



Congressional Hearing  
May 20, 2026

**Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Personnel**

Job No. 1707042-001

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TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
PERSONNEL POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

Wednesday, May 20, 2026

U.S. Senate  
Subcommittee on Personnel  
Committee on Armed Services  
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:30 p.m.,  
in Room SR-222, Russell Senate Office Building, Mr. Tommy  
Tuberville, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

Committee Members Present: Senators Tuberville  
[presiding], Scott, Warren, Hirono, Blumenthal, and Kaine.



1           OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. TOMMY TUBERVILLE, U.S.  
2 SENATOR FROM ALABAMA

3           Senator Tuberville: [Technical issues.] I might as  
4 well turn that on -- willingness to appear before the  
5 committee and discuss the department's priorities,  
6 challenges, and ongoing initiatives. I also want to  
7 recognize what has been a welcome shift back toward a focus  
8 on war fighting readiness standards, and lethality across  
9 the force. Our military exists to deter conflict and, if  
10 necessary, fight and win wars. Strong leadership,  
11 discipline, and mission focus matter to the readiness of  
12 the joint force. And I appreciate your leadership to  
13 reintroduce and reinforce those priorities.

14           At the same time, meaning the personnel and readiness  
15 issues facing the force present significant challenges for  
16 the senior leadership as well as our service members.  
17 While recruiting has improved significantly over the last  
18 two years, and retention remains strong across much of the  
19 force. We cannot afford to become complacent. The  
20 department continues to face long term demographic  
21 challenges, increasing competition from the private sector  
22 and a shrinking pool of Americans eligible for military  
23 service.

24           The strength of our military depends not only on the  
25 weapons systems we feel or the operations we conduct, but

1 on our ability to care for the men and women who serve this  
2 Nation and the families who stand beside them.

3 This subcommittee has spent years working on issues  
4 like military compensation, child care, spouse employment  
5 and professional development because taking care of service  
6 members and their families directly impacts readiness and  
7 retention. As the department continues to make significant  
8 investments across the defense enterprise, it is crucial  
9 that resources remain focused on the quality of life,  
10 health care and personal readiness issues, and most  
11 directly affect service members, military families and  
12 overall force readiness.

13 Today, the military health system faces significant  
14 funding and readiness challenges that threaten access to  
15 care, strain military treatment facilities and jeopardize  
16 the retention of highly skilled medical professionals. At  
17 a time of increasing global threats and growing demands on  
18 our force, we cannot afford to underinvest in the health  
19 care infrastructure that underpins military readiness.  
20 Ensuring stable, significant, sufficient and predictable  
21 funding for the military health system is not simply a  
22 health care issue, it is a national security imperative.

23 Today's hearing also provides an important opportunity  
24 for the committee to hear directly from the department's  
25 civilian leadership on the policies and decisions shaping

1 the force.

2       Too often, military leaders appearing before Congress  
3 are asked to defend or explain policy decisions that  
4 ultimately originate elsewhere within the department. This  
5 hearing gives us the opportunity to discuss those decisions  
6 directly with the officials responsible for developing and  
7 implementing them. I appreciate all of you being here  
8 today, and we look forward to your testimony. Senator  
9 Warren.

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1           STATEMENT OF HON. ELIZABETH WARREN, U.S. SENATOR FROM  
2 MASSACHUSSETS

3           Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank  
4 you to our witnesses for being with us today. Our annual  
5 posture hearing provides an opportunity for the Department  
6 to discuss personnel priorities for the coming year, and  
7 it's also an opportunity for this subcommittee to continue  
8 to focus specifically on the challenges that service  
9 members and their families are facing. That is our job.

10          Since this subcommittee's posture hearing last April,  
11 Secretary Hegseth and President Trump have asked our troops  
12 to risk their lives in an illegal war with Iran, at the  
13 same moment that the administration's actions make life  
14 harder for service members and their families. President  
15 Trump and Secretary Hegseth have badly mismanaged America's  
16 military budget. The Army reportedly needs to make up for  
17 a shortfall of 4 to \$6 billion.

18          Now, to fill that gap, the Army is reportedly looking  
19 to slash training costs across the force, including by  
20 cutting pilots at flight hours, which could have serious  
21 safety consequences. We should ask ourselves, why is there  
22 such a huge gap? And the answer is that the President's  
23 decisions to drag the military into a war with Iran and at  
24 the same time to use the military to do DHS's job at the  
25 southern border. And the gap is getting even wider because

1 the Army still has not been reimbursed by the Department of  
2 Homeland Security for its past support in border  
3 Operations.

4 Now, Secretary Hegseth has also continued to send  
5 chilling messages of who is and who is not welcome in  
6 America's military. So far, despite repeated questions  
7 from Congress, there have been no explanations for multiple  
8 abrupt removal of top military officers. The secretary  
9 also reportedly blocked the promotion of four army officers  
10 to become one-star generals, two of whom are black and two  
11 of whom are women. Secretary Hegseth is also requiring a  
12 review of the, "Effectiveness of having women in ground  
13 combat roles," despite senior enlisted leaders testifying  
14 before this subcommittee in February of this year that  
15 women in combat arms units do not lower standards. And  
16 attacks on university partnerships will limit opportunities  
17 for troops to develop leadership skills and risk gains in  
18 both recruitment and retention.

19 Secretary Hegseth has also continued to undermine the  
20 military justice system. He fired the top military lawyers  
21 shortly after he was confirmed to avoid, "Roadblocks to  
22 President Trump." Those roadblocks are known as the law.  
23 The secretary has sent Judge Advocate General off to work  
24 as immigration judges or Federal prosecutors in Minneapolis  
25 and other cities. He said the Iran war would have, "No

1 stupid rules of engagement." He also launched a, "Ruthless  
2 review of the roles of JAGs." That may simply be one more  
3 way to reduce accountability for potentially illegal  
4 policies.

5 The administration also continues to treat DOD's  
6 civilian workforce with contempt. It is shameful that for  
7 the second year in a row, DOD's budget request fails to  
8 include a dollar of pay raises for civilian employees.  
9 That is shameful. With Trump policies driving up costs for  
10 all Americans, this is a significant pay cut for DOD  
11 civilians who play critical roles in our military, critical  
12 roles supporting service members and families' quality of  
13 life, contracting and acquisition for weapons systems,  
14 engineering, holding together our medical health system as  
15 the chairman identified, and much, much more.

16 Secretary Hegseth is taking other steps that endanger  
17 the health of our troops. Last month, he announced that  
18 DOD would end the mandatory flu vaccine, which has been in  
19 place since 1945. Keep in mind that the flu vaccine was  
20 made mandatory after 20 to 40 percent of the U.S. Army and  
21 Navy personnel fell ill during World War I, resulting in  
22 over 26,000 deaths and significant degradation in military  
23 readiness.

24 Mandatory vaccines in the military date all the way  
25 back to when General George Washington mandated that troops

1 be vaccinated against smallpox back in 1777. Secretary  
2 Hegseth is playing politics with the health and the  
3 readiness of our military, and that is wrong. There is  
4 much to talk about, but I want to focus on two topics with  
5 our witnesses.

6 First, we need to ensure that the contractors  
7 entrusted to administer TRICARE benefits are keeping our  
8 service members and their families healthy, not just using  
9 taxpayer dollars to boost their own bottom lines. Express  
10 Scripts, which is the largest pharmacy benefit manager in  
11 the United States, has held the TRICARE pharmacy contract  
12 for 20 years now.

13 And over that time, Express Scripts has forced  
14 thousands of pharmacies out of the TRICARE network, which  
15 makes it a whole lot harder for service members to fill  
16 prescriptions. But it likely boosts the orders and the  
17 profits for Express Scripts mail order pharmacy.

18 For years, I've been calling for more transparency  
19 into the TRICARE pharmacy contract. But DOD has carefully  
20 protected the interests of Express Scripts at every single  
21 step. It is time for TRICARE to put the interests of our  
22 service members first. They should do it on their own, but  
23 if they don't, then Congress should force them to do so.

24 Second, we need to have protections in place for  
25 service members to report serious concerns to protected

1 channels without fear of reprisal. Military families have  
2 long dealt with terrible living conditions in housing that  
3 is owned by private military contractors. But those  
4 private companies have muzzled families by forcing them to  
5 sign non-disclosure agreements to get compensation for the  
6 damages that they have suffered.

7 I appreciate that one of the Department's legislative  
8 proposals for this year's NDAA would be to make clear that  
9 tenants are protected from reprisals for reporting  
10 dangerous and disgusting housing conditions to an Inspector  
11 General, to Congress, or to the Department of Defense. But  
12 we shouldn't stop there. We must make clear to service  
13 members, including in other contexts, where they're forced  
14 to sign NDAs, that they still have the right to report  
15 serious violations of the law, to report gross wastes of  
16 money, abuse, serious threats to public safety, and to do  
17 it all through protected channels.

18 We also need to make sure that we are protecting  
19 service members who come forward to report serious concerns  
20 to troop safety and health, such as unsafe weapons or  
21 aircraft systems, so they can report to Congress, to DOD  
22 and to the IG. Safety of our troops and the efficient  
23 operation of DOD should be at the top of our list. And  
24 that means protecting people who have the courage to call  
25 out problems and make us aware of them. So, I look forward

1 to discussing these topics with our witnesses. Thank you,  
2 Mr. Chairman.

3 Senator Tuberville: Thank you, Senator Warren. Now  
4 we'll turn to our opening statements. The Honorable  
5 Anthony Tata, Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and  
6 Readiness.

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1 STATEMENT OF HONORABLE ANTHONY J. TATA, UNDER  
2 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS

3 Mr. Tata: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon,  
4 Chairman Tuberville, Ranking Member Warren, distinguished  
5 members of the personnel subcommittee. Thank you and your  
6 staff for the opportunity to testify today and for your  
7 shared resolve to care for our service members, their  
8 families, and Department of War civilians and to ensure  
9 that our military remains ready, lethal, and unmatched.

10 When patriotic young Americans answer the call to  
11 defend our Nation, we answer a call of our own, to look  
12 after them and the families who serve and sacrifice  
13 alongside them. This includes our fallen heroes and their  
14 loved ones. They will never be forgotten. President Trump  
15 and Secretary Hegseth have prioritized the well-being and  
16 preparedness of our warriors from day one.

17 Since last July, my team and I have focused on  
18 optimizing personnel and readiness policies in line with  
19 their guidance. We have taken swift action to deliver  
20 tangible outcomes that directly improved the lives of the  
21 people we serve. For example, we have enabled historic  
22 recruiting successes and strong retention rates through  
23 innovative initiatives like MAPS in a box. Expanded our  
24 partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs,  
25 striving to expedite the transfer of electronic health

1 records. Created an Aviation Mishap Task Force to address  
2 concerning trends in aviation. And more recently,  
3 authorized the evacuation of military civilian families in  
4 Bahrain, helping to coordinate safe moves and continuous  
5 access to education. Indeed, a service member who knows  
6 their family is well cared for is one who is focused on  
7 their mission.

8 With this as a governing principle, we will continue  
9 to ensure that our warriors and their families have access  
10 to high quality health care, sound education for their  
11 children, food security, and meaningful employment  
12 opportunities. Meanwhile, we are working to reshore the  
13 pharmaceutical supply chain for military essential  
14 medications. Transform the Department of War education  
15 activity to better serve our students. Revitalize  
16 professional military education in line with our core war  
17 fighting mission. Modernize the Defense Commissary Agency  
18 and establish Project Patriot Pipeline to develop mission  
19 critical skills for the department and the Defense  
20 Industrial Base.

21 The President's historic \$1.5 trillion budget enables  
22 further investments in these activities, allowing us to  
23 build on hard earned gains that will benefit our military  
24 community and our mission for years to come. Under the  
25 leadership of President Trump and Secretary Hegseth, the

1 department has made strong progress. With your support, we  
2 will keep advancing the policies and programs that enable  
3 our people to thrive and the force to remain ready. Thank  
4 you again for the opportunity to testify today. I look  
5 forward to answering your questions.

6 [The prepared statement of Mr. Tata follows:]

7 [SUBCOMMITTEE INSERT]

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1           Senator Tuberville: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. The  
2 next is Honorable Tim Dill, Assistant Secretary of Defense  
3 for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. Secretary.

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1 STATEMENT OF HONORABLE TIMOTHY D. DILL, ASSISTANT  
2 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS

3 Mr. Dill: Chairman Tuberville, Ranking Member Warren  
4 and distinguished members of the personnel subcommittee,  
5 thank you for the opportunity to speak about the heartbeat  
6 of the Department of War, our men and women in uniform, our  
7 civilian workforce and their families. My team is guided  
8 by President Trump's directive to achieve peace through  
9 strength and Secretary Hegseth's three key pillars,  
10 restoring the warrior ethos, rebuilding our military, and  
11 reestablishing deterrence.

12 I'm grateful for Secretary Hegseth and Under Secretary  
13 Tata's leadership in accomplishing these tasks. As a  
14 former Green Beret, I constantly remember the first of  
15 United States Special Operations Command soft troops.  
16 Humans are more important than hardware. The department  
17 must attract, develop, employ and retain the finest talent  
18 by offering a meaningful mission, setting high  
19 uncompromising standards and taking care of our people.  
20 We're succeeding on that front. In Fiscal Year 2025, the  
21 military's recruiting efforts broke records with all  
22 active-duty services meeting the recruiting and retention  
23 goals. That momentum continues in Fiscal Year 2026.

24 We can never fully compensate our service members for  
25 their sacrifices, but we must ensure they're financially

1 secure. Our recent review confirms the department's total  
2 military compensation package is strongly competitive with  
3 the civilian labor market. To reward our top civilian  
4 performers, the department recently processed more than  
5 90,000 cash awards.

6 We are expanding spouse education and career  
7 development opportunities and removing unnecessary  
8 regulations to reduce military spouse unemployment,  
9 increasing child care opportunities, and focusing our DoDEA  
10 schools on core academic excellence and transparency with  
11 parents.

12 I have witnessed firsthand the bravery, sacrifice and  
13 resilience of our men and women in uniform, our civilian  
14 personnel and their families, and I am privileged to serve  
15 them. They are the reason the American military is the  
16 most lethal fighting force in history. May God bless our  
17 troops, and I look forward to your questions.

18 [The prepared statement of Mr. Dill follows:]

19 [SUBCOMMITTEE INSERT]

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1           Senator Tuberville: Thank you very much. Next, we  
2 have the Honorable Keith Bass, Assistant Secretary of  
3 Defense for Health Affairs.

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1 STATEMENT OF HONORABLE KEITH M. BASS, ASSISTANT  
2 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR HEALTH AFFAIRS

3 Mr. Bass: Chairman Tuberville, Ranking Member Warren  
4 and distinguished members of this committee, thank you for  
5 this opportunity to represent the 130,000 men and women of  
6 the military health system.

7 The President's Fiscal Year budget 2027 is a direct  
8 investment in our most vital military asset, our people.  
9 This budget equipped the department to counter evolving  
10 threats and most importantly, to safeguard the health and  
11 well-being of our service members. A medically ready force  
12 is a lethal force, and to that end, our primary focus is on  
13 ensuring our medical personnel are strategically positioned  
14 to enhance force readiness and maintain the critical  
15 clinical skills required for combat casualty care.

16 To further this objective, we are strengthening our  
17 strategic partnership with the Department of Veterans  
18 Affairs. These collaborations are vital. They enable the  
19 delivery of joint health care services, optimize the use of  
20 taxpayer resources, and enhance the patient access across  
21 both systems, ensuring a seamless continuum care for our  
22 Nation's heroes.

23 The proposed budget funds critical combat support  
24 requirements, including our blood program, joint trauma  
25 care, and medical logistics. These investments allow for

1 rapid deployment of life saving technologies to support our  
2 medical personnel in the most austere and remote locations.

3 With the continued and invaluable support of Congress,  
4 we are making significant investments in the military's  
5 medical research, and development. These efforts directly  
6 address the unique threats our warfighters face, with  
7 particular focus on advancing brain health and expanding  
8 access to mental health care services.

9 Finally, we are taking decisive action to remedy the  
10 TRICARE transition issues. My leadership team is  
11 aggressively focused on enhanced contract oversight,  
12 process improvement, accountability at all levels to ensure  
13 that no member of our community faces unnecessary delays in  
14 receiving care. We are redoubling our efforts to ensure  
15 beneficiaries are aware of resolution channels, including  
16 our dedicated TRICARE benefits counselors and patient  
17 advocates to address any issues with billing, access or  
18 quality of care.

19 Our warfighters, past and present, and their families  
20 deserve a health care system they can depend on without  
21 reservation. I'm grateful for the enduring partnership and  
22 the support of this committee has provided to the  
23 department and to the military health system. Thank you,  
24 and I look forward to your questions.

25 [The prepared statement of Mr. Bass follows:]

1 [SUBCOMMITTEE INSERT]

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1           Senator Tuberville: Thank you very much. The next is  
2 Honorable Maurice Todd, Assistant Secretary of Defense for  
3 Readiness.

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1           STATEMENT OF GENERAL HONORABLE MAURICE L. TODD,  
2 ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR READINESS

3           Mr. Todd: Chairman Tuberville, Ranking Member Warren  
4 and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you  
5 for the opportunity to testify today on the readiness of  
6 our total force.

7           As we navigate a strategic landscape defined by  
8 persistent competition and accelerating technological  
9 change, the partnership between the department and this  
10 committee has never been more vital to our national  
11 defense. Our National Defense Strategy demands a joint,  
12 disciplined force that is lethal, agile, and decisively  
13 superior, ensuring our warfighters can deploy, fight, and  
14 win in any conflict. My office is committed to translating  
15 that strategic imperative into operational and tactical  
16 reality.

17           Over the past year, our direct partnership with this  
18 committee has yielded significant, tangible wins in our  
19 readiness enterprise. By executing our strategic  
20 priorities and applying resources precisely where they  
21 generate the greatest operational impact, we are  
22 maintaining a proactive, dominant posture across the globe.  
23 This deliberate allocation of resources and readiness  
24 capabilities does more than maximize our combat credibility  
25 and readiness. It builds vital trust with the American

1 people and takes care of our warfighters.

2 We are seeing the results of this unified effort  
3 through several critical wins. In aviation and operational  
4 safety, we are aggressively prioritizing mishap prevention  
5 to protect our air crews. Through the new Aviation Mishap  
6 Task Force, we are examining mishaps to identify critical  
7 safety issues and solutions to improve aviation safety  
8 throughout the force.

9 We have also refocused military education and training  
10 standards to restore the warrior ethos, to forge the  
11 intellectual and tactical readiness of the total force,  
12 recognizing that our true advantage is the intellect and  
13 resilience of our warfighters. By fundamentally refocusing  
14 professional military education on mission relevant  
15 curricula, we are ensuring our warfighters have the  
16 dedicated time to master the skills required to outthink  
17 and outfight any adversary.

18 In human performance and brain health, we are  
19 aggressively mitigating risks to brain health from blast  
20 overpressure. We have established cognitive baselining at  
21 all initial military training sites and are modernizing how  
22 we track lifetime exposures. Thanks to your partnership in  
23 the Fiscal Year 2025 NDAA, we are developing blast specific  
24 safety thresholds and deploying new blast safety officers  
25 across the force. We are actively promoting a culture of

1 safety across the enterprise by tackling systemic risks  
2 head on to protect our most valuable asset, our people.

3 Ultimately, the shared focus guarantees that our total  
4 force is ready to deter aggression and, if called upon, to  
5 prevail decisively against any threat to American  
6 interests.

7 As a public servant to the American people, I am  
8 deeply committed to this mission and to our continued  
9 partnership to ensure the readiness of our warfighters.  
10 Thank you for your continued partnership, and I look  
11 forward to your questions.

12 [The prepared statement of Mr. Todd follows:]

13 [SUBCOMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Tuberville: Thank you very much. As we start  
2 here, we'll just go through a round of questioning. Mr.  
3 Tata, recently we heard about a project you've been working  
4 on called Project Patriot Pipeline. Could you explain to  
5 us what that is?

6 Mr. Tata: Thank you, Chairman, and thank you for your  
7 and the ranking member's commitment and this committee's  
8 commitment to our men and women in uniform. Project  
9 Patriot Pipeline is a direct result of the Secretary's  
10 focus on the Arsenal of Freedom, as he has traveled around  
11 the country to bolster our Defense Industrial Base. We and  
12 the personnel in Readiness domain asked ourselves the  
13 questions, "How are we going to resource this with the  
14 talent necessary to expand the Arsenal of Freedom and  
15 complete the mission, and indeed to align presidential  
16 priorities and personnel policy?"

17 And so, what we've done is we've taken a look at  
18 several different work streams. You have active National  
19 Guard Reserve, you have spouses and you have civilian  
20 workforce that we are charged with managing. And within  
21 each one, we want to encourage reenlistment, and we want to  
22 encourage reenlistment into those high demand, low density  
23 military occupational skills such as Patriot, Cyber and  
24 Aviation maintainer, and we are aligning bonuses with the  
25 services to ensure that we are encouraging folks to

1 reenlist within those key high demand, low density MOSs.  
2 Within if they choose to leave service, we want to capture  
3 that training and investment that we made in their  
4 training, so that we're able to keep that half million or  
5 million dollars that we put into that individual.

6 And if they're an aviation maintainer in the military,  
7 we want them to be a depot aviation maintainer. And so, we  
8 are tweaking tuition assistance and skill bridge time to be  
9 able to incentivize folks that want to migrate into the  
10 Defense Industrial Base, to try to incentivize them into  
11 those key skill sets.

12 We have a real issue with our aviation depot  
13 maintainers. We're going to drop off the cliff here pretty  
14 soon and demand is going to go way up, depending upon the  
15 platform that we're talking about. And so, we are trying  
16 to get ahead of that by incentivizing people if they are  
17 going to leave, to stay within the Defense Industrial Base.

18 And I include health care, education in the Defense  
19 Industrial Base as well. And so, we are incentivizing  
20 people through tuition assistance, through extra time and  
21 skill bridge. Come down to military spouses we have a huge  
22 military spouse employment effort going on. We're  
23 rebranding it as Spouse Works, where we have the skill  
24 bridge like program that they can do the internships and  
25 then begin to work.

1           We have money where we can pay for scholarships.  
2 We're going to increase that to incentivize them to go into  
3 the Defense Industrial Base, whether that's health care,  
4 education, aviation maintainer, welder, shipbuilder. All  
5 of that to us, our spouses and -- deserve these  
6 opportunities. And we've allowed for direct hiring  
7 authority in many of these areas to help with the Patriot  
8 Pipeline, as we call it.

9           In the third, the civilian workforce we want them to  
10 re-enlist, so to speak, and re-up within the civilian  
11 domain, to go into things such as the Golden Dome, Cyber  
12 and these real critical, high demand, low density areas  
13 where we need the real talent. And so, it's a holistic  
14 approach from when someone comes in. We're trying to  
15 incentivize them through bonuses into these critical, high  
16 demand, low density areas. We're trying to keep them in  
17 which we're doing. And recruiting and retention are going  
18 very well right now.

19           And then to the very end when they choose to get out,  
20 if that's 3 years or 30 years, we've invested a lot of  
21 money in that professional military education. We want  
22 them to stay or a spouse. We want that person to be able  
23 to work in the Defense Industrial Base and make our country  
24 stronger, make that Arsenal of Freedom stronger. And then  
25 likewise with our civilian workforce.

1           So that's it in a nutshell. We are trying to  
2 complement the Secretary's efforts and Under Secretary  
3 Duffey's efforts in the Arsenal of Freedom to undergird it  
4 with the talent necessary to run the Arsenal of Freedom.

5           Senator Tuberville: Thank you. Senator Warren.

6           Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The TRICARE  
7 pharmacy benefit helps 9 million service members, veterans  
8 and their families access prescription drugs. TRICARE  
9 pharmacy contractor Express Scripts decides which  
10 pharmacies are included in the TRICARE network and decides  
11 what they're going to get paid. And of course, Express  
12 Scripts is supposed to work for the DOD and for military  
13 families. That's what taxpayers pay Express Scripts to do.

14           Express Scripts also runs its own pharmacy that  
15 participates in the TRICARE network, a competitor to every  
16 other pharmacy. And that means that Express Scripts both  
17 provides pharmacy services to TRICARE members directly and  
18 sets the reimbursement rates for itself and all of its  
19 competitors. That gives Express Scripts an incentive to  
20 under reimburse all of the competing pharmacies and inflate  
21 its own payments.

22           So how is that deal working out for the taxpayers?  
23 Express Scripts reportedly charged DOD \$484 more on average  
24 for generic drugs dispensed by the Express Scripts owned  
25 pharmacy. Meanwhile, Express Scripts has offered

1 unaffiliated pharmacies such terrible terms that since  
2 2022, nearly 13,000 retail pharmacies have just left the  
3 TRICARE network. They've just said, "We can't be part of  
4 this."

5 So, Assistant Secretary Bass, you lead the Defense  
6 Health Agency, which oversees this contract that I'm  
7 talking about. Are you concerned that Express Scripts  
8 appears to be steering service members to the pharmacies  
9 that it owns and overcharging American taxpayers?

10 Mr. Bass: Thank you, Ranking Member Warren. I  
11 appreciate your support. And I understand that this is an  
12 important issue. The department continues to look at this  
13 in review. And as you're aware, this TRICARE PBM is  
14 different than a normal PBM. It provides administrative  
15 services only as a contract management mechanism for the  
16 department. It does claims, mail order pharmacy and is  
17 paid a fixed fee for each of the prescriptions. The  
18 Department of War controls the pricing and retains the cost  
19 savings. We understand the concerns and we welcome the  
20 opportunity to work with you and your staff --

21 Senator Warren: I'm sorry, could I have an answer to  
22 my question? I am concerned that we've got a pharmacy  
23 benefit manager here who competes with a bunch of America's  
24 pharmacies, and it's the one that is doing the pricing, and  
25 it's the one that's deciding who else the competition will

1 be. That seems like, to me, a perfect way to be able to  
2 advantage yourself, disadvantage everyone else.

3 And look, I'm not just making that up. I've got two  
4 pieces of evidence, \$484 more per average that we're paying  
5 now on these generic drugs and 13,000 pharmacies across  
6 this country that have just said, "You won't pay me enough  
7 so I've got to leave the entire system." Which cuts down  
8 on service for our military members. And are you telling  
9 me, "Oh, you're thinking about it?" You've had 20 years to  
10 think about this.

11 Mr. Bass: The department continues to evaluate this  
12 budget, it reviews and works with the contractor to ensure  
13 that it's within the guidelines of the --

14 Senator Warren: Well, you're working with the  
15 contractor. How's that working out? How do you explain  
16 \$484 on average more for generic drugs?

17 Mr. Bass: Thank you. Senator. I'm not aware of the  
18 cost discrepancy --

19 Senator Warren: Okay. Then how do you explain 13,000  
20 pharmacies actually leaving the whole system? Just saying,  
21 "You won't even pay me enough to make it worthwhile."

22 Mr. Bass: The contractor is meeting its contractual  
23 requirements.

24 Senator Warren: What are you saying about 13,000  
25 pharmacies leaving this whole system and they can't fill

1 prescriptions now for our military and for our veterans.

2 You're okay with that?

3 Mr. Bass: No, ma'am. Our priority is to make sure  
4 all of our beneficiaries, the 9.6 million, get the coverage  
5 that they deserve and the benefits they deserve.

6 Senator Warren: Well, I think they deserve a lot more  
7 than what you're delivering for them. And I want to know  
8 when you're going to get better at this. Look, what we're  
9 talking about here is a blatant conflict of interest. Our  
10 job in this Senate subcommittee is oversight, and that's  
11 why it is -- for years now, I've been calling for more  
12 transparency to ensure that Express Scripts isn't favoring  
13 itself and its own subsidiaries, and under-reimbursing the  
14 independent pharmacies in the hopes that it can drive them  
15 out of the TRICARE business altogether and just have more  
16 of the business for themselves.

17 I have been met with obstruction every step of the way  
18 from our own Department of Defense. So let me ask you  
19 another question Secretary Bass, will you disclose the  
20 differences between TRICARE reimbursement rates and fees  
21 and other price concessions between what it's paying  
22 pharmacies and what it's paying itself?

23 Mr. Bass: Thank you, Ranking Member Warren. I commit  
24 to working with you and your staff in providing the data  
25 that you're --

1 Senator Warren: You'll give me that data?

2 Mr. Bass: I will work with you and your staff --

3 Senator Bass: I'm going to hold you to that. So  
4 Express Scripts pattern of bad behavior speaks for itself.  
5 In addition to the news reports that I've already  
6 mentioned, an audit by the Office of Inspector General for  
7 the Office of Personnel Management, found that Express  
8 Scripts overcharged American Postal Workers Union and the  
9 Federal Employees Health Benefits Program by about \$45  
10 million, and the Government Accountability Office found,  
11 "Persistent inconsistencies in the data that express  
12 scripts provided to DOD, which DOD is supposed to be  
13 validating on its own but failed to catch."

14 So, Secretary Bass, given the long history of  
15 infractions by Express Scripts that I just read to you,  
16 will you commit to annual audits of the TRICARE pharmacy  
17 contract to ensure that taxpayer dollars are not being  
18 wasted?

19 Mr. Bass: Yes. I commit to doing, annual review of  
20 the contract.

21 Senator Warren: Good. And then will you let us see  
22 those annual audits?

23 Mr. Bass: I commit to working with you and your staff  
24 --

25 Senator Warren: No. Will you let us see them. I

1 don't want to hear about them and hear your summary. I  
2 want to see the audits. Do I have that commitment?

3 Mr. Bass: I will work with you and your staff --

4 Senator Warren: Is that a yes?

5 Mr. Bass: Yes.

6 Senator Warren: Good. Thank you. That wasn't so  
7 bad. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I apologize for running  
8 over. I just want to finish up by saying, the current  
9 TRICARE contract with Express Scripts expires in 2029. And  
10 DOD right now is in the acquisition planning phase for the  
11 next generation contract. As it builds the requirements  
12 for this new contract, DOD cannot continue to ignore this  
13 conflict of interest that arises when a company owns both a  
14 PBM that is the one directing the payments and a pharmacy.  
15 That has got to stop.

16 And in the meantime, existing contracts should be  
17 regularly audited and subjected to much greater  
18 transparency to try to beat this kind of conflict out of  
19 the system. I look forward to working with DOD on this and  
20 serving the best interests of the 9 million American  
21 service members, veterans and their families who are  
22 depending on us. Thank you. I appreciate it, Secretary  
23 Bass. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for the extra  
24 time.

25 Senator Tuberville: Thank you, Senator Warren.

1 Senator Hirono.

2 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary  
3 Tata, the Trump regime has repeatedly attempted to reshape  
4 our Federal vaccine policies in direct conflict with  
5 science and leading public health experts. Now, it seems  
6 those misguided -- as far as I'm concerned -- policies are  
7 seeping into the military. First, Secretary Hegseth has  
8 waived the Covid 19 vaccine requirements. And now, just  
9 last month, he overturned the annual flu vaccine mandate,  
10 which has been DOD policy since the early 1950s, over 70  
11 years.

12 Of course, there is a reason for the flu vaccine  
13 requirement. Military personnel frequently live and work  
14 in close quarters, particularly on ships, making them  
15 highly susceptible to rapid disease transmission.  
16 Secretary Tata, do you know who funded the invention of the  
17 first flu vaccine?

18 Mr. Tata: Senator, thank you for the question. Thank  
19 you for the concern for our soldiers. I believe World War  
20 1 was when the U.S. Army created the flu vaccine. And --

21 Senator Hirono: Yes. So, the U.S. Army in the 1930s  
22 and '40s. And do you know why the Army did this?

23 Mr. Tata: Because they wanted to stop the spread of  
24 infectious disease.

25 Senator Hirono: So, does that concern still not

1 exist? Because what's going to happen when getting the flu  
2 vaccine becomes optional. In fact, what new peer reviewed  
3 literature does the department rely on to support  
4 overturning the flu vaccine requirement, and how many  
5 service members of the 1. -- I don't know that millions.  
6 There are 1.8 million, 2.8 million active duty and almost a  
7 million reserves and civilians within DOD?

8 So, what peer review study led to this change in the  
9 flu vaccine requirement? And how many service members do  
10 you expect will now not get the flu vaccine as a result of  
11 this optional policy?

12 Mr. Tata: Senator, thank you for the opportunity to  
13 comment on this. We, under the Secretary's guidance, went  
14 to the services. We asked the services to come back to us  
15 with a list of exceptions to the policy that they wish us  
16 to pursue. We are collecting those exceptions right now,  
17 and as you might expect, the services have come back with a  
18 robust set of exceptions that we are still in the Pre-  
19 decisional draft stage. We're talking about submarines,  
20 we're talking about ships, we're talking about basic  
21 training, we're talking about Ranger school, we're talking  
22 about --

23 Senator Hirono: Just so I understand, Mr. Secretary.  
24 So, these exceptions are those services who are saying that  
25 they want to continue to require people getting the flu

1 vaccine? Are those exceptions you're talking about?

2 Mr. Tata: This is in draft Pre-decisional. They've  
3 come back asking for these exceptions --

4 Senator Hirono: Exceptions to the no --

5 Mr. Tata: -- to the policy that we will then take to  
6 the Secretary for his final approval.

7 Senator Hirono: Okay. I'm going to have to ask you  
8 again, just so there's clarity. The exceptions are to  
9 Secretary Hegseth as this is an optional vaccine. So, the  
10 services are submitting exceptions that they want their  
11 submariners, for example, to have to get the flu vaccine.  
12 Are those the exceptions that are being gathered now? Yes  
13 or no?

14 Mr. Tata: I can't list them all for you right now,  
15 but the exceptions that we are gathering are to be able to  
16 vaccinate for flu prior to deployment on a ship --

17 Senator Hirono: Okay.

18 Mr. Tata: -- for example. But there are several  
19 other exceptions that are being requested.

20 Senator Hirono: Yeah, I understand. I just want to  
21 make sure that there are some service that have decided  
22 that this optional policy is going to probably affect  
23 readiness. You can't have a flu outbreak in the submarine,  
24 for example. So, I think that's warranted. But you didn't  
25 mention peer reviewed literature that led to Secretary

1 Hegseth making this policy change to begin with. Are you  
2 aware of any peer review studies that led to this change.

3 Mr. Tata: Senator, what I'm aware of is the troop  
4 morale and significant backlash from the imposition from  
5 the Biden era on the Covid vaccine and the mandatory Covid  
6 vaccine, and the expulsion of lots of talent for refusing  
7 to take that vaccine, that experimental vaccine that was  
8 unlawful, as implemented. And so, I think what the  
9 Secretary is trying to get at is restoring trust and faith,  
10 restoring the warrior ethos within the force by saying that  
11 --

12 Senator Hirono: Okay. So, he had his reasons, but  
13 they were not based on any peer reviewed literature. It  
14 was based on the -- there is such a thing as leadership  
15 that will say to the service members, "This is for your  
16 health protection. It is science based, etc." But that  
17 didn't --

18 Mr. Tata: Senator, he did it in full consultation  
19 with Health Affairs, with the team to make the best  
20 decision possible, to restore trust and faith in the wake  
21 of the Covid vaccine --

22 Senator Hirono: Yeah. So basically, it was  
23 ideologically based, not peer review based. I have a  
24 question about women in combat. Can I continue? I can't  
25 tell from my clock whether my time is up.

1 Senator Tuberville: It is.

2 Senator Hirono: I think it is. Is it up?

3 Senator Tuberville: Yeah. It is up, but you  
4 continue.

5 Senator Hirono: Could I just mention something about  
6 women in combat? So as you know, Secretary Hegseth has  
7 asked for a review, a study on the appropriateness of women  
8 in combat roles. And you recently issued a memo mandating  
9 the review of female service members performance in combat  
10 arms units. As you know, women can serve in combat units,  
11 provided that they meet all of the physical requirements  
12 that everybody else has to meet.

13 So, I just want to ask you, should every service  
14 member, regardless of gender, be permitted to serve in any  
15 role, including the combat arms if they meet the  
16 established standards? Yes or no?

17 Mr. Tata: Senator, what we are doing is reviewing the  
18 effectiveness of ground combat units that have been  
19 integrated 10 years after integration, just like we did  
20 Goldwater-Nichols, just like we did Don't Ask, Don't Tell,  
21 just like we did Blended Retirement System --

22 Senator Hirono: Do you think that anyone --

23 Mr. Tata: -- this is 10 years later.

24 Senator Hirono: - who meets the physical requirements  
25 should be able to serve in any role to which they meet the

1 physical and other -- whatever requirements there are? Yes  
2 or no? You can't seem to answer --

3 Mr. Tata: I'm not sure I understand your question,  
4 Senator.

5 Senator Hirono: Whether or not any -- okay. I'll  
6 repeat. Should every service member, regardless of gender,  
7 be permitted to serve in any role, including the combat  
8 arms, if they meet the established standards?

9 Mr. Tata: The established standards? Yes, Senator.

10 Senator Hirono: Yes. Thank you.

11 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. Secretary Todd,  
12 traumatic brain injuries continue to be a huge problem.  
13 You see anything that we're doing that's helping, restore  
14 and, just improve, the identification number one, of brain  
15 problems because we've all seen that. And then are we  
16 making any progress on getting the health recovery time  
17 faster than in the past?

18 Mr. Todd: Chairman Tuberville, thank you for your  
19 question. Yes. Traumatic brain injury is a serious  
20 concern in the force, among our military service members,  
21 you can have long lasting effects long after they've had  
22 the initial concussion or injury. We are working  
23 diligently with the military services to ensure that we  
24 have guidelines out there concerning exposure, particularly  
25 blast exposure, but also other types of traumatic brain --

1 things that can cause traumatic brain injury. We put out  
2 guidelines.

3 We have a reference and information guide that  
4 addresses specific weapon systems that our service members  
5 are exposed to on a regular basis. Outlining the area of  
6 the blast, the standoff distance required, the minimization  
7 of using or being close to these weapon systems, minimizing  
8 what they have to do to maintain their proficiency,  
9 emphasizing the use of simulators if possible, in order to  
10 ensure that they are proficient.

11 We're also looking and working with our acquisition  
12 folks to make sure that as we develop new weapon systems,  
13 the impact of blast overpressure and of course, those  
14 impacts on traumatic brain injury are considered when  
15 developing the weapon system so that we have some sort of  
16 mitigating measures.

17 In addition, the Secretary recently signed the  
18 Warfighter Performance Optimization directive, which  
19 focuses on the total readiness of our force and looks at  
20 their health. And part of this is brain trauma and  
21 traumatic brain injuries.

22 We are working -- again with all the service -- we are  
23 also working directly with specific units in the field. In  
24 fact, we just had a briefing from the Ranger Regiment where  
25 they were using their own local tactical initiatives to see

1 what they can do to mitigate, for example, breaching  
2 operations or confined explosive operations. And they came  
3 up with a number of very innovative ideas on how to do it.

4 In addition, since, as you know, our Ranger Regiment  
5 or our airborne units, they have a mouthpiece that has a  
6 Wi-Fi factor or component in it. So, every time one of  
7 their soldiers jumps, it can automatically record if there  
8 was what it perceived as some sort of traumatic injury.  
9 And it automatically starts broadcasting and they can't  
10 hide it because, some troops just don't want to report it.  
11 They want to keep soldiering on. And so that is hooked in  
12 with some of the initiatives they're doing. We taking that  
13 and looking at it to see if we can expand that not only to  
14 other airborne units, but across the force.

15 In fact, the Under Secretary recently, decided that we  
16 should work with our DoDea schools, career schools, in  
17 order to use some of these mouthguards to see if we can  
18 identify any risk to the children of our service members  
19 when they're playing sports in some of our schools.

20 So we're trying to look both with our service members,  
21 but across the force to identify any of these things that  
22 impact or could cause traumatic brain injury.

23 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. Mr. Dill, only a  
24 small percentage of Americans currently qualify for  
25 military service without a waiver. Many of these young

1 Americans who are motivated and want to serve, but they  
2 encounter a lot of times, administrative hurdles and waiver  
3 decisions during their process. From your perspective,  
4 what are the biggest bottlenecks in the system today, and  
5 what more should the department do to be streamlining  
6 medical evaluations and waiver processing so that we are  
7 not necessarily delaying or disqualifying otherwise capable  
8 applicants?

9 Mr. Dill: Mr. chairman, I appreciate you highlighting  
10 that issue and the chance to speak to it. It's a very  
11 concerning thing that so few young Americans today are  
12 qualified to serve. Something we need to be very careful  
13 about is, for one, maintaining high uncompromising  
14 standards. So, where we have a very good reason to ensure  
15 that you meet a minimum qualification, we need to uphold  
16 that for the good of the service and for the protection of  
17 the individual. We also need to make sure that we don't  
18 just have needless requirements because they're historical  
19 relics.

20 So, one of the things we must continue to do through  
21 our medical accession records pilot program is, carefully  
22 review each of the medical requirements we enforce when a  
23 young American man or woman tries to join, and make sure  
24 that requirement makes sense, that it's connected to the  
25 battlefield requirements, that it contributes to lethality.

1 And if that's a historical requirement that doesn't make an  
2 impact on the battlefield, we should get rid of it.

3 We've had success over the last couple of years,  
4 reducing some of the requirements in this pilot program,  
5 letting young people come in despite the fact that they had  
6 a pre-existing condition that in the past would not have  
7 been waived. And we see very strong results from that  
8 program. We are continuing to actively review conditions.  
9 Even just last year, we removed several of the existing  
10 conditions that were automatic disqualifications to ensure  
11 that if you're actually qualified to serve, that we give  
12 you that opportunity.

13 I can speak to personal experience. I had an ACL  
14 reconstruction in college. When I applied to the Army, I  
15 was automatically disqualified and needed a waiver to come  
16 in. And I'm so grateful that I was given the chance to  
17 serve and I was able to serve in airborne and special  
18 operations units for 10 years. And that was the right  
19 decision to make sure that it wasn't a needless  
20 disqualification. And we do continue to do that to  
21 carefully filter and take advantage of the talent that's  
22 volunteering to serve in our department.

23 Senator Tuberville: So in your instance, how many  
24 evaluations did you have to have to be cleared?

25 Mr. Dill: I had to go to two extra appointments. I

1 had to see a specialist, and there was really advanced  
2 equipment that I had to drive another hour to a different  
3 facility to put my leg in that machine and have it test the  
4 flexibility and strength. It took months in that process,  
5 I was sweating bullets, Mr. Chairman, to see if I'd have a  
6 chance to serve in the Army. And I'm really grateful I got  
7 the chance, and I think it was clearly the right decision.

8 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. Senator Blumenthal.

9 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you, Chairman. Secretary  
10 Tata, I want to ask you about the recent decision to remove  
11 military fellowships and PME Programs from -- that is  
12 professional military education programs from Yale and a  
13 number of other institutions. I question whether these  
14 decisions were driven by actual national security criteria  
15 or by very bluntly, political retaliation against  
16 universities that are perceived, I think, wrongly, as  
17 ideologically disfavored.

18 According to the Pentagon's own memo, partner  
19 institutions are supposed to be evaluated based on factors  
20 like intellectual freedom, national security, relevance,  
21 and relationships to adversaries. As I'm sure you know,  
22 Yale has a nationally renowned national security program,  
23 the Jackson School. It has experts at the law school as  
24 well as elsewhere in the university. It conducts extensive  
25 defense related research. It hosts ROTC programs, which

1 are very widely attended, and it educates active-duty  
2 service members and senior officers. So, my question is,  
3 why was Yale removed from these programs? And I assume the  
4 same answer would apply to the other institutions.

5 Mr. Tata: Senator, thank you for that question and  
6 your interest in our professional military education.  
7 Certainly, all the schools that were adjusted from the  
8 current list of fellowships, we added new schools, we  
9 wanted to refresh. In particular, we were interested in  
10 schools that allowed freedom of speech on the campus and  
11 other types of intellectual freedom. And, the realignment  
12 --

13 Senator Blumenthal: And you don't think Yale provides  
14 freedom of speech and intellectual freedom?

15 Mr. Tata: Senator for Yale and others, the Secretary  
16 chose to realign so that we could involve other schools  
17 that were more aligned with the patriotic values. And the  
18 values that we seek to instill within --

19 Senator Blumenthal: So, I don't know if any school is  
20 more aligned with patriotic values than Yale. If you come  
21 to Yale and you talk to students and faculty, but also see  
22 the great tradition of Yale as volunteers for our military,  
23 it's active-duty participation now in educational programs  
24 and ROTC, which has grown in magnitude. I really question  
25 whether that's a fair assessment and whether in fact, it's

1 based on preconceived, non-fact based notions of an Ivy  
2 League school. What would you say?

3 Mr. Tata: Senator, I don't think it was based on any  
4 preconceived notion. The list of schools that we have now  
5 are all very much aligned with establishing a strong  
6 professional development program for professional military  
7 education and getting our senior leaders focused on our  
8 foundational principles, back to the constitutional  
9 principles upon which our great Nation was founded. And  
10 that's the goal of the professional military education  
11 program.

12 Senator Blumenthal: Well, I think that it's pretty  
13 clear these decisions were made based on the Secretary of  
14 Defense or some other official feeling that these  
15 universities are, "Woke," which I think undermines our  
16 national security because it denies our service members the  
17 benefit of some of the best teachers, academicians,  
18 research and frankly, veterans at these schools. Let me  
19 ask you about housing conditions of U.S. military  
20 installations.

21 A comprehensive survey not long ago reported that 97  
22 percent of service members and their families reported  
23 habitability issues with their military provided home like  
24 toxic mold and damage. The survey also found that half of  
25 all requests to address dangerous conditions reportedly

1 went unresolved. I don't have to tell you that that  
2 pattern is unacceptable.

3       Along with some of my colleagues on this panel,  
4 Senator Hirono, Senator Ernst, in a bipartisan way, led the  
5 Military Occupancy Living Defense Act, The Mold Act, which  
6 requires strict health and safety standards, independent  
7 inspections, financial accountability for contractors in  
8 privatized housing to assure that military families are  
9 protected. Given that these problems have continued, what  
10 are you doing? What reforms have you undertaken?

11       Mr. Tata: Senator, thank you for your concern. I  
12 share your concern for military family housing. It's  
13 certainly something that is not under the Personnel and  
14 Readiness portfolio, but we have a seat at the table on the  
15 barracks task force, and we do not own facilities or  
16 military housing, but I'm very concerned about it. And I  
17 was just in Pacific last week, and we had mold in housing,  
18 and we talked about it with families. I held sessions with  
19 families and other folks, teachers and parents and those  
20 that were living in housing. And it's a real concern. And  
21 so I support what it is that you are discussing, and I'm  
22 happy to talk to my colleague, the Under Secretary for  
23 Acquisition and Sustainment that owns that portfolio.

24       Senator Blumenthal: Well, it's a Health problem.  
25 It's a Readiness problem.

1 Mr. Tata: That's right.

2 Senator Blumenthal: It's a military family problem.  
3 It's a mold problem, which is potentially fatal to  
4 children. And evidently our leadership isn't doing much  
5 about it. And in fairness, I should tell you, this problem  
6 has spanned various administrations, but now is the time to  
7 do something about it, and I hope you will. I visited  
8 housing in New London and Groton, where mold problem has  
9 really presented a health problem to military families.  
10 And if you're not the right person, I hope you will tell us  
11 who the right person is?

12 Mr. Tata: Senator, I'm the right person. I'm here  
13 before you. I'm the right person and representing the  
14 department. And I'll tell you, the Secretary made an  
15 announcement not too long ago, he's committing millions of  
16 dollars to remediation of mold across the force, across all  
17 the housing. And so, yes, I'm the right person because I'm  
18 sitting right here before you.

19 Senator Blumenthal: Well, let me just pose it to you.  
20 We've now spent and acknowledged \$29 billion on a war of  
21 choice. It is a war that this President said would not  
22 become a forever war. It seems like now a whatever war  
23 becoming a forever war. But it is consuming at least \$1  
24 billion a day. I suggest, respectfully some of that money  
25 should be devoted to military housing. It would be a

1 fraction of that total, but it is vital to readiness and  
2 preparedness, not just morale, but the health of our troops  
3 and their families.

4 And we know families serve along with our military men  
5 and women. And I could also suggest, by the way, that  
6 maybe instead of \$1 billion for a ballroom, we could devote  
7 some money to military housing.

8 Mr. Tata: As I said, Senator, the Secretary has  
9 pledged money to remediation of mold throughout the  
10 barracks and housing.

11 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you. My time has expired.  
12 Thank you for your answers to my question.

13 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. I'd like to follow  
14 up. Secretary Tata, do you think that people are actually  
15 listening? Because I think every state is having this  
16 problem in military bases. You know, we can talk about it,  
17 but I know we're having a huge problem in our state of  
18 Alabama. And if you're not having a problem, then you  
19 don't have humidity in your state. Any state with humidity  
20 has huge problems. What do we need to do? I mean, do we  
21 need to specifically put in NDAA, something about mold,  
22 something about the treatment. I mean, we can't continue.  
23 It's been happening since -- I've been here for six years  
24 and we haven't made any progress. So what's your thoughts?  
25 Are people listening?

1 Mr. Tata: Chairman, people are listening. The  
2 Secretary has made a commitment of significant funds to  
3 remediation of mold. And we can certainly circle back to  
4 the committee with exactly what that commitment is. But  
5 the Secretary takes it very seriously. He is all over the  
6 world. He is in barracks, he is in family housing, and he  
7 has noticed this problem. He talks to troops and families  
8 routinely, as do I. And we know this is an issue and we  
9 have committed funds to it, and we are resolved to resolve  
10 the issue.

11 Senator Blumenthal: How much in funds have been  
12 committed?

13 Senator Warren: Mr. Chairman, if you don't mind -- I  
14 go next, because my questions follow right up on what  
15 you're doing.

16 Senator Tuberville: Okay. Are you through, Senator?

17 Senator Blumenthal: How much in funds have actually  
18 been committed and spent?

19 Mr. Tata: Senator, I need to get back with you on  
20 that number. I do not know the exact amount that has been  
21 committed to remediation of mold in family housing and  
22 barracks.

23 Senator Blumenthal: And the chairman is absolutely,  
24 absolutely right. I've been on this committee now for  
25 almost 16 years. We've talked about it endlessly. I have

1 visited bases and military family housing, and it seems  
2 like the inaction is like the mold. It just keeps growing  
3 and it's there.

4 Mr. Tata: As I said, Senator, the Secretary shares  
5 your passion and commitment to fixing the problem, as do I  
6 and my team.

7 Senator Tuberville: Senator Warren.

8 Senator Warren: Sir, I just want to follow up on this  
9 same conversation, if I can, with you, Secretary Tata, and  
10 it picks up on what the chairman said, "Is anybody  
11 listening?" And I just want to focus in a little bit on  
12 that. So you're the top advisor on quality-of-life issues.  
13 Do you support Congress passing reforms in this year's NDAA  
14 that would protect service members and their families from  
15 retaliation for reporting housing companies that are  
16 forcing them to live with mold for months or even years on  
17 end?

18 Mr. Tata: Absolutely. Without equivocation, I  
19 support that.

20 Senator Warren: I really appreciate that and want to  
21 triple underscore it as we go into our negotiations on the  
22 NDAA, because housing companies have been using non-  
23 disclosure agreements to try to muzzle tenants, to keep our  
24 service members from being able to report what's going  
25 wrong. And we just don't want to see the same thing over

1 and over, where NDAs are used in different parts of DOD to  
2 keep those who are injured from being able to complain  
3 about their injury.

4 And look, there may be a lot of different  
5 circumstances where people are being asked to sign NDAs,  
6 including people who have clearances. But those agreements  
7 should never preclude the ability of a service member to be  
8 able to complain to a commanding officer about what's  
9 happening in housing, to be able to complain to an  
10 Inspector General, or to complain to Congress to point out  
11 wrongdoing. And I think it's critical that we make sure  
12 that whistleblowers of every kind, including spouses who  
13 are trying to protect their children in their housing, all  
14 the way to people who see something wrong in the department  
15 they're in. So let me ask you on that one. Secretary  
16 Tata, should DOD be informing service members of their  
17 rights and responsibilities to report violations of the law  
18 and abuses, even if they've already signed an NDA  
19 agreement?

20 Mr. Tata: I support any Senator -- Ranking Member,  
21 Warren. I support any action that protects a family  
22 member, a service member and their family to have  
23 appropriate housing and to lodge appropriate complaints,  
24 regardless of the circumstances, because they deserve the  
25 best. They're sacrificing their lives for our country.

1 And there should be nothing in their way of absolutely  
2 having the best housing possible.

3 Senator Warren: And I appreciate that because like my  
4 colleagues here, we've been working to try to upgrade the  
5 housing for a very long time. Basically, it feels like  
6 ever since the private contractors came in and took over  
7 and figured out they could make a profit by shortchanging  
8 our military families. But let me remind you, Mr.  
9 Secretary, the question I was asking actually widened out  
10 the second time. And that is, this true about housing.  
11 But I'm asking the question up and down the line. The fact  
12 that people are being asked to sign NDAs, and it raises  
13 questions in other contexts about whether or not they have  
14 the right, for example, to report to an Inspector General  
15 about something they've seen that is wrong.

16 And if they can't report or feel like they can't  
17 report to an Inspector General, then we don't get the  
18 information we need. We don't get the oversight we need.  
19 We can't expose the problems we've got. So I just want to  
20 make sure your support is not only that families ought to  
21 be able to report about housing, but anybody, up and down  
22 our chain in the military should not be stopped by an NDA  
23 from reporting when they see something that is wrong, being  
24 able to report to an IG, being able to report to a  
25 commanding officer, being able to report to somebody here

1 in Congress. Are you in agreement on that?

2 Mr. Tata: I know of nothing that restricts anybody  
3 from reporting anything to the Inspector General.

4 Senator Warren: Okay. And then if I can, I'll do one  
5 really quick, one more turn on this. And that is about the  
6 importance of making sure that our warfighters are  
7 operating systems that do not unnecessarily endanger their  
8 health or their safety. For example, in 2011, two F-22  
9 pilots raised concerns about becoming disoriented because  
10 of oxygen problems with the F-22. But their commanders  
11 said, "Fly anyway." Both pilots went to Congress. One  
12 went to the IG. The IG concluded that the pilot wasn't  
13 protected. The law protects troops who come forward to  
14 raise concerns about public safety, but it isn't explicit  
15 if they want to prevent their fellow service members from  
16 being hurt or being killed.

17 So I just want to ask, should we be alerting people to  
18 their rights to report and make sure that service members  
19 can come forward with concerns about troop safety?

20 Mr. Tata: Ranking Member Warren, broadly, any  
21 soldier, sailor, airman, marine or guardian that sees an  
22 issue with any kind of defective equipment or any safety  
23 issue should feel free to go to the chain of command, go to  
24 the Inspector General, go to whomever that can help solve  
25 that problem until that problem is solved.

1 Senator Warren: Yeah, I appreciate that. I very much  
2 support your conclusion here. But I want to remind you the  
3 reason I'm asking these questions is because the problem is  
4 out there, and there are people who feel like they can't do  
5 that. And so I just hope we're going to do everything  
6 possible at DOD. We're going to get as much as we can in  
7 the NDAA to push in that direction.

8 And I also want to say thank you to Secretary Todd for  
9 your work on blast overpressure. I appreciate the  
10 questions from the chairman on this. And thank you to  
11 Secretary Bass for your point about supply chains. Other  
12 things I would have asked you about, but you guys have  
13 covered it. I really do appreciate it. Thank you for your  
14 work.

15 Senator Tuberville: Secretary Tata, you can you can  
16 tell we're all concerned about the mold because we all hear  
17 about it from our constituents. And, I'm all for spending  
18 whatever we need on \$1 trillion business, which is our  
19 military. But we always have to look at the blocking and  
20 tackling here. And that's the pay for our service members  
21 and taking care of our service members through health care  
22 or housing or whatever. Because I have people coming to my  
23 office all the time talking about mold, and their families  
24 are sick.

25 I mean, sooner or later whatever we do with the NDAA,

1 if we just add a percent to Personnel Readiness, it would  
2 help this military so much. Sometimes it just gets  
3 overlooked, unfortunately. It's not your fault, but now  
4 we're charging you with getting it done.

5 Mr. Tata: Chairman. I'm sitting here. So it's in my  
6 rucksack, so, I'm going to carry it back. The Secretary,  
7 as I said, has recognized this a while ago, and he has  
8 committed funds to it and he's got a team working on it.  
9 And, I've got about 15 note takers in here, including  
10 myself. And this is one issue that we know that we need to  
11 get back to you on ASAP.

12 Senator Tuberville: Thank you.

13 Senator Blumenthal: Remember the blocking and  
14 tackling.

15 Senator Tuberville: Yeah. That's right.

16 Senator Blumenthal: And we're in your mouthpiece  
17 where you're doing it.

18 Senator Tuberville: Secretary Kaine or Senator Kaine?

19 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair and to Ranking  
20 Member Warren and to colleagues here. I want to follow up  
21 on just a point that Senator Blumenthal was making. In  
22 early March when the Pentagon canceled the Senior Service  
23 Corps Fellowship program at 13 colleges and pulled them and  
24 said it was because these colleges were weak and woke.  
25 That was the claim.

1           One of the colleges was the College of William and  
2 Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, the oldest public  
3 university in the United States. The educator, Thomas  
4 Jefferson, a pretty important figure in our Nation's  
5 history. William and Mary's kind of key leadership  
6 position is the Chancellor for a long time recently, that  
7 Chancellor was Bob Gates, the former Secretary of Defense.  
8 And it was almost comical that -- I think that announcement  
9 came out of the Pentagon on the 3rd of March.

10           On March 25th, militaryfriendly.com named William and  
11 Mary a gold level military friendly school, the highest  
12 honor a university can receive, and also named the Raymond  
13 A. Mason School of Business as the top graduate school in  
14 the Nation for military and veterans.

15           William and Mary 1600 military connected students  
16 across campus. Army ROTC, Naval ROTC. The Office of  
17 Student Veteran Engagement is the central hub for  
18 connecting military and veterans on campus. Since that  
19 opened six years ago, the graduation rate for military or  
20 veteran connected students has exceeded the graduation rate  
21 for everybody else. But that's not all.

22           William and Mary also has the Lewis Puller, Chesty  
23 Puller Veterans Benefit Clinic at the William and Mary Law  
24 School that -- where law students help veterans qualify for  
25 benefits they're entitled to under the VA. The center for

1 Military Transition at the Mason School of Business to help  
2 veterans transition to high level civilian management  
3 positions. The School of Education at William and Mary has  
4 a unique program in the country. It's called the Clinical  
5 Mental Health and Military Veteran Counseling Program,  
6 which trains counselors to work with veterans and military  
7 families. And there's a whole lot more I could say about  
8 military friendliness at William and Mary.

9 Now, the announcement that William and Mary is one of  
10 the 13 schools that's too weak or woke to have a senior  
11 fellowship, kind of struck the campus almost as this April  
12 Fool's Day. There was only one such fellow at William and  
13 Mary at the time, so it's not like this was a huge dent to  
14 the university. But for a college that has had such a  
15 prominent role in American military history and is winning  
16 awards for being a military and veteran friendly campus, it  
17 kind of felt like a gratuitous slap, and I just wanted to  
18 ask Secretary Tata or anybody else, like what's weak and  
19 woke about the College of William and Mary?

20 Mr. Tata: Senator, thank you. I appreciate your  
21 support of our military. And it's been 20 years since we  
22 bumped into each other in Afghanistan when you were  
23 governor.

24 Senator Kaine: Afghanistan.

25 Mr. Tata: Notably, everything that you read except

1 for the fellowship program stays with William and Mary, the  
2 ROTC, all of that stays. We are realigning the senior  
3 service college fellowship in a different direction for  
4 professional military education. Notably, George Mason  
5 stays and, quite frankly, the Hayden Center, they're not  
6 super supportive of the administration, but they've stayed  
7 and they met the criteria. And so, this was an objective  
8 assessment of education institutions. And --

9       Senator Kaine: Can I just say about, Secretary Tata,  
10 on that, objective assessment. If the announcement was  
11 we're realigning and, maybe William and Mary only has one  
12 of these fellows. So, it's not like a core part of the  
13 William and Mary mission. They got these other things. Or  
14 if the announcement was about some objective criteria,  
15 certain universities meet and certain universities don't.  
16 That sounds like a realignment and analysis.

17       But the announcement that we're pulling 13 schools  
18 because they're weak and woke, that was the headline around  
19 the country, that's the headline that the William and Mary  
20 alums and the students and the folks who are working so  
21 hard with the veterans and military families had to be  
22 confronted with.

23       And when they're running the ROTC program and the  
24 Veterans Benefit program and the Military Families  
25 Counseling program, and they're winning awards for national

1 publications, it just seemed like a gratuitous and  
2 unnecessary insult. And, I doubt you were the person who  
3 assigned that label to William and Mary. You're a  
4 Virginian, and you know how important William and Mary is  
5 to Virginia. But it was almost comical that this happened  
6 at the same time as William and Mary is being lauded for  
7 national publications, for how much they do for our  
8 Nation's military.

9 I'm going to ask a second question. And this might be  
10 Secretary Tata, for you, or it might be for somebody else.  
11 But this is something that I think I may offer some  
12 amendment about in the NDAA process. The SECDEF recently  
13 announced reforms to the Chaplain Corps that would remove  
14 visible officer rank insignia from chaplain uniforms. The  
15 argument was the change would reinforce the idea that  
16 chaplains are chaplains first and officers second.

17 But I've heard from an awful lot of people in the  
18 Chaplains Corps, and they've argued that, "Hey, I earned my  
19 rank, I earned my rank. And just like I could wear a  
20 chaplain's corps insignia, just like somebody else could  
21 wear the insignia that might signify what their MOS is in  
22 the military." Chaplains are saying, "If I've earned the  
23 rank, I ought to be able to carry the insignia on my  
24 uniform."

25 I'm trying to understand what is the problem that's

1 trying to be solved here? Because I think a lot of our  
2 chaplains feel like when you order me to take off my rank  
3 insignia, you're almost kind of devaluing the work that  
4 I've done to get to the rank that I've earned.

5 So, could you explain that a little bit? Because I  
6 think I may try to bring up an amendment about this in the  
7 course of the NDAA, but what's the justification?

8 Mr. Tata: Thank you, Senator, for that question.  
9 I'll take a shot at answering. Then I'll turn it over to  
10 Secretary Dill as well. The bottom line is, as a former  
11 paratrooper, battalion commander, air assault brigade  
12 commander, deputy commanding general, and all the troops in  
13 Afghanistan, sometimes, frequently, perhaps young soldiers,  
14 see a captain major, lieutenant colonel rank, and they're a  
15 little concerned about going to an officer versus a  
16 chaplain, and I believe that that was a large part of the  
17 aesthetic change that the Secretary directed, to get back  
18 to the ministerial duties and not counseling, but  
19 ministering to our troops, the faith based troops that want  
20 to come to the chaplain. And I don't care if it was the  
21 captain that was a chaplain for me as a battalion commander  
22 or the chief of chaplains of the Army. I still call them  
23 chaplain, and I don't care what faith they were, I still  
24 call them chaplain.

25 Senator Kaine: Does anybody else want to add to that?

1 Because I kind of have a follow up response --

2 Mr. Tata: Yeah, so --

3 Senator Kaine: -- before I do --

4 Mr. Tata: I'll let Secretary Dill take that on.

5 Mr. Dill: Senator Kaine, I appreciate the chance to  
6 speak to this very personal issue to me as well. My father  
7 is a pastor. I served for many years, I'm very grateful  
8 for the chaplains. I echo Secretary Tata's point.  
9 Absolutely, there are young service members that are gun  
10 shy about approaching senior personnel in general, and I  
11 would be disappointed to hear a chaplain express that type  
12 of reaction about their rank.

13 A phrase that you shared to say like, "I earned that  
14 rank." That is the case, but I absolutely see the role of  
15 a chaplain as being a servant of the troops. And the fact  
16 that they have that rank, I think, should not at all impact  
17 their primary concern to be just as Secretary Tata said, to  
18 care for the spiritual needs of the service members. When  
19 I served in special forces, I often did not wear my rank.  
20 Never did I have a feeling that I was no longer a captain  
21 in the Army, or that someone had disrespected me, and I  
22 wasn't in a chaplain's role. In fact, they are always both  
23 a chaplain and an officer, regardless of what people see on  
24 their chest. And how strong is it to be able to see the  
25 symbol of their religious service and the servant

1 leadership position prominently on their chest to let  
2 service members know, this is who you can come to talk to,  
3 to have your spiritual needs addressed.

4 And as you may know, Senator, this policy from the  
5 Secretary is not stripping chaplains of their rank and not  
6 even depriving them of the chance to wear that rank on a  
7 uniform, but not in the working and utility uniforms when  
8 they're out there ministering to the troops.

9 Senator Kaine: Yeah. And so let me respond back to  
10 that. Our troops go to a lot of folks for pretty personal  
11 advice. They go to medical professionals, they go to  
12 lawyers, JAG lawyers for advice. We don't deprive somebody  
13 who's in the military in a medical MOS of their ability to  
14 wear their rank when they are providing service to troops.  
15 We don't provide JAG officers who are providing legal  
16 counsel on incredibly sensitive matters in many cases of  
17 the ability to wear their rank when they're providing  
18 services to their troops.

19 We don't provide mental health professionals who are  
20 uniformed -- we also have obviously civilian mental health  
21 professionals. We don't provide mental health  
22 professionals who are uniformed and tell them, "Listen,  
23 you're not supposed to wear your rank when you're providing  
24 services to your troops." And so, I think there's a little  
25 bit of a double standard here that I can understand why

1 we've received outreach from chaplains on this.

2 Their sense of having earned the rank is not an  
3 entitlement mentality. It's that they joined this all-  
4 volunteer military and they're proud of their service. And  
5 when they feel like they alone are being told, "You have to  
6 remove your rank insignia when you're interacting and doing  
7 the job that you're doing for the U.S. military, they feel  
8 singled out in a way that they can't understand."

9 It's helpful to hear you, to kind of describe the  
10 rationale. And this is something that we can take up more  
11 as we go forward in the next month. The last thing that I  
12 wanted to ask, and, I never assumed budgetary decisions are  
13 made by the person that happens to be sitting across me at  
14 the table. I get budget recommendations are made, they go  
15 all the way up the chain. And usually, it's the  
16 President's team and OMB, that's kind of maybe the final  
17 arbiter.

18 But I have mentioned at Armed Services Committee  
19 hearings, that it seems odd that the budgetary requests to  
20 increase the defense budget from 800 billion to 1.5  
21 trillion, give or take, does not include a pay raise for  
22 800,000 civilians who work in the military. There's a  
23 bonus pool, I get that. But there is a significant and  
24 well merited and well-deserved pay raise for uniformed  
25 members of the DOD family. And that's good. And I hope we

1 do that.

2 But to not include any pay raise, for the civilian 800  
3 000, which is, I guess maybe about 30 percent of the DOD  
4 family that strikes me as -- if money was really tight, I  
5 might get it. But if we're jumping from 800 billion to 1.5  
6 trillion, I think that sends a signal that is kind of a  
7 challenge. You have an awful lot of DOD civilians who are  
8 working side by side with uniformed folks. You know, every  
9 day these guys will get the big raise and these guys and  
10 girls won't get any raise.

11 I think that could create some morale challenges. And  
12 especially when you consider that the DOD civilian  
13 workforce is heavily a veteran workforce. An awful lot of  
14 the DOD civilians are people who've served, could be eight  
15 years or could be a full career in the military. And then  
16 they move into a DOD civilian position.

17 And so, it's my hope, and this is, again, I'm not  
18 assuming that any of this was your recommendation. I mean,  
19 I suspect all of you would like to see a whole lot more  
20 done in a whole lot of areas. But I'm hoping that our  
21 colleagues, when we sit down and grapple with this  
22 significant request in the top line, think about the fact  
23 that this 800,000-civilian component of the DOD does  
24 really, really good work, and we ought to be sending them a  
25 message that we recognize that. And so, with that, Mr.

1 Chair, I yield back.

2 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. Secretary Tata, the  
3 oversight, we're getting ready to go in to mark-up our  
4 NDAA. Anything any of you want to say, any need or  
5 whatever we can think about going into the mark-up next  
6 month? We'll start down here just if we missed something.

7 Mr. Tata: Chairman, Ranking Member, Senator Kaine, I  
8 appreciate your comments on civilian workforce. I talk  
9 frequently about the professionalism of the PNR career  
10 civilians. One of the things we just did was we rewarded  
11 the top 15 percent and within PNR, I said make it G15 and  
12 below because CS's get a bonus up to \$25,000. And I was in  
13 Korea last week, with my good friend General Xavier Brunson  
14 and his team lined up all the civilians that they had given  
15 bonuses to. And they said this was life changing. This  
16 was a sea change in how we treat our civilians.

17 So that bonus pool that you referenced, Senator, is  
18 very, very important. And certainly, we appreciate your  
19 support of our civilians and we appreciate our career  
20 civilian workforce. And, to the Chairman and the Ranking  
21 Member, we appreciate having this conversation.

22 We dedicate to you to answer all of the questions that  
23 you might have for the record. And I will turn over the  
24 rest of my time to, my teammates here that I work very  
25 closely with.

1 Senator Kaine: Can I just say one thing about this  
2 guy? So, before I knew him, I knew his dad, who was a  
3 beloved member of the Virginia General Assembly for a very  
4 long time representing Virginia Beach, and his nickname was  
5 Coach. Everybody called him Coach Tata, and he was a  
6 member who was really revered on both sides of the aisle.  
7 And I first met the Secretary when he was serving in  
8 Afghanistan. And as governor, I went to visit our Guard  
9 troops, and I think it was at Bagram Air Force Base.

10 Mr. Tata: I don't know if it was at Bagram. And you  
11 stopped when you saw my last name and you said, "Are you  
12 Coach's son?" And I said, "Of course." And you're getting  
13 me misty eyed here. Senator.

14 Senator Kaine: Good man, good man.

15 Senator Tuberville: Secretary Dill, any follow up?

16 Mr. Dill: Chairman Tuberville, I appreciate that  
17 question. The opportunity to speak on the department's  
18 needs. The primary thing I would point to would be fully  
19 supporting the President's budget request. That request is  
20 how we get after so many of these quality-of-life concerns  
21 from the well-deserved pay raise for the troops to funding  
22 child care, to helping spouses find employment, and then  
23 many other things in my colleagues' portfolios as well. So  
24 that would be my major request. And of course, we always  
25 appreciate the chance to work with your staff as you

1 examine these issues and mark-up and come to us and give us  
2 a chance to provide some context. Thank you.

3 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. Secretary Bass.

4 Mr. Bass: Chairman, Ranking member, I just want to  
5 thank you for your continued support. Obviously, military  
6 health system equals readiness. I have 20 years in the  
7 military. Both my girls were born in the health care  
8 system and I received care at Fort Belvoir. So obviously  
9 this is a very important issue for our military members.  
10 And I look forward to continuing to work with this  
11 committee.

12 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. Secretary Todd.

13 Mr. Todd: Chairman Tuberville, thank you very much.  
14 Yes, as we look forward to moving ahead. I think one key  
15 thing that we can look at is, as we work with the services  
16 on blast overpressure requirements, they've identified many  
17 requirements, but the only folks who put money on it in the  
18 PALM for Fiscal Year 2027 was SOCOM. So, what we would  
19 like to do is ensure that we emphasize to the services that  
20 if you're going to identify these requirements, that you  
21 put a number on it in your PALM request, because just  
22 looking at the numbers estimated that require for Fiscal  
23 Year 2027, it's about 85 million. And then those things  
24 are multiplied over the over the Fiscal Year.

25 So yes, they understand there's a requirement. We

1 understand there's a requirement. We put money on it. It  
2 was available to us under SOCOM, but to emphasize to the  
3 services that if they do have this requirement to please  
4 budget for it.

5 Also, as we look at aviation mishaps throughout the  
6 force and responding, as we have been to the tragedy of  
7 January 2025. We've been looking very deeply across the  
8 force, and we're finding that the availability of funds in  
9 a timely manner through a formal budget will help our  
10 commanders and leaders in the field implement their flying  
11 hour programs, being able to plan for maintenance,  
12 scheduled maintenance and unskilled maintenance, depot  
13 maintenance and buy the repair parts they need.

14 So, we're hoping that -- we know the continuing  
15 resolutions having quite a lot, but they do limit our folks  
16 in the field to be able to implement these programs. So,  
17 it reduces flying hour programs, safety training. It  
18 undermines retention because aviators want to fly. And if  
19 they can't do it in the military, they'll do it somewhere  
20 else. So, we really hope that we can get some support  
21 there to make sure they have dedicated funding.

22 And we're hoping to somehow emphasize to the services  
23 not to reduce your flying hour programs to meet other  
24 requirements, because it does undermine safety and  
25 readiness across the force. Thank you, Chairman

1 Tuberville.

2       Senator Tuberville: Thank you very much. This has  
3 been good. I hope somebody got something out of this. But  
4 we do appreciate all of your service. We might have went  
5 over a little bit of time today, but this was very  
6 informative. And if we can help in any way, let us know.

7       Thank you. We are adjourned.

8       [Whereupon, at 3:31 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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