise
18 has been essential. And I think it's a part of American
19 beliefs that there should be that separation. And I will
20 endeavor, should I be confirmed, to keep that independent.

21 Chairman Wicker: That's helpful.

22 Let me take a bit of liberty here. Mr. Matthews,
23 there's been a problem in the past with DOD OGC, and I
24 certainly hope you're going to help us rectify this. We
25 make requests, we get responses very late from various

1 components of the Department, unnecessary redactions of
2 sentences, long passages in documents that we receive.

3 If confirmed, how would you use your role as General
4 Counsel to ensure that the DOD responds to this committee,
5 as you now promised to do, in full, transparent, and timely
6 manner, and avoid this practice of incomplete, late, and
7 redacted responses?

8 Mr. Matthews: Thank you for the question, Mr.
9 Chairman. I can say that, if confirmed, I'm going to return
10 your phone calls, Mr. Chairman, and those of Ranking Member
11 Reed, or any member of this committee. I view the Congress
12 of the United States as the Board of Directors for the
13 Department of Defense. And I consider it my responsibility,
14 if confirmed, to be responsive.

15 Chairman Wicker: Okay. Well, I appreciate that. You
16 know, we can have a hearing Senator Reed down in the
17 classified SCIF, if we need to, but once we get down there
18 the redactions need to be lifted. And so, I'll leave it at
19 that. And I thank my colleagues for indulging me.

20 Senator Reed.

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

22 Mr. Williams you will be the senior lawyer in the
23 Department of Defense. And Secretary Hegseth has made it
24 very clear in multiple ways that he has not much respect for
25 lawyers. Among his first actions, he dismissed the JAGs for

1 the Army, Navy, and Air Force. And these officers are
2 absolutely critical to guide the Department, particularly in
3 complying with the Law of Armed Conflict and ensuring that
4 the military shares restrictions and rules including that
5 would touch upon any type of domestic deployment.

6 So, Mr. Matthews, do you commit to following the rule
7 of law and the Constitution even if you the Secretary
8 disagrees?

9 Mr. Matthews: Unreservedly, sir? Yes, I do.

10 Senator Reed: Thank you.

11 Do you commit to always exercising your professional
12 legal judgment free of political influence?

13 Mr. Matthews: I do, Senator

14 Senator Reed: Federal law states clearly that no DOD
15 employee may interfere with the provision of independent
16 advice by TJAGs to military service leadership and by JAG
17 officer to commanders. Do you commit to fostering and
18 continuing and protecting this independence?

19 Mr. Matthews: Yes, Senator. I will always follow the
20 law.

21 Senator Reed: Will you ensure that the acting IG will
22 not be influenced or interfered with as he conducts his
23 duties, including the evaluation of Signalgate?

24 Mr. Matthews: If confirmed, Senator, yes, I do.

25 Senator Reed: Thank you very much.

1 Mr. Williams you've been charged with a very
2 challenging assignment; leading NNSA. As I indicated in my
3 opening remarks, in mid-February, 177 employees were laid
4 off, and 153 took early retirement. Now, 150 of those, of
5 the 177 returned, they were called back because they
6 realized, they couldn't function without them. But NNSA has
7 been chronically understaffed for the years. And now, as I
8 mentioned too, there they've declared that DOE will shed
9 8,500 employees, and that boils down to about 500 civilians
10 at NNSA.

11 How can you make the organization function when morale
12 has been spiraling downwards because of these personnel
13 changes and simply the lack of personnel?

14 Mr. Williams: Thank you for the question, Ranking
15 Member Reed. I have read those reports, although I have no
16 firsthand direct knowledge of any of those decisions within
17 the Department of Energy or within NNSA. As I mentioned in
18 my opening statement, the men and women of NNSA are an
19 exceptional organization, I think, actually in human
20 history. And they will be essential to accomplish the scope
21 of the task that's been outlined by this committee the
22 resources that have been entrusted over the last decade of
23 a, of a real rebuilding of it. And I can assure you that I
24 will advocate for the men and women of NNSA that we can
25 accomplish that mission together.

1 Senator Reed: Well, I hope you do, because if you lose
2 500 personnel, you'll be sitting up at night not just
3 worrying, but also watching our weapons.

4 Mr. Hansell, you as the USDIS are responsible for
5 carrying out Section 714 of Title 10, which authorizes the
6 Secretary of Defense to provide protection and personal
7 security in the United States to designated individuals who
8 are under a serious and credible threat to their safety.

9 The most annual -- most recent, excuse me, annual
10 threat assessment of the U.S. intelligence community in
11 March of this year stated Iran seeks to target former and
12 current U.S. officials it believes were involved in the
13 killing of Islamic Revolutionary Guard, Quds Force Commander
14 Qasem Soleimani in January, 2020, and previously has tried
15 to conduct lethal operations in the United States.

16 There are two former Defense officials, Secretary Esper
17 and Joint Chiefs of Staff General Milley, who have had their
18 protection removed. Do you believe that decisions related
19 to whether or not this protection should be based on the
20 assessment of the threat by the intelligence community?

21 Mr. Hansell: Thank you for the question, Senator. I'm
22 very aware of the specific 714 language, and specifically,
23 it's new ability for this Secretary to delegate this
24 responsibility to the Under Secretary for Intelligence
25 Security versus the prior restriction to the Deputy

1 Secretary.

2 And I'm very familiar with the regulation, and that
3 there's two categories, one, that of folks that can receive
4 this benefit because the nature of the position. And second
5 is a population mostly DOD, and DOD retired. That is based
6 on circumstances; one of those being serious, credible
7 threats, the other being overwhelming operational
8 circumstances, and that the law says that that determination
9 shall be made based on a threat assessment.

10 So, to answer your question specifically, the law is
11 clear that a threat assessment should inform that. And I'm
12 also aware of the Congressional notification requirements in
13 that law. And, if confirmed, would intend to follow it as
14 written, and I think additionally, make an overall
15 assessment of the program to ensure we have a sustainable
16 resource sustainable framework that allows us to mitigate
17 risk to force in a standardized way.

18 Senator Reed: So, your view is that the threat
19 assessment should be the predicate for removing or providing
20 protection. Can Congress get the copy of the threat
21 assessment that was used in the decision to take away this
22 protection?

23 Mr. Hansell: Senator, I have no information about
24 historical. I'm not in the Department now, about historical
25 decisions, but if confirmed and if delegated this

1 responsibility, I would have access to those threat
2 assessments and accordance with regulations, would share
3 those.

4 Mr. Williams: Thank you very much.

5 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Reed. Senator
6 Fischer.

7 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank
8 you gentlemen for all putting yourselves forward to serve
9 your country. We deeply appreciate that.

10 The National Nuclear Security Administration, NNSA,
11 designs, builds stores, and disposes of our nation's nuclear
12 weapons. Our stockpile remains safe, secure, effective, and
13 credible thanks to the hard work done every single day by
14 NNSA and our National Security Laboratories.

15 Mr. Williams, I appreciate our earlier conversations
16 and agree that NNSA faces immense challenges. After the end
17 of the Cold War, NNSA infrastructure recapitalization
18 efforts were abandoned, and now we must modernize most of
19 the enterprise without interrupting the production of new
20 nuclear weapons. Many of these facilities are truly one of
21 a kind, and must be custom designed and built to safely
22 process plutonium, uranium, tritium, lithium, anti-high
23 explosives.

24 Fortunately, we are not starting from a blank state.

25 The NNSA has produced an enterprise blueprint that shows all

1 the facilities that need to be built over the next 25 years,
2 and then sequences them in priority, linking them to a new
3 warhead production effort. We also have an opportunity as
4 we build new infrastructure to replace old facilities, some
5 of which date back to the Manhattan Project, to incorporate
6 modern manufacturing processes. We can produce nuclear
7 weapons faster, more efficiently, and reduce risk in that
8 process.

9 Mr. Williams, if confirmed, how would you approach the
10 challenges of recapitalizing NNSA's infrastructure?

11 Mr. Williams: Well, Senator Fischer, thank you for
12 that question. And that is the key question. I think as I
13 have studied the problem, and read the stockpile reports,
14 and read the blueprint enterprise that you mentioned, as
15 well as the GAO reports, CRS reports, I think the scope and
16 scale is, as you describe, we have to deliver the program of
17 record, the lifetime extensions of our existing stockpile,
18 as well as rebuild the infrastructure to modernize.

19 A lot of that comes, I think, through reassessing our
20 relationship with risk. The reevaluating the risk that we
21 take, I think we have to make sure we have the workforce
22 that we retain, the workforce that we have. As I mentioned
23 it's not just a weapon scientist, it's machinist, its
24 technicians.

25 It's every level of the organization that is needed to

1 keep the very special qualities and skills that we have
2 acquired that we can't afford to lose. And then I think it
3 will require leadership focused on the mission. I think one
4 of the things that drives all of us, it certainly drove the
5 Manhattan Project, is understanding the current threat.

6 I think that it's very sobering and awakening for all
7 of us to suddenly be talking about strategic deterrence,
8 talking about threats that we thought perhaps as a nation
9 had gone away 30 years ago. And of course, the men and
10 women, the NNSA never believed that, nor the Combat
11 Commanders of STRATCOM.

12 So, I think there's a focus of the mission and
13 leadership. I think there's innovation, and I think it's
14 focused on the workforce as well as keeping Congress
15 informed that you'll continue to support this mission.

16 Senator Fischer: I hope, if confirmed, that you will
17 look at that leadership, look at the workforce, be able to
18 look at some of the complex construction projects that are
19 out there, and figure out how to improve the management of
20 those as well.

21 Mr. Williams, there are seven life extension programs
22 and major altercations currently underway. These nuclear
23 weapons must be delivered on schedule, and several are
24 synced to new delivery systems that are currently under
25 development by the Department of Defense. So, maintaining

1 that close connection between NNSA and the Department of
2 Defense on these programs, that is key to the success for
3 all the programs that are involved here.

4 If confirmed, how will you ensure that NNSA fully
5 understands the Department of Defense's requirements for
6 these?

7 Mr. Williams: Senator Fischer, thank you for that
8 question. Of course, I'll be participating in the Nuclear
9 Weapons Council. I would like to come out to STRATCOM, meet
10 with the leaders, General Cotton, and the leaders of
11 STRATCOM. They are the most important customer of NNSA. If
12 confirmed, I would very much like to hear their input and
13 have a very transparent conversation with them. There are a
14 great number of details and classified information that I've
15 not been privy to that I look forward to immersing myself in
16 to make sure I understand all the details of delivering
17 what, frankly, our strategic forces require to deter our
18 enemies.

19 So, very committed to work with you and with this
20 committee to make sure I'm following through on all of
21 those, should I be confirmed.

22 Senator Fischer: And your role in that Nuclear Weapons
23 Council is important in that process, if you are confirmed.
24 So, thank you for that.

25 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator Fischer.

1 Senator Hirono.

2 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 Welcome to all of our nominees. I ask the following
4 two initial questions of all nominees before any of my
5 committees to ensure the fitness to serve. So, we'll start
6 with Mr. Matthews, and we'll go right down the line. Since
7 you became a legal adult, have you ever made unwanted
8 requests for sexual favors, or committed any verbal, or
9 physical harassment or assault of a sexual nature? Please,
10 down the line.

11 [Witnesses answer in the negative.]

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

14 [Witnesses answer in the negative.]

15 Senator Hirono: For Mr. Marks, several military
16 training areas very critical to INDOPACOM. These landless
17 leases in Hawaii are set to expire in 2029, right around the
18 corner. These leases, as I mentioned, are critical to
19 ensuring U.S. and allied military forces can adequately
20 train in the Pacific. However, the lands involve also hold
21 cultural significance to the Native Hawaiian community.

22 If confirmed, will you ensure that these negotiations,
23 which will expire, is conducted in a manner that respects
24 local communities and the environment, while still
25 prioritizing military readiness?

1 Mr. Marks: Senator, thank you for that question. I
2 know this is critically important to you. And, yes,
3 Senator, if confirmed, I will work not only with the
4 military services, but the local community. Hawaii plays a
5 very strategic role for INDOPACOM, and I would want to
6 ensure that both the respect of the communities as well as
7 the incredible importance of those training areas is
8 recognized and we find the best possible solution.

9 Senator Hirono. And, in fact, the DOD has recognized
10 the importance of these negotiations. And there is a person
11 name and Noa Kalupi who is charged with making sure that
12 these negotiations include the voices of the community. So,
13 it's good that you are aware or that you will be aware of
14 the necessity of how we're going about things. And I would
15 also note that it is very important to the community that
16 these negotiations occur as transparently as possible so
17 that the community feels as though the military is acting in
18 good faith.

19 And listening to their voices, again for you, the DOD
20 stakeholders are coastally coordinating with the EPA
21 Hawaiian State, Hawaii state agencies, and the public to
22 complete the closure of the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage
23 Facility. And you probably are aware that the, the spills
24 that occurred at the Red Hill facility resulted in some
25 93,000 people being impacted. They had to go to hotels and

1 find other arrangements. This led to a questioning by the
2 community of how the Navy, basically, but to the community,
3 the Navy, the military was conducting it itself.

4 So, will you commit to overseeing the safe, timely
5 closure of Red Hill, which will require taking a transparent
6 role with the public to restore the confidence and the trust
7 of the community in the military?

8 Mr. Marks: Senator, thank you. The transparency is
9 vital to partnership. Good partnership is built on trust
10 and good relationships. And so, Senator, if confirmed, I
11 will commit to work not only with the Navy as this moves
12 forward, to ensure we're taking the proper steps for both
13 mission capability and what is in the best interest of the
14 community.

15 Senator Hirono: And the closing of Red Hill is not
16 over in that there are remediation and environmental issues
17 that still must be addressed. And I would ask that you
18 address them in a timely manner with the resources that will
19 be required.

20 Mr. Marks: Yes, Senator, absolutely. And in fact, it
21 was just a couple weeks ago, I had the privilege of meeting
22 with the Hawaii coordination cell so that they could begin
23 to get me up to speed so that I could understand the issue
24 more thoroughly. And I do appreciate it more deeply.

25 Senator Hirono: I also want to mention that our

1 military base, our installations, I should say, are in
2 various states of disrepair, frankly, and especially in
3 Hawaii, which have aging facilities, energy vulnerabilities,
4 and poor infrastructure. And so, I'm putting into the NDAA
5 a requirement that all of our services conduct or put
6 together a 30-year infrastructure improvement plan so that
7 we have something going forward that will more properly
8 ensure that our infrastructure needs are being addressed and
9 met. So, would you support such a planning process for our
10 services

11 Mr. Marks: Senator, as a strategist, I believe in
12 long-term planning. And so, I appreciate the initiative
13 that you've introduced, and if confirmed would want to work
14 not only with you, this committee, but the services on a way
15 to achieve how we get a greater future look at the
16 investments on our infrastructure.

17 Senator Hirono: Mr. Chairman, could I just ask one
18 question of Mr. Matthews?

19 Chairman Wicker: Oh, sure.

20 Senator Hirono. This won't take long. So, I'm glad
21 that you testified that you will follow the rule of law and
22 the independence of the JAG officers. That's very
23 important. Do you have any concerns about the fact that the
24 military services senior JAG attorneys were fired?

25 Mr. Matthews: Good morning, Senator Hirono. Thank you

1 for the question. Not being in the Department, I wasn't
2 privy to the reason for the decision of Secretary Hegseth to
3 request nominations for the Judge Advocates General. I will
4 say that from my understanding, the Navy TJAG had resigned
5 before the beginning of the administration. So, I don't
6 believe it was actually said he was fired. I think the
7 Secretary requested nominations for the Army and the Air
8 Force Advocate General. I think he acted according to law
9 when he did. So, I would say that I share your concern
10 about the independence of legal advice.

11 Senator Hirono: You can imagine we have some concerns
12 about what happened because no reasons were given. Thank
13 you, Mr. Chairman.

14 Chairman Wicker: Perhaps you can follow up also on the
15 record, Senator Hirono. Thank you very much. Senator
16 Sullivan.

17 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 And I want to thank all the nominees and their
19 families. By the way, some really, really impressive group
20 of nominees, all veterans, all served in incredible
21 capacities, Purple Heart recipients. This is very
22 impressive. So, thank you to all of you. I'm not going to
23 quiz you on the great Billy Mitchell, father of the U.S. Air
24 Force who said that Alaska was the most strategic place in
25 the world. I know you already know all that. I just want

1 from each nominee your commitment to come to Alaska, to see
2 this strategic place and see our wonderful military forces
3 there. Can I get each of you to commit to that starting
4 with you, Mr. Matthews?

5 Mr. Matthews: If confirmed, Senator, it's my first
6 trip.

7 Senator Sullivan: Excellent. Well, that's a great
8 answer. Can anyone else top that?

9 Chairman Wicker: Doesn't have to be the answer.

10 Senator Sullivan: That's a great answer. Maybe you
11 can come before you're confirmed. No, I'm kidding. Good
12 answer.

13 Mr. Hansell: Senator, as I testified to you five years
14 ago about the increased importance in economic national
15 security of the area, I think that trend will continue and
16 thus appropriately. I look forward to visiting.

17 Senator Sullivan: Great. Thank you.

18 Mr. Williams: Senator, I'd be honored. Would likely
19 be in July or August with my fishing gear.

20 Senator Sullivan: No. You're coming in February,
21 where it's 40 below 0.

22 [Laughter.]

23 Mr. Williams: That's so long as we can visit ADAC.
24 I've always heard about it

25 Senator Sullivan: Okay. Well, I'm getting to ADAC

1 here in a minute.

2 Mr. Marks: And, Senator, as we discussed it, as goes
3 Alaska, so goes defense of the homeland. It'd be at an
4 honor to visit Alaska.

5 Senator Sullivan: Right. Thank you. And, again, I
6 really appreciate all the great opening statements. Mr.
7 Matthews, your statement and your family's service. Just
8 remarkable. It's super impressive. I'm glad so many of
9 your family members are there. You and I had a good
10 discussion. You're very smart lawyer. You have a great
11 background. Just to be clear, as we discussed, your
12 loyalty, of course, in this job is to the Constitution,
13 correct?

14 Mr. Matthews: Yes, sir. To the constitutional laws of
15 the United States.

16 Senator Sullivan: Good. Perfect. And you've been
17 doing that your whole career, loyalty to the Constitution
18 and the United States?

19 Mr. Matthews: Yes, sir.

20 Senator Sullivan: Excellent. Let me go to you, Mr.
21 Matthews and Mr. Marks. I want to talk just briefly about
22 the 8(a) contracting program that we talked about in my
23 office.

24 I was recently in the great State of Alabama,
25 Huntsville, Alabama. There's a lot of 8(a) contractors

1 there. You know, this is a program that's been in law for
2 decades. It helps economically disadvantaged communities.
3 But where I don't think it gets a lot of press is just how
4 effective, efficient -- I mean, our military, our Pentagon
5 needs effective, efficient ability to deliver services.

6 These companies in Huntsville, I saw a company, it was
7 Alaska Native company that took a -- the request for an
8 armored wheeled vehicle, a Navy harpoon anti-ship system to
9 combine them together. They did it in two weeks, the
10 design. Then, they had manufacturing done where this new
11 system was out on the beaches of Taiwan in less than a year.
12 And the government gets to keep the IP. All done in
13 Huntsville, Alabama. It was unbelievable. The OEMs, the
14 big primes, it would take them 10 years to do something like
15 that.

16 So, Mr. Matthews and Mr. Marks, can I get your
17 commitment to work with this committee? You know, there's
18 some people out there -- oh, these are DEIs. This has
19 nothing to do with DEI. This is efficient, effective, good
20 for the Pentagon. And I just want to make sure you guys
21 agree with me on that. Can I get your commitments on that?

22 Mr. Matthews: Senator, you have my firm commitment. I
23 think we should not paint for broad brush Alaska Naval
24 corporations particularly have played a unique role in
25 support of the national defense, and we can't ignore that

1 Senator Sullivan: And made it much more effective and
2 efficient and deadly. Correct?

3 Mr. Matthews: Exactly, sir.

4 Senator Sullivan: Mr. Marks?

5 Mr. Marks: Senator, if confirmed, you have my
6 commitment. Anything that can get capability into the hands
7 of the warfighter more quickly, that helps us defend our
8 nation is a vital importance, and we should support that.

9 Senator Sullivan: Great. Let me very quickly talk
10 about ADAC. The INDOPACOM Commander, NORTHCOM commander,
11 CNO of the Navy have all recently testified either in
12 classified or unclassified hearings saying, look, you look
13 at a map, you look at the Russians and the Chinese, how
14 aggressive they're being in the North Pacific in the Arctic.
15 We need to reopen that base. There was a Navy team that was
16 there just last week, and can I get your commitment to work
17 with me on that? And looking at that really, really
18 critical base that used to be a sub base. Senator Hirono
19 was talking about Red Hill. ADAC has one of the largest
20 fuel storage depots anywhere on the planet Earth. It's all
21 infrastructure is still ready available. Can I get your
22 commitment to work with me on that?

23 Mr. Marks: And yes, Senator, you have my commitment,
24 if confirmed.

25 Senator Sullivan: Great. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Sullivan. Senator
2 King.

3 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome to all
4 the nominees.

5 I want to echo Senator Sullivan's comments.
6 Extraordinarily well qualified in the work you have done to
7 serve this country prior to this day as exceptional. I want
8 to express my appreciation and recognition of that. I also,
9 and want to have to go back to our wonderful chairman, John
10 McCain, and remind the Senator that Billy Mitchell was
11 court-martialed, but that's another story,

12 Senator Sullivan: But I think he got his rank back
13 after that.

14 Senator King: This is something that's been going on
15 for 10 years in this committee.

16 Chairman Wicker: Turns out he knew what he was talking
17 about.

18 Senator Sullivan: He did. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 Senator King: Okay. Mr. Williams, I know Senator Reed
20 raised this question, but I'm gravely concerned about this
21 memo that was mentioned on Friday of the possibility of 500
22 people in the NNSA as non-essential. That's 20 percent of
23 the workforce. And the testimony was, it's one of the
24 greatest scientific and engineering organizations in human
25 history. I just don't understand how that wonderful

1 organization, which is that's true, 20 percent are non-
2 essential?

3 By the way, I did a little calculation. That's two-
4 tenths of 1 percent of the NNSA budget is those 500 people.
5 So, what's to be gained by reducing the staff by 20 percent
6 of this essential agency in this moment of the rebuilding of
7 our nuclear triad?

8 Mr. Williams: Senator King, thank you for that
9 question, and for your attention on the workforce, which I
10 think is absolutely critical. If confirmed, I commit to you
11 that I will stand up for the men and women of NNSA that we
12 are that I will advocate for them. We're facing a moment in
13 history where NNSA must perform. And I think there's
14 opportunities for us to innovate at NNSA to deliver on the
15 program of record and the expectations that this committee
16 has set and that will stand up to our adversaries.

17 Senator King: You're absolutely right. This is a no
18 fail mission. And, in fact, because of the modernization
19 program that we're in the midst of, the demands on NSA have
20 never been greater, probably since the founding of the
21 agency. So, I hope you will stand up for that workforce.
22 And by the way, there's an issue here, not only of the
23 people, 500 people being said, they're non-essential. The
24 effect on morale in the workforce, I think is something to
25 be considered.

1 So, I hope you can address this early in your tenure
2 and be sure that the workforce is protected, and that the
3 morale, and the esprit of the agency can be maintained.
4 Will you commit to that?

5 Mr. Williams: Mr. King, if confirmed, I will certainly
6 commit to that. I will tell you that my commitment to this
7 deterrence really did begin in Tiananmen Square in May of
8 1989, and observation of the student protest there. I was
9 in the Pacific on a nuclear submarine during the third
10 crisis of the Taiwan Strait, when the Communist Chinese
11 first launched missiles in the modern age that dropped short
12 and flew over Taiwan in a show of force.

13 In the aftermath of that, as I recall, we sailed a
14 carrier battle group through the Strait of Formosa to show
15 our resolve. And that we can't do that today, that concerns
16 me. This program is of historic importance.

17 Senator King: I couldn't agree more. Mr. Hansell, I
18 always ask intelligent officials the same question. Will
19 you tell the President the truth, even if it's something he
20 doesn't want to hear?

21 Mr. Hansell: Absolutely. I would do so, and I think
22 the President and the Secretary would require me to do so.

23 Senator King: The former DNI Dan Coats put it very
24 succinctly. He said, "The job of the intelligence community
25 is to find the truth and tell the truth." And just

1 parenthetically, who started the war in Ukraine,

2 Mr. Hansell: Senator, it's a military fact that Russia
3 invaded Ukraine, both in 2014 and 2022, as recently outlined
4 in the unclassified ATA, Annual Threat Assessment.

5 Senator King: You just earned my vote. Thank you,
6 sir. Mr. Williams, I'm going to overlook the Harvard Law
7 School experience. I think several other Senators on this
8 committee labor under that disability. Can you recall an
9 occasion in all of your career as a lawyer for the military,
10 when you said no to an officer, that they -- to something,
11 an order that they wanted to pursue that you told them was
12 contrary to the Constitution or the laws of this country?

13 Mr. Matthews: Senator, I typically try to avoid that
14 situation by providing advice in advance. But I can recall
15 experiences where there were violations of the Law of Armed
16 Conflict, which I had to point out when I was in Afghanistan
17 one year when we had platoon leader who was -- had some
18 detainees, and he was making them walk in front of the
19 formation over across IED-infected land. It was a violation
20 of Law of Armed Conflict. It's not how we do it. We
21 separate our prisoners and speed them to the rear. So, that
22 was something that I had to point out.

23 Senator King: And you made it clear and reversed the
24 decision?

25 Mr. Matthews: Oh, there was an investigation. That's

1 correct, sir.

2 Senator King: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator King. Senator
4 Tuberville.

5 Senator Tuberville: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 Thank you, gentlemen, for being here, and your
7 willingness to serve Mr. Marks. I want to talk a little bit
8 about an issue that affects many of our installations across
9 the country, including my home state, Redstone Arsenal,
10 Huntsville. The issue is military construction, better
11 known as MILCON. We need to move fast. And traditional
12 military construction process is way too slow. You know,
13 back at Redstone Arsenal, there are two out warehouses, as
14 we speak, that are going up. One military corps engineers
15 is building, and the other is by the FBI.

16 These warehouses are roughly the same size, but the FBI
17 facility has a lot more bells and whistles, yet the military
18 warehouse is going to take double the amount of time to
19 build and 150 percent over the cost of what it's cost in the
20 FBI building. How on earth does this make sense? It is a
21 disaster, and I'm sure we're having those problems across
22 the country.

23 Can I get your commitment to go and look at this
24 situation? Lieutenant General Chris Mohan, the Commander
25 down there is really looking into this, and I think he could

1 help us with some of this in the future. We need to cut
2 back on the time and the cost on a lot of these buildings,
3 Mr. Marks.

4 Mr. Marks: Senator, thank you for that question, and I
5 couldn't agree more. We absolutely need to look at
6 additional best practices on ways to speed up our MILCON to
7 include how it aligns with our programs. And so, if
8 confirmed, I absolutely would want to dig deeper with you on
9 this to ensure that I see how we can potentially go faster.

10 Senator Tuberville: Thank you.

11 And another quick question for you, Mr. Marks. You
12 recently discussed drone incursions with my staff. Can you
13 tell the committee about that conversation and your
14 experience?

15 Mr. Marks: Senator, thank you. What we have seen
16 across the country, and especially there at Eglin, is an
17 increase in drone activity, and in fact, activities
18 surrounding our installations, whether that is foreign
19 national turnarounds or other investments, things that we
20 need to make.

21 And so, Senator, in the local area at the installation
22 I currently serve at, we've increased our investment to
23 include increased detection capability so that we can then
24 use the authorities that we have been provided at the
25 installation level to defend those installation. And

1 Senator, if confirmed, I would want to see it expanded so
2 that we can work with the combatant commanders to ensure we
3 are defending our local installations here in the homeland.

4 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. Very much needed.

5 Mr. Hansell, as you know, one of the organizations you
6 will oversee is USD(I&S). If you are confirmed, is the
7 Missile and Space Intelligence Center, MSIC, which is a
8 component of the Department of Intelligence. It's located
9 in Huntsville, Alabama. MSIC provides world-class analysis
10 and performance of foreign weapons systems.

11 Mr. Hansell, can you talk a little bit about how
12 important it is for our warfighters to assess the kind of
13 foreign material data that MSIC provide?

14 Mr. Marks: Yes, Senator.

15 Mr. Hansell: I'd first highlight the importance of
16 MSIC, as the important relative to the growing importance of
17 the space domain. It becomes ever more critical to our
18 national security as well, as I think critical intel from
19 MSIC should be used to inform the Golden Dome architecture
20 design at every stage of the milestone.

21 Senator Tuberville: Thank you.

22 Mr. Williams, NNSA has been plagued by cost overrun
23 schedule delays, project cancellation related to
24 construction of nuclear facility, including Ukraine, uranium
25 processing facility, the Savannah River Plutonium Processing

1 facility, and others. If confirmed, what specific steps
2 would you take to ensure that these project management
3 failures are not repeated in the future?

4 Mr. Williams: Thank you, Senator. And that is right
5 at the heart to the plutonium pit production that you
6 mentioned in Savannah River as well. In Los Alamos, you
7 know, is the critical path to restoring our ability to make
8 new nuclear weapons and to ensure the long-life extension of
9 our existing stockpile. There's a number of classified
10 details that I've not been briefed on in that, but that is,
11 I commit to you, should I be confirmed, that is absolutely a
12 commitment to get that back and to deliver for the weapons
13 programs.

14 Senator Tuberville: Thank you.

15 Mr. Matthews, if confirmed, what role would you have in
16 advising the President and the Secretary on reforming the
17 JAG Corps?

18 Mr. Matthews: Thank you, Senator, for the question.
19 If confirmed, I would be a legal advisor to the Secretary of
20 Defense and not to the President unless he asked me. But if
21 the President were to ask me, I would render -- I would
22 consider the question he asked. And in light of the facts
23 and information available to me, I would make a
24 recommendation. The JAG Corps, the Judge Advocate General
25 Corps, the Joint Force, JAG play an important role in

1 ensuring the delivery of military justice, ensuring
2 compliance with the Law of Armed Conflict, a whole myriad of
3 activities. And so, it's important that we get it right.

4 Senator Tuberville: Thank you.

5 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Tuberville. Mr.
6 Marks are you going to visit Huntsville before or after you
7 visit Alaska.

8 [Laughter.]

9 Chairman Wicker: Just take that for the record.
10 Senator Warren.

11 Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and
12 congratulations to all of our nominees.

13 So, after a 2018 Reuters investigation found that
14 military families were living in homes that were filled with
15 mold, pest infestations, and other safety hazards, this
16 committee opened an inquiry and instituted a slate of
17 reforms in 2019 to hold private military housing contractors
18 accountable.

19 One of these reforms was the creation of a Tenant Bill
20 of Rights to ensure that military families have the quality
21 housing that they deserve. Another was the creation of a
22 public database for military families to report when their
23 landlords failed to provide that quality housing. So, I'm
24 glad that the DOD finally created that database called the
25 Housing Feedback System last year. I'm sorry that service

1 members had to wait five years for it. DOD needs to do
2 better to rebuild trust with military families.

3 Mr. Marks, if you are confirmed, it will be your job to
4 make sure that service members and their families have safe,
5 high quality, and affordable housing. So, will you commit
6 to preserving and using DODs Housing Feedback System to hold
7 private military housing contractors accountable?

8 Mr. Marks: Senator, thank you for that. And as
9 someone who has been a military housing resident, I greatly
10 appreciate the additional oversight to include that
11 database, which has been implemented. And I've watched that
12 rollout at the local installation level. If confirmed, you
13 have my commitment we will continue to build transparency
14 and trust with our residents. We owe them that. Good.

15 Senator Warren: I appreciate that, and I appreciate
16 your strong response here.

17 So, while the reforms we've put in place are an
18 important start, military families are still being treated
19 like second-class citizens by unscrupulous landlords at Fort
20 Belvoir. The housing conditions in these private homes were
21 so reprehensible that families couldn't even live there, but
22 the families had to continue paying rent for their unlivable
23 homes while they may do in temporary housing.

24 Mr. Marks, do you agree that military families deserve
25 the same tenant protections provided to their civilian

1 neighbors? So, for example the right to terminate their
2 leases if their landlord fails to address safety hazards, or
3 the right to sue their landlord for relief if their family
4 got sick because of poor conditions in the home?

5 Mr. Marks: Senator, we owe our residents the highest
6 standards of quality in homes and to continue to make robust
7 the both informal and formal dispute resolution processes.
8 And if confirmed, I would want to work with you in this
9 committee to see what we can do.

10 Senator Warren: My question is, should our military
11 families have the same rights that their civilian neighbors
12 have to insist under local and state laws to get protection?

13 Mr. Marks: Senator, I understand there are some laws
14 to include the Enclave Act that needs to be addressed. And
15 so, what I would want to do is, if confirmed, dig deeper to
16 see how we could address that. I do believe that residents
17 do need to have robust rights to include where they live.

18 Senator Warren: Well, you know, we already have a
19 pretty bad example here because these families at Fort
20 Belvoir tried to file claims under the Virginia Consumer and
21 Housing Protection Laws, and their complaints were dismissed
22 because of the Enclave doctrine. This is the doctrine that
23 says on federal lands, tenants may not be entitled to the
24 same rights as other members of the state or community.

25 I want to work with my colleagues to address this in

1 the NDAA, but DOD also recently provided a response to a
2 letter that I sent with Senators Ossoff and Kaine that said
3 the military services already have the authority to require
4 private military housing companies to take corrective action
5 and can negotiate to provide families with additional
6 rights.

7 So, let me ask you, Mr. Marks. Will you work with this
8 committee and the military services to fight for and enforce
9 military families housing protection rights, and ensure they
10 receive the safe and quality high quality housing they're
11 entitled to

12 Mr. Marks: Senator, if confirmed, you have my
13 commitment to work with this committee, you and others, and
14 the services on behalf of our residents. We owe them that
15 for the service that they give our great nation.

16 Senator Warren: I appreciate that, and I hope this is
17 something we'll take up in the NDAA. We have a duty to make
18 sure that military families' homes are safe so they can stay
19 focused on the mission of keeping the rest of us safe. And
20 substandard housing conditions hurt military readiness.
21 That's a problem we could fix. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Warren. Senator
23 Gillibrand.

24 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 Mr. Hansell, currently, there's discussions within the

1 DOD about whether the NNSA and the U.S. Cyber Command should
2 be dual-hatted. Do you believe all of the prior reviews of
3 this arrangement, including one just three years ago, that
4 have found substantial benefits to that structure, or do you
5 feel that this should be reconsidered? And an open
6 question, what's your recommendation for the future
7 arrangement of a dual-hatted arrangement?

8 Mr. Hansell: Thank you for the question, Senator.
9 Without being in the Department, having the most current
10 information, I can't make a full assessment, but I did
11 testify on this five years ago. I'm very aware in the time,
12 in a seating time how robust the capabilities that U.S.
13 CYBERCOM have become and how the criticality of the cyber
14 domain for national security. I am very aware of all the
15 lengthy amount of thought that has gone into this to date,
16 the Dunford Commission and the current SSG implementation
17 guide that Secretary Austin put in place, and would
18 certainly leverage all thinking to date in any analysis.

19 Although I don't have a specific recommendation on
20 this, I do believe just like in the private sector, that
21 every organization to include the defense intelligence and
22 security enterprise has to constantly assess itself to make
23 sure it's aligned with the right tools in our organizational
24 structure to maximize effects.

25 I would just note that I'm very aware of this

1 committee's language that any recommendation to change the
2 dual-hat comes with a need for the both the Secretary and
3 the Chairman to certify no degradation in operational
4 capability to CYBERCOM for our national security. And
5 certainly, if confirmed, and I conduct a review, would
6 advise the Secretary accordingly to that.

7 Senator Gillibrand: OUSD is one of the full-time per
8 participants of the DOD's cross-functional team for
9 anomalous health incidents. A DOD Inspector General report
10 from March '23 recommended a review and update any
11 applicable counterintelligence guidance and policy documents
12 to address AHI-related information and counterintelligence.
13 To my knowledge, this has still not been completed. Will
14 you commit to reviewing and implementing the recommendations
15 of the DOD IG report?

16 Mr. Hansell: I will, Senator, I think it is absolutely
17 critical. I know firsthand the importance of taking care of
18 those that are willing to put themselves on the line in the
19 service of our country. And if confirmed, I would ensure
20 that the defense intelligence enterprise continues to make
21 AHI a counterintelligence-reportable event so that we can
22 determine any relatedness to foreign intelligence service
23 activities.

24 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

25 Mr. Matthews, Secretary Hegseth just took the

1 unbelievable action of firing the Judge Advocates General of
2 the military departments. The senior military lawyers were
3 put in place to provide independent legal advice. The law
4 currently states no officer employee of the Department of
5 Defense may interfere with the ability of a Judge Advocate
6 General to give independent legal advice.

7 I know Senator Reed asked you a similar question and
8 you said that you will follow the law, and you will work to
9 maintain independence. How are your JAGs supposed to feel
10 about this, and how are you going to assure them that they
11 will not be subject to political pressure?

12 Mr. Matthews: Good morning, Senator. Thank you for
13 the question. And thank you for your work on military
14 justice reforms throughout the years. You know, many, JAGs,
15 Senator, it's hard to control them. Because you came up
16 with the special trial council concept and they opposed it.
17 So, when they have an issue, they will not hesitate to speak
18 up, and they will. And it is been my experience. The Judge
19 Advocates and the Joint Force are willing to they have
20 options. They can leave government service, they can become
21 lawyers at corporate law firms or corporations. So, they're
22 going to do the right -- they're not in these jobs for
23 money. So, they're going to do the right thing regardless,
24 Senator. So, I think their moral fiber, their courage,
25 they've been trained to do, to choose the harder right, over

1 the easier one.

2 Senator Gillibrand: Well, we are counting on them to
3 exert their independence, and their legal acumen, and to
4 really strengthen the military justice system, which has not
5 been working well. So, it's on you to make sure they feel
6 supported, to make sure they have the tools and resources
7 they need to make sure they don't feel that they are being
8 politically bullied to certain outcomes.

9 I'm also very concerned that Secretary Hegseth is
10 considering downgrading the Judge Advocate General from 3-
11 stars to 2-stars. I'm sure you are aware that we have 20
12 years of precedent that put that change in place so that
13 they would have independence. Do you think this rank
14 reduction is appropriate?

15 Mr. Matthews: Senator, I think that this Congress gave
16 the Secretary the discretion to determine what grade they
17 serve at. As you well know, Senator, when Senator Graham
18 led the fight to have the Generals serve at the 09 level, it
19 was required that they be at the 09 level. That was
20 changed. We all have agreed that there was two there.
21 Pentagon, it's too top heavy with stars. And so, I think
22 there's an overall assessment of the rank structure within
23 the Department at the headquarters of the Army, Navy, and
24 Air Force.

25 And so, you know, it may be that other principal staff

1 officers on the Army, Navy and Air staffs also lose their
2 grades. And I think the quality of the legal advice is not
3 impacted by the grades that an officer serves at. When I
4 joined the Army, and the Judge Advocates General were 2-
5 stars, and they gave frank advice.

6 And commanders are always going to rely upon their
7 Judge Advocates because they want to stay out of trouble.
8 So, they play a vital role at the commanding commander at
9 the O6 level. So, I think that, you know, rank's important,
10 but more important is the quality of the legal advice that
11 they're going to be issuing.

12 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Matthews.

13 We will be counting on you to bring a military justice
14 system that is worthy of the sacrifice of our men and women
15 who serve.

16 Mr. Matthews: Yes, ma'am.

17 Chairman Wicker: Mr. Matthews, you've made a very
18 frank and honest answer to that question, and appreciate it.
19 Thank you. Senator Gillibrand. Senator Scott.

20 Senator Scott: Thank you, Chairman.

21 Well, first off, congratulations, each of you on your
22 nominations. I know, I think every one of you is going to
23 do a great job. Let me start with Mr. Matthews. I've
24 always had concerns about how much influence JAG officers
25 have. I'd be a little bit different than my colleague has

1 just talked about. But in the combat, how -- you know, so
2 we have people that are responsible for our men and women in
3 uniform to lead them in battle.

4 How much influence does it have a JAG officer on their
5 -- I mean, I understand the JAG officers give them legal
6 advice, but ultimately, they're not the decision-maker. And
7 just you keep hearing stories that the lawyers are making --
8 are running every time that we have to go. We put men and
9 women in harm's way. If we're going to put men and women in
10 harm's way, I want somebody that's a warfighter rather than
11 a JAG officer to be the one that's making the final
12 decision. So, how it actually works?

13 Mr. Matthews: Thank you for the question, Senator. A
14 couple of things. One JAG officers are warfighters. We who
15 wear a uniform, we're part of the Joint Force, we're
16 soldiers. We want to destroy the enemy just like anybody
17 else. What, but JAG officers are running the command,
18 that's a command failure in my opinion, because we're
19 advisors. We only advise the commander. The policy makers
20 should be making decisions that would be as if the counsel
21 to the Senator is telling the Senator what to do. That's
22 not how it works. We can only advise. And so, that's my
23 response, Senator.

24 Senator Scott: So, the decision, the tactical
25 decisions are not made by JAG officers?

1 Mr. Matthews: They should not be. Now, I will say,
2 Senator, in 20 years of counterinsurgency and counter-
3 terrorism operations, we have exercised a great deal of
4 restraint and conduct of combat operations and lethal
5 activities. And so, the law of war is quite permissive, but
6 the ROE, which is policy not a legal requirement, has been
7 quite restrictive.

8 And that's impacted our ability to get after the enemy.
9 Sometimes, we should always adhere for the law of war, of
10 course, distinction and proportionality, military necessity,
11 humanity. But I think we live in a risk-adverse culture.
12 And commanders are always concerned about getting relieved
13 about getting a 15-6 investigation where they killed
14 somebody in a civil incident, and that's going to impact
15 their ability to be promoted. And so, that's an issue that
16 I think you properly identified, Senator.

17 Senator Scott: Thank you, Mr. Hansell, in 2019, we
18 experienced a tragic church attack at the Pensacola Naval
19 Air Station. After that tragic day, I fought hard as
20 Florida's Senator to get legislation passed to ensure we
21 properly vet every foreign national, regardless of the
22 country of origin, or any partnerships we have with these
23 countries. I was glad that we were able to make this get
24 this become law, but we have to remain vigilant.

25 Can you discuss how we can continue to expand security

1 armed bases and protect the brave individuals of our
2 military forces and their families?

3 Mr. Hansell: Absolutely. Senator, being from the
4 Panhandle, very aware of the incident and your fight for the
5 legislation after it. If confirmed, part of my --

6 Senator Scott: Because you know what was happening, it
7 was the military wasn't deciding who was allowed on our
8 base. The State Department was making the decision about
9 who was allowed on our base, not the Department of Defense,
10 which made no sense at all.

11 Mr. Hansell: And as I testified before, and I assume I
12 will more today, is it's these seams in government that we
13 have to really be careful of. And I think after this
14 legislation though, it's very clear about the vetting
15 requirements needed for international military students.
16 And I would say as disturbed as I am about the status of our
17 vetting security clearance, vetting capabilities in the
18 Department right now, there can be no exception about the
19 application of them in securing our personnel.

20 And I would just say in addition to since that
21 incident, there's been new threats arising. And one that is
22 of a concern of mine is this threat of UAS on our
23 installations, and would certainly work with my colleagues
24 in policy and the Counter UAS Task Force to best address
25 that.

1 Senator Scott: Thank you.

2 Mr. Marks, you know, constantly we get reports that our
3 military's not ready to go to battle today. If something
4 happened today, they're not ready to go to battle. So, what
5 are the things that you can do to make sure that our men and
6 women are prepared?

7 Mr. Marks: Senator, I greatly appreciate that
8 question. And one of the greatest ways that, I believe,
9 that we can help our service members is to ensure that the
10 places that they live and work are of a high enough standard
11 in quality, so that they're not distracted by the things
12 that would keep -- take them from their mission preparedness
13 to ensure that they're 100 percent ready to go do the work
14 that they need to do.

15 Senator Scott: Thank you. Thank you, Chairman.

16 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Scott. Senator
17 Rosen.

18 Senator Rosen: Well, thank you, Chairman Wicker,
19 Ranking Member Reed for holding this hearing.

20 And I want to thank Congressman Williams for meeting
21 with me last week. Thank you. I'm going to direct my
22 questions to you, Congressman. You know, the Nevada Test
23 Site, now known as the Nevada National Security Site, NNSS,
24 but we really still call it the Test Site Nevada -- so, I'll
25 defer to that -- it is larger than all NNSA sites combined,

1 and to the ranking member, our site, it's equivalent to the
2 size of the State of Rhode Island. So, but --

3 Senator Reed: High tide or low tide?

4 [Laughter.]

5 Senator Rosen: We'll strike that from the record.
6 There you go. Anyway, the Nevada's Test Site played a
7 critical role in nuclear weapons development. It was
8 ground-zero for the majority of the United States explosive
9 nuclear testing from 1951 to 1992, when 100 atmospheric and
10 828 underground tests were conducted during this era, which
11 we must not ever return to. Millions of people and acres of
12 land were contaminated by radiation.

13 Since President George H. W. Bush signed the moratorium
14 in 1992, the NNSA has utilized the Stockpile Stewardship
15 Program in Nevada's underground laboratory to conduct
16 subcritical experiments to certify the reliability, safety,
17 and effectiveness of our nuclear stockpile. What we're
18 doing in Nevada is working for decades. The directors of
19 the National Laboratories, the commanders of U.S. Strategic
20 Command, the Secretaries of Defense and Energy, including
21 through the entirety of the first Trump administration, have
22 annually certified the military effectiveness of our
23 stockpile.

24 Nonetheless, some in President Trump's orbit have
25 suggested that the U.S. should resume explosive nuclear

1 testing. Can you imagine that despite no evidence
2 supporting this position, and if it is above ground
3 explosive testing, the amount of exposure and destruction
4 would be felt worldwide.

5 So, in addition to placing Nevadans at risk, experts
6 warn that breaking the moratorium would likely prompt Russia
7 and China to follow as they have more to gain from testing
8 than we do. Given our superior scientific and computer
9 modeling capabilities, this could ignite a dangerous,
10 deadly, and costly nuclear arms race for no reason.

11 So, Congressman Williams, if President Trump were to
12 ask your advice about returning to explosive nuclear tests,
13 how would you counsel him on the national security
14 implications, and what would you recommend?

15 Mr. Williams: Senator Rosen, thank you for that
16 question. Thanks very much for hosting me and that
17 conversation. It's very insightful and very much
18 appreciated that as you pointed out we have 928 nuclear
19 tests that we performed, more than any other nation, and we
20 collected more data than anyone else. And it is precisely
21 that data that has underpinned our scientific basis for
22 confirming the stockpile. Since the moratorium in 1992, the
23 decision whether to continue testing critical testing, super
24 critical testing would certainly be above my pay grade,
25 should I be confirmed, as the Administrator

1 Senator Rosen: Would you recommend explosive nuclear
2 testing in place of our subcritical testing that we do at
3 the U1A tunnel effectively in all of these years?

4 Mr. Williams: And sorry to get to my answer is I would
5 not advise thank you testing, and I think we should rely on
6 the scientific information.

7 Senator Rosen: Thank you. I'm going to stay on this
8 because resuming explosive testing at the Nevada National
9 Security Site would risk severe economic and environmental
10 impacts not just in Nevada, but primarily in Nevada, placing
11 more than 2 million people at risk who live in Las Vegas.
12 And not to mention the down winds states going East, we know
13 that at least 32 accidental venting accidents occurred
14 during the last period of underground testing. That's why
15 there's strong statewide bipartisan opposition to testing,
16 including from our Republican governor.

17 So, again, Congressman Williams, how would the risk of
18 radiological release and groundwater contamination posed by
19 underground nuclear testing, along with the risk to Las
20 Vegas economy, feature in your advice to the president if he
21 were even to indicate interest in resuming even below ground
22 or any type of explosive nuclear testing?

23 Mr. Williams: Senator, thank you. The question, my
24 primary concern would be for our deterrents. That we're
25 deterring our enemies, and the environmental impact, of

1 course, would be very important and impactful to the
2 citizens of Nevada. And I think before those kinds of
3 activities were to take place particularly so close to a
4 populated area like Nevada, those would be very important
5 considerations.

6 Senator Rosen: Thank you. Thank you for your time.

7 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Senator Kelly.

8 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 Mr. Hansell, as Under Secretary of Defense for
10 Intelligence and Security, you would be responsible for the
11 overall security of classified information. And recent
12 reporting has highlighted that foreign governments are
13 increasingly trying to exploit recently fired probationary
14 federal employees for classified information. And as you
15 know, some of those probationary employees have actually
16 worked for DOD for some period of time. If they were
17 promoted, they go to the probationary status.

18 And our national security secrets are more at risk now,
19 because -- this is my view on this, because of this
20 administration's sledgehammer approach to our federal
21 workforce. And this is not about the loyalty of our
22 civilian service, but rather about the careless manner in
23 which they were being fired.

24 And while this isn't a new problem, this
25 administration's actions have made it a bigger one. So,

1 already, we're aware of an ongoing effort by the PRC to
2 contact and recruit members of the U.S. military to learn
3 how our military operates so effectively in certain areas.
4 Certainly, combat aviation is one of those. And we have an
5 edge because of our training and our tactics and our, you
6 know, long history, especially in combat aviation, but in
7 other areas as well.

8 We should not be making this information available to
9 our adversaries. So, last year, I introduced a piece of
10 legislation called the No Work with Adversaries Act with
11 Senator Cotton to help try to tackle this problem. And I'm
12 going to be introducing this legislation again next year.
13 So, if confirmed, Mr. Hansell, how do you plan to shore up
14 our military's defenses and ensure service members and DOD
15 civilians are alerted to the threat that's out there from
16 the PRC and our adversaries?

17 Mr. Hansell: I appreciate the question, Senator. And
18 I'm certainly aware of the magnitude and breadth of TTPs,
19 and the agility of the TTPs being used by our adversaries,
20 namely Chinese espionage in this situation. And
21 specifically, very aware of the legislation you've
22 introduced regarding training of some of our fighter
23 aircraft pilots.

24 From outside in, not yet, having been in the
25 Department, I would say is my hypothesis that far. It's

1 most veterans and service members don't have any malice
2 intent. This, I bet the bad apples are far and few between.
3 And I think this is an example where we need to have clear
4 guidance that's understood by service members, and develop
5 the tools that enable them to navigate the commercial space
6 at a speed of relevance. I'm very concerned about the
7 Department's ability in foci identification and mitigation,
8 along a slew of variables in the industrial base. But this
9 would be a perfect example. You know, reading the
10 legislation not only pass through entities, but the amount
11 of subsidy that triggers the legislation is something that I
12 think we have a burden to provide the service members the
13 tools to do the right thing, which I think is their natural
14 instinct.

15 Senator Kelly: Yeah, I agree with you. Most service
16 members do not have any intent to share information, though.
17 Just one, the right person with the right knowledge can do
18 significant damage to our national security. I think it's
19 also important that everybody understands that the risk is
20 out there, and the PRC is actively trying to recruit.

21 You know, my understanding is there have been times
22 where folks think they're working for one company and
23 they're actually working for the PRC. So, getting the
24 information out there is incredibly important. So, I hope
25 you work with us on that.

1 Mr. Williams, recent efforts to eliminate federal
2 workers and contractors could have significant consequences
3 for NNSA's mission. So, how do you assess the impact of
4 potential workforce reductions on stockpile sustainment,
5 non-proliferation, and modernization programs? And briefly,
6 I don't want to go over my 30 seconds.

7 Mr. Williams: Yeah. Thank you for the question,
8 Senator, and thanks also for working with me on NEPA reform
9 issues under the NDAA. I think it was a little over a year
10 ago. You know, if confirmed, I will speak up for the men
11 and women of the NNSA and advocate for them. I think we
12 know how critical they are to restoring our nuclear
13 deterrence, our nuclear weapons enterprise. And so, all of
14 the discussions about personnel, we're rising to meet a
15 historic demand. Right now, I think innovation is key to
16 that. I think efficiency is key to that, but we need the
17 specialized workforce that has been developed at NNSA.

18 Senator Kelly: All right. And I encourage you to push
19 back against any further cuts to our NNSA workforce when it
20 could undermine, especially, the nuclear security mission.
21 Thank you.

22 Chairman Wicker: And thank you very much, Senator
23 Kelly. Senator Slotkin.

24 Senator Slotkin: Thank you, Chairman.

25 Mr. Matthews, I mean, to all the nominees,

1 congratulations. Mr. Matthews, you know, if confirmed, you
2 will be the senior most lawyer in the Department of Defense,
3 an incredibly important job. When the Secretary of Defense
4 and the commander-in-chief want to employ and deploy the
5 Department of Defense, it will come to you to decide whether
6 the requests meet those legal standards.

7 I'm concerned that Secretary Hegseth is looking to
8 chart his own path on legal issues. As I understand it, in
9 March, he brought in his personal lawyer, Timothy Parlatore,
10 to oversee sweeping reforms of the JAG Corps, those
11 thousands of military lawyers in the Department of Defense
12 who meter out how military lawyers are trained, and the
13 decisions that they make. If confirmed, would you be
14 Timothy Parlatore's boss, or would he be your boss? Can you
15 turn on your mic for us?

16 Mr. Matthews: Thank you for question, Senator.
17 Senator, President Trump nominated me to be the chief legal
18 officer of Department of Defense. I will be the chief legal
19 officer of the Department of Defense and the principal staff
20 assistant to the Secretary on all legal matters. And so,
21 I'm not really -- so I've been reading newspaper articles
22 about Mr. Parlatore, but I don't know him. I don't think --
23 he just became a judge advocate. So, I'm not aware of these
24 efforts, but I'll be the chief legal officer of the
25 Department of Defense. Senator, I'm not an empty suit. I'm

1 a serious guy, and I have to speak up.

2 Senator Slotkin: That's what we want. We want the
3 Senate-confirmed official to be the senior lawyer. I hope
4 that his personal lawyer doesn't start to employ sweeping
5 reforms given what the Secretary has already done with the
6 JAG Corps.

7 In that role, which we want you to serve, you'll be
8 asked to meter out really big decisions for the Department
9 of Defense. There are times when Presidents and Secretaries
10 of Defense ask for things that violate the Constitution.
11 And you are standing in the breach making those tough calls,
12 as we discussed in, in our office. So, can you just confirm
13 for me that and a couple of things that if you are told that
14 active-duty military is being asked to bring -- to come in
15 to suppress nonviolent protests in violation of Posse
16 Comitatus, will you determine and advocate that that not be
17 a way the Department of Defense is employed?

18 Mr. Matthews: Senator, I will advise on the law, and
19 I'll tell my clients what the law is.

20 Senator Slotkin: Well, I think the law is pretty clear
21 about active-duty suppressing nonviolent protests in
22 violation of Posse Comitatus. What about U.S. military
23 holding U.S. citizens indefinitely without charge or access
24 to courts? Will you push back on any attempt to use those
25 unlawful powers?

1 Mr. Matthews: Senator, you raised a hypothetical
2 scenario, which is extraordinary. I'm not aware of that
3 occurring today, or --

4 Senator Slotkin: I hope it never happens. We hope it
5 never happens, but it's clearly illegal, right? I mean, the
6 --

7 Mr. Matthews: I can imagine no situation where a U.S.
8 citizen could be held indefinitely without any access to
9 court or due process. I don't see that, Senator.

10 Senator Slotkin: Great. I hope you'll push back on
11 that. What about if you are asked to punish military
12 personnel for expressing lawful political views outside of
13 their official duties, would you advocate for military
14 punishment in that case?

15 Mr. Matthews: So, Senator the General Counsel of
16 Department of Defense, if I'm confirmed, we don't punish
17 anybody. I'm a lawyer. I provide legal --

18 Senator Slotkin: Well, make a recommendation. Your
19 recommendation.

20 Mr. Matthews: So, and what's the scenario, again,
21 Senator?

22 Senator Slotkin: That a member of the military
23 expresses a lawful political view outside of their official
24 duties.

25 Mr. Matthews: I think lawful political view is in the

1 eye of the beholder. Senator, as you know, members of the
2 Joint Force or the Armed Forces have truncated First
3 Amendment rights. So, if they're making disparaging remarks
4 about members of the Senate or of the commander-in-chief,
5 that's an issue that we need to study.

6 Senator Slotkin: So, if in their private life they
7 express a view that they might consider voting for a
8 Democrat, is that something you would recommend advocating
9 some sort of reprimand for?

10 Mr. Matthews: Senator, I don't have anything against
11 Democrats. Not to be flippant, but no -- it's a
12 hypothetical, but I can't imagine a scenario like that,
13 Senator.

14 Senator Slotkin: Well, I mean, we, we see 4-star
15 Generals being fired because of their alleged views, right?
16 We're seeing people remove JAGs. People, I am assuming
17 you've served with, for years, be removed for doing their
18 jobs, because they don't comport with the political views of
19 the Secretary of Defense. So, it's not a hypothetical to
20 ask whether someone's going to be punished for their
21 political views outside of work.

22 Mr. Matthews: Senator, I haven't seen any evidence
23 that the JAGs were removed because of political views. I've
24 not seen that. Maybe you have access to stuff I haven't
25 seen.

1 Senator Slotkin: Well, I think it's -- can we agree?
2 It's highly unusual to remove that many JAGs at once. Have
3 you ever seen in your career the removal of that many JAGs
4 at one time?

5 Mr. Matthews: Again, Senator, one --

6 Senator Slotkin: Have you ever seen it? You've been
7 there for a long time.

8 Mr. Matthews: I have not seen it in my career, but
9 I'll tell you this, that one of the persons of those
10 Advocates General resigned before the administration even
11 started. So, we're talking about two people Senator. And
12 the actions taken by the Secretary were lawful, to my
13 understanding.

14 Senator Slotkin: I'm out of time, so I yield back.

15 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Slotkin. And
16 Senator Peters.

17 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 Mr. Marks in response to an advanced policy questions
19 that was posed to you, you've indicated that you would,
20 "continue to aggressively address PFAS in a comprehensive
21 manner across the Department." I'm certainly glad to hear
22 that. And, certainly, I am glad to hear because it's the
23 top priority for me, particularly with the number of sites
24 that we have in Michigan that need to be addressed. And I'm
25 hopeful we can agree on some expectations.

1 So, I'm going to ask you four questions, and if you can
2 just answer yes or no, this would be incredibly helpful.
3 When it comes to PFAS cleanup, first off, yes or no, would
4 you be willing to remediate where PFAS exceeds federal or
5 state standards?

6 Mr. Marks: Senator, I would adhere to the laws of the
7 standards, and we would remediate to those, if confirmed.

8 Senator Peters: Both federal and state, cleaning up to
9 the extent that meets both federal and state PFAS standards
10 to ensure PFAS Safety?

11 Mr. Marks: Senator, again, we want to clean up to the
12 standards as indicated by law and policy?

13 Senator Peters: And next ensuring remediation is
14 completed efficiently and effectively

15 Mr. Marks: To the degree possible. Absolutely,
16 Senator.

17 Senator Peters: And, finally, improving transparency
18 and engaging with community stakeholders throughout the
19 process.

20 Mr. Marks: Senator Transparency is key. And yes, if
21 confirmed, we would want to uphold that.

22 Senator Peters: Great. And transparency is essential.
23 The one of the frustrations we've had is the communications
24 in our local communities, and I would hope that would be
25 different, if you are confirmed.

1 Mr. Marks: Again, Senator, you have my commitment, if
2 confirmed. We'll work hard on transparency.

3 Senator Peters: Great. Thank you.

4 Mr. Hansell, congratulations on your nomination. I'm
5 glad that we were able to meet in my office prior to this
6 meeting, and talk about priorities related to technology
7 acquisition process in the intelligence community. As we
8 discussed, if you recall, my office, the bulk of new
9 information technology development in the commercial sector
10 the DOD's traditional acquisition practices. And we think
11 they need to be updated and streamlined to quickly adapt and
12 to integrate to commercial technologies that are advancing a
13 whole lot faster than we're seeing in the traditional
14 sources.

15 But this kind of change is particularly challenging for
16 the IC community given the needs for additional safeguards
17 and classification. So, my question for you, sir, is if
18 confirmed, how will you work to speed up commercial
19 technology adoption?

20 Mr. Hansell: Senator, thank you for the question. I'm
21 very aware of it. In my private sector experience, I've
22 seen the challenges highlighted in the FORGED Act. As
23 advisor to DOD IC clients, I saw firsthand the opportunity
24 cost of not enabling decisive action. And in advising
25 private sector clients trying to do business in the

1 intelligence community, Defense Department, I saw the loss
2 of effects of not being a good customer and not cutting the
3 red tape.

4 I agree with you, in areas with more classification,
5 these problems are exasperated. And I think we certainly --
6 the first thing I would do is in line with the FORGED Act,
7 but I think we need to be more aggressive, is make sure
8 there's not an over classification. I've seen too many
9 times where folks are using over classification as a barrier
10 entry to deter competition and that is not getting the best
11 effects down range for the warfighter. We have to stop
12 that.

13 Another example. The red tape is, you know, when
14 between an FCL accreditation, SCIF accreditation, security
15 clearance backlog, when in the private sector, it's
16 sometimes is better to buy a company for accreditation than
17 to go through the process. I think we can agree the process
18 is extremely broken. And what I would do, I think, top two
19 things I would do is, one, I think that there's incredible
20 amount of people out there that want to provide services to
21 the intelligence community, Defense Department, but don't
22 understand the problems which exist because we've overed
23 them. And so, I would work to build bridge with leaders
24 inside industry.

25 Senator Peters: Right. Well, I look forward to

1 working with you, if confirmed, on all of that.

2 Mr. Hansell: Thank you, Senator.

3 Senator Peters: There's a lot to do there.

4 Mr. Williams, the National Nuclear Security
5 Administration, which you have been nominated to head, is
6 responsible for a lot of very big things, as you know.
7 First and foremost, maintaining, enhancing the safety,
8 security, and effectiveness of our nuclear stockpile. It's
9 a big job. And yet, we have Elon Musk and his DOGE that
10 have made, unfortunately, this agency a top target for
11 staffing cuts, which to me, and I think many Americans
12 believe is reckless.

13 So, Mr. Williams, how can the National Nuclear Security
14 Administration protect our most sensitive nuclear assets and
15 meet its additional responsibilities without sufficient
16 staff?

17 Mr. Williams: Thank you, Senator, for the question. I
18 think of course, I'm not in the Department, so I'm not
19 really familiar with what the plans are. I'm not familiar
20 other than the news reports. However, I will commit to you
21 that, should I be confirmed, that I will be an advocate for
22 the men and women of the NNSA. They comprise a unique
23 workforce at a unique period of time when we have to meet
24 the mission of reconstituting our nuclear weapons
25 enterprise. So, that's my commitment, Senator. That I'll

1 be an advocate on behalf of the men and women of the NNSA.

2 Senator Peters: So, I'm out of time, but just real
3 quick. If confirmed, will you allow DOGE to dictate
4 staffing decisions in your agency, if confirmed, or will you
5 push back?

6 Senator Scott: Senator, I'm not aware of how DOGE
7 operates, but the NNSA Act by Congress puts personnel issues
8 under my authority, should I be confirmed as the
9 administrator, and I will be certain to protect and exercise
10 that authority that's given by Congress.

11 Mr. Matthews: Very well. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

12 Chairman Wicker: Senator Shaheen.

13 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome
14 to all of the nominees this morning.

15 Mr. Marks, the former Pease Air Force Base in New
16 Hampshire was one of the first places where PFAS was
17 discovered after the base had been closed. It contaminated
18 the water supply for the City of Portsmouth, and the Air
19 Force was very responsive in coming and helping the city
20 deal with that, putting carbon filters on the wells so that
21 the water was cleaned up. And now they have been cleaning
22 up the groundwater since then. So, I was reassured to hear
23 your responses to Senator Peters about your commitment on
24 PFAS.

25 But I am concerned with reports that I'm hearing from

1 New Hampshire, from those people who are part of the
2 Restoration Advisory Board that DOD's travel policy
3 restrictions are hindering public participation in community
4 PFAS engagement meetings. So, again, I was reassured when
5 you talked, committed to supporting community engagement on
6 this issue, but do you agree that there is a responsibility
7 to meet regularly with those restoration advisory boards,
8 and if possible, to do that in person where possible so that
9 it increases transparency and engagement with communities?

10 Mr. Marks: Senator, thank you for that. I'm
11 unfamiliar directly with that part of the issue. However,
12 partnership is exactly what needs to take place in
13 communities to be successful. And so, if confirmed, I would
14 want to work with the services to better understand why they
15 were not allowed to travel.

16 I understand the orders that have come forth on that,
17 but my understanding is also that mission can go forward.
18 So, I would like to dig deeper, if confirmed, to understand
19 more, but it would be my encouragement to have those in-
20 person meetings. I think they're the most effective
21 methodology.

22 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you. I appreciate that.
23 And I agree, and I would just point out that because of the
24 early recognition of PFAS contamination, Pease was the site
25 where the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry,

1 which is now being cut, did a health study that is still
2 ongoing. It's about to wrap up with, I think, about 9 sites
3 around the country to determine the long-term health effects
4 of PFAS.

5 But for us in New Hampshire, the impact from the former
6 Pease Air Force Base has been significant because there were
7 two childcare centers that were affected by the
8 contamination, and parents were very concerned about what
9 that impact will be long-term on their children.

10 Mr. Matthews, I understand you were present in meetings
11 at the Department of Defense on January 6th, and that you
12 subsequently wrote a report outlining fallacies in previous
13 testimonies to Congress. I appreciate that. But I'd like
14 to know how you intend to ensure that all DOD attorneys
15 provide legal advice that's free from political influence.

16 Mr. Matthews: Thank you, Senator. Senator, I think
17 that that's the standard. That's the expectation that they
18 will be free from political influence. It's your job. And
19 so, I will reinforce that requirement throughout the
20 Department to the extent I can ask that, if confirmed.

21 Senator Shaheen: And you are a member of the Army JAG
22 Corps. Is that correct?

23 Mr. Matthews: I'm a reserve officer in the Army JAG
24 Corps. Yes, ma'am.

25 Senator Shaheen: Well, I'm sure you're aware that the

1 Secretary of Defense fired the Army and Air Force JAGs at
2 the beginning of May, starting at the beginning of May. A
3 number of my colleagues on this panel have requested answers
4 for why that happened. But do you have any knowledge of
5 that?

6 Mr. Matthews: I wasn't at the Department. I have no
7 special insight, ma'am. I do know that the -- my
8 understanding was that Secretary Hegseth announced that the
9 President will be accepting nominations for those positions,
10 Air Force, and Army, and Navy Judge Advocate General, and
11 that the incumbents for the Army and Air Force did resign
12 after it was announced that nominations were being sort.
13 But I have no insight into why that occurred.

14 Senator Shaheen: But just to be clear, do you consider
15 your job as a JAG officer to be political in any way?

16 Mr. Matthews: No, ma'am.

17 Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

18 Mr. Matthews: People in uniforms should stay out of
19 politics, ma'am. That's my view.

20 Senator Shaheen: Well, I appreciate that, and I hope
21 that that's a value that the Department of Defense and
22 Secretary Hegseth will continue to reinforce.

23 Mr. Williams, I just want to follow-up on Senator
24 Peter's question about the firings at NNSA because as he
25 pointed out, there are fewer qualified, experienced

1 personnel now who are safeguarding our nuclear weapons.
2 That when those, the first firings, happened at NNSA of
3 3,000 people who were deemed non-essential, that people had
4 to be hired back because the firings were not targeted
5 enough to recognize who was essential and who wasn't.

6 So, I would hope that if you are confirmed, that you
7 would be very clear about what personnel are essential to
8 ensuring that our nuclear stockpile is safe.

9 Mr. Williams: Senator Shaheen, thank you for that
10 question. Thanks also for visiting the Air Force Research
11 Lab in Rome, New York, where you and I were together a
12 little over a year ago. So, thanks for showing interest in
13 the former Griffith Air Base. I just wanted to tell you
14 that

15 Senator Shaheen: I don't think that was me, Mr.
16 Williams.

17 Mr. Williams: Was it not?

18 Senator Shaheen: It was not.

19 Mr. Williams: I wish it had been.

20 [Laughter.]

21 Mr. Williams: The to answer to your question. The
22 mission of NNSA is so critical right now in our national
23 history. The workforce is absolutely critical to meeting
24 the needs right now. If confirmed, I would work very
25 carefully and closely to see what changes, if any, in

1 personnel and scope would be necessary.

2 Honestly, I would welcome analysis and evaluation of
3 are we innovating? Are we spending money in NNSA in an
4 optimal way? But those decisions, as I've said, I will
5 advocate for the men and women of NNSA, and know that they
6 have special skills and special experience that cannot be
7 easily replicated.

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

9 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Shaheen. Mr.
10 Reed, further questions?

11 Senator Reed: No, Mr. Chairman.

12 Chairman Wicker: This concludes today's hearing. I
13 want to thank our witnesses for their testimony, and again,
14 thank their friends and families for joining us, and for
15 staying with us. For the information of members and staff,
16 questions for the record will be due to the committee within
17 two business days of the conclusion of the hearing. With
18 that, we are adjourned.

19 [Whereupon, at 11:48 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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