

Stenographic Transcript  
Before the

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

## **UNITED STATES SENATE**

TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE POSTURE OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE IN REVIEW OF THE  
DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026  
AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

Tuesday, May 20, 2025

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1 TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE POSTURE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF  
2 THE AIR FORCE IN REVIEW OF THE DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION  
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4 PROGRAM

5  
6 Tuesday, May 20, 2025

7  
8 U.S. Senate

9 Committee on Armed Services

10 Washington, D.C.  
11

12 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:35 a.m.,  
13 in Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Roger  
14 Wicker, chairman of the committee, presiding.

15 Committee Members Present: Senators Wicker  
16 [presiding], Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan,  
17 Cramer, Scott, Tuberville, Mullin, Budd, Schmitt, Banks,  
18 Sheehy, Reed, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono,  
19 Kaine, King, Warren, Peters, Duckworth, Rosen, Kelly, and  
20 Slotkin.  
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2 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROGER WICKER, U.S. SENATOR  
3 FROM MISSISSIPPI

4 Chairman Wicker: This hearing will come to order.

5 Good morning. I begin with a common refrain: The  
6 United States faces its most dangerous threat environment  
7 since World War II. However, though many of our national  
8 security challenges mirror the 1930s, warfare looks much  
9 different today. Technological advances in artificial  
10 intelligence, hypersonic strike weapons, sixth-generation  
11 aircraft, and space-based weapons are transforming the  
12 nature of modern conflict.

13 The Department of the Air Force is on the front lines  
14 of these changes. Today we will hear from three  
15 representatives of that service. We welcome Secretary  
16 Troy Meink, General Chance Saltzman, and General David  
17 Allvin. I thank all of them for being here and for their  
18 continued service to our nation.

19 The Committee understands that the fiscal year 2026  
20 President's budget is not yet complete, and we are  
21 therefore aware that the three witnesses before us do not  
22 have the full budget picture. That being said, their  
23 testimony is still vital. It will help us consider how to  
24 support the mission of the Air Force and the Space Force,  
25 which is to be lethal and "ready to fight tonight," as the

1 slogan goes.

2 One of our most pressing responsibilities is to ensure  
3 the long-term readiness and modernization of the Air Force.  
4 In the event of war, we need not only capability but also  
5 capacity. If we go to war in 2027, we will fight with the  
6 Air Force we have today, which is a mix of fourth-  
7 generation fighters, such as the F-15E and F-16, and fifth-  
8 generation fighters, the F-22 and F-35. We need more  
9 fighter aircraft now, and we are working along with our  
10 colleagues in the House, Chairman Rogers, to keep the F-  
11 15EX line open through our reconciliation bill.

12 Even as we plan for future systems, we must address  
13 the state of today's fleet. The mission capability rates  
14 across many Air Force platforms remain unacceptably low.  
15 Some platform fleets are frequently less than 50 percent  
16 mission capable, and we will have questions about that.  
17 The F-35 fleet is available a mere 54 percent of the time.  
18 This is not just a maintenance issue. It is a readiness  
19 issue, and it impacts our ability to deter adversaries and  
20 respond when necessary. Taxpayers are investing billions  
21 of dollars to support these aircraft, and our airmen, and  
22 our citizens, deserve higher readiness levels to defend our  
23 national interests. I expect our witnesses to provide a  
24 frank assessment of what is driving these poor rates and,  
25 more importantly, what is being done to reverse the trend.

1       The Air Force also plays a key role in modernizing our  
2 nuclear forces. The service is responsible for two legs of  
3 the nuclear triad as well as a majority of the U.S. nuclear  
4 command, control, and communications system. These  
5 programs must stay on schedule to deliver the essential  
6 capabilities we need to deter nuclear threats. We cannot  
7 afford to allow these programs to flounder because of a  
8 lack of leadership and prioritization. This Committee  
9 expects accountability among program managers and  
10 transparency with Congress to ensure we can modernize  
11 effectively, and I think this panel shares that sentiment.  
12 I look forward to hearing our witnesses explain how the Air  
13 Force manages these risks while preserving strategic  
14 stability.

15       The U.S. Space Force has grown significantly in the  
16 last 5 years. That trend should continue, because our  
17 threats are growing as well. Maintaining space superiority  
18 is a no-fail mission. Increased investment in this young  
19 service is absolutely vital.

20       We also must invest in the facilities that support our  
21 servicemembers. In the 2025 NDAA, this Committee  
22 unanimously adopted a provision that requires the services  
23 to maintain a minimum 4 percent plant replacement value for  
24 infrastructure. That provision survived conference and was  
25 signed into law by the President. It is the law of the

1 land. Let me say this again. This is the law of the land,  
2 and senior leaders should set the example to the Force by  
3 following the law, a law that was created, I must point  
4 out, because the services had long ignored this problem.

5 We cannot make progress on any of these issues without  
6 those who wear the uniform and support the mission every  
7 day. Our airmen, guardians, and civilians are our greatest  
8 asset. Recruiting and retention continue to be major  
9 challenges, and we need to remain focused on supporting  
10 servicemembers and their families with the resources, care,  
11 and career opportunities they deserve.

12 I look forward to the hearing and the testimony from  
13 each of our witnesses about how they intend to ensure the  
14 Department of the Air Force has what it needs to meet  
15 today's challenges, maintain our superiority in air and  
16 space, and prepare for the threats we face on the horizon.

17 With that I turn to my 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 Secretary Meink, General Allvin, General Saltzman, welcome  
5 to this hearing. Thank you for your leadership, and please  
6 share the Committee's gratitude to all the men and women  
7 you lead in the Department of the Air Force and the Space  
8 Force.

9           The air and space domains grow more complicated by the  
10 day, even as our forces continue to fly and operate the  
11 finest aircraft and space assets in the world. Our  
12 adversaries, in particular China, Russia, and Iran, are  
13 developing their own cutting-edge air defense systems,  
14 aircraft, missiles, and satellites. The capability of such  
15 weapons is evident, as we saw only last month when a number  
16 of American F-16s and an F-35 experienced close calls from  
17 Houthi air defense fire over Yemen.

18          Additionally, just 1 year ago, Iran launched a large-  
19 scale attack against Israel, and many feared significant  
20 destruction. However, dozens of American F-15 fighters  
21 intercepted more than 70 drones and missiles and Israeli  
22 and U.S. Navy air defense systems shot down hundreds more.

23          The U.S. Space Force provides critical intelligence,  
24 surveillance, and reconnaissance information as well as  
25 command and control capabilities. Ninety-nine percent of

1 Iran's missiles were shot down, a strong demonstration of  
2 America's air- and space-based kill chain.

3 Despite these formidable capabilities, however, the  
4 Department of the Air Force will need to quickly evolve its  
5 technologies to keep pace with and outstrip our rivals. To  
6 that end, the Committee looks forward to receiving and  
7 reviewing the President's defense budget request for fiscal  
8 year 2026. I urge the White House to deliver that as soon  
9 as possible.

10 Secretary Meink, the Air Force has spent the past  
11 several years modernizing a number of capabilities,  
12 including the bomber force, the ground-based  
13 intercontinental ballistic missile force, the Advance  
14 Battle Management System program, and several unmanned  
15 aircraft systems. But modernization can only be successful  
16 if the Air Force appropriately balances legacy platforms  
17 against new priorities, including uncrewed systems.

18 Secretary Meink, I would ask for an update on how you are  
19 addressing this challenge.

20 General Alvin, the Air Force recently announced the  
21 Boeing F-47 as the winner of the Next Generation Air  
22 Dominance program. Although production is several years  
23 away, I would like to know what capability gaps you intend  
24 the F-47 to fill and how you envision the service employing  
25 this aircraft.

1           In addition, the Air Force's success in the coming  
2 decades will be shaped by its ability to acquire and  
3 control data. The Air Force must be able to detect,  
4 analyze, and act on information across the battle space  
5 quickly, using automation, artificial intelligence, and  
6 predictive analytics. The Committee would appreciate an  
7 update on these and other programs that are receiving  
8 increased emphasis and resourcing.

9           General Saltzman, Congress established the Space Force  
10 in order to consolidate the numerous space activities in  
11 the Department of Defense. Given that the Space Force is  
12 only 5 years old, I understand it is still becoming  
13 institutionalized within the Department and there are many  
14 challenges in that process. I would like to know how you  
15 are growing the service in terms of personnel and  
16 structures like the Space Development Agency and how you  
17 are working to foster a service culture that can succeed in  
18 the dramatically evolving space environment.

19           Finally, the President has directed the Department of  
20 Defense to develop a so-called Golden Dome to defend the  
21 U.S. homeland against missile threats. So far, details for  
22 this initiative have been scarce, but I understand the  
23 concept will rely heavily on space-based detection and  
24 warning systems. I want to ask each of you, our witnesses,  
25 to explain your respective roles in the Golden Dome program

1 and how you plan to shift resources to accommodate.

2 Secretary Meink, General Allvin, General Saltzman,  
3 thank you again for appearing today, and I look forward to  
4 your testimony. Thank you.

5 Chairman Wicker: Gentlemen, the three of you have  
6 submitted written testimony, consisting of 18 pages.  
7 Rather than ask each of you to read six pages at a time, I  
8 will ask, how do you propose to proceed on opening  
9 statements? General Allvin?

10 General Allvin: Chairman, I am happy here. I have an  
11 opening statement I can read, or we can defer that and get  
12 to questions.

13 Chairman Wicker: No. So you are all three prepared  
14 to make opening statements. Then, General Allvin, you are  
15 recognized.

1           STATEMENT OF GENERAL DAVID W. ALLVIN, USAF, CHIEF OF  
2       STAFF OF THE AIR FORCE

3           General Allvin: Thank you, Chairman. Good morning,  
4       Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished  
5       members of the Subcommittee. I would also like to extend a  
6       warm welcome to our new Secretary of the Air Force, Dr.  
7       Troy Meink, and express my appreciation to the Committee  
8       for supporting his confirmation. The Department of the Air  
9       Force will be well served under his leadership.

10          Today I am proud to represent the 677,000 total for  
11       airmen serving the nation. I want to thank you for your  
12       support not only for those airmen but for their families.

13          I would also like to express my immense pride in the  
14       exemplary performance of our airmen in securing our  
15       homeland and deployed worldwide. From the Indo-Pacific to  
16       the Middle East to our southern border, they are working  
17       around the clock to deliver air power, anytime, anywhere,  
18       to protect the United States.

19          The strategic landscape has shifted dramatically. We  
20       now operate in a world where the PRC is not only rapidly  
21       modernizing its military but is doing so with a clear  
22       intent to coerce its neighbors and reshape the  
23       international order, to include a PRC nuclear breakout that  
24       demands unmatched deterrence capabilities. In parallel, we  
25       are seeing unprecedented threats to our homeland. These

1 converging pressures make one thing clear: the U.S. must  
2 maintain air power dominance if we are to safeguard our  
3 security, deter aggression, and prevail in conflict. This  
4 is not just a future challenge. It is today's reality.

5 To achieve peace through strength, we must adapt and  
6 evolve. Reinforced by our most recent Interim National  
7 Defense Strategic Guidance, our Air Force has three  
8 enduring priorities. First, we must defend the homeland.  
9 Air and missile threats are evolving in both speed and  
10 sophistication. The ability to detect, track, and defeat  
11 those threats in real time is foundational to our national  
12 defense and is non-negotiable.

13 Simultaneously, the United States Air Force provides a  
14 reliable, effective, and safe nuclear deterrent that is the  
15 backbone of strategic stability. These priorities are  
16 paramount, cannot fail, and must be given equal weight.

17 Finally, we must project power globally, either  
18 independently or as part of the joint force, to rapidly  
19 respond anywhere to deter aggression and win. This is what  
20 makes our Air Force unique and what is needed now more than  
21 ever.

22 To achieve these priorities we are asking for sustain  
23 support and modernization and the development of new  
24 capabilities. The fiscal year 2026 budget request is  
25 designed to build a force aligned with today's operational

1 realities. That means preserving current readiness and  
2 optimizing our force design tailored for contested  
3 environments and one that blends next-generation aircraft,  
4 autonomous systems, and resilient command and control.

5 Our modernization efforts to rebuild our military  
6 include the continued development of the F-47, the  
7 integration of collaborative combat aircraft, and other  
8 possibilities to expand combat mass at lower costs. We are  
9 also upgrading the F-35 and F-15 to keep pace with evolving  
10 threats. These platforms are critical not just to maintain  
11 parity but to retain the edge our warfighters need. At the  
12 same time, we are recapitalizing aging fleets essential for  
13 maintaining power projection in the interim.

14 Our investment in nuclear modernization remains top  
15 priority with funding directed toward the Sentinel program,  
16 the B-21 Raider, and the revitalized B-52 fleet. These  
17 systems will anchor our strategic deterrence for decades to  
18 come.

19 Equally as important is the investment in our airmen.  
20 We are enhancing recruiting, expanding training  
21 opportunities, and strengthening family support structures.  
22 We suffered a recruiting setback due to the year-long  
23 continuing resolution and subsequent reduction of nearly  
24 half a billion dollars in our military personnel account.  
25 This will result in our inability to fund the recruitment

1 of 3,000 Americans who want to join our Air Force.

2 Furthermore, and particularly, Mr. Chairman, at odds  
3 with your opening statements about the increased investment  
4 we need in facilities, sustained restoration, and  
5 modernization, because of the reduced budget triggered by  
6 the CR we had to decrease our FSRM account by \$642 million,  
7 just to remain solvent. This directly affected quality of  
8 life for our airmen, and we must find a better way going  
9 into the future.

10 We do not just need a smarter Air Force; we need a  
11 capable one. We need more tooth, less tail, a force that  
12 can deliver rapid, decisive blows and reposition quickly  
13 for the next fight. That means divesting from aging  
14 systems and unused infrastructure while investing in  
15 platforms and people that enhance our warfighting capacity.

16 More means more options for the nation, enhanced  
17 homeland defense, strengthened deterrence, and unmatched  
18 power projection. It means a force that is strategically  
19 postured to deny adversaries. No other service can match  
20 what the Air Force delivers, affects anywhere on the globe,  
21 at any scale, on minimal notice. Our airmen are the best  
22 in the world, ready to win today and build the enduring  
23 force for tomorrow. With your support, we can ensure the  
24 Air Force remains the cornerstone of American power through  
25 the 21st century.

1           Thank you for your time, and I look forward to your  
2 questions.

3           [The prepared statement of General Allvin follows:]  
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1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, General Allvin. Let's go  
2 to General Saltzman next. Sir, you are recognized.

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1           STATEMENT OF GENERAL B. CHANCE SALTZMAN, USSF, CHIEF  
2   OF SPACE OPERATIONS

3           General Saltzman:   Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member  
4   Reed, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for  
5   the continued support and for the opportunity to testify on  
6   the Space Force's posture for fiscal year 2026.

7           Never before in our history has space been more  
8   critical to the future of our nation.   Satellites underpin  
9   our economic prosperity, enabling everything from  
10   transportation and communication to agriculture and  
11   finance.   Space has likewise become the backbone of our  
12   national security, and today's joint force is built around  
13   the assumption that space power will be there when needed.  
14   GPS allows our forces to mass and maneuver fires.  
15   Satellite communications ensure global C2 of operations.  
16   Satellites offer constant vigilance on the battlefield,  
17   alerting America's forces of missile launches and adversary  
18   actions.

19          All of these effects, and more, are provided by the  
20   U.S. Space Force.   With about 3 percent of the DoD budget  
21   and less than 1 percent of the personnel, the Space Force  
22   is a great value proposition for the Department.   For this  
23   tiny fraction of resources, you enable a service that has  
24   become indispensable to modern power projection.

25          However, despite the dramatic rise in threats and

1 increasing importance of space, over the last few budget  
2 cycles the Space Force has experienced shrinking resources.  
3 This disconnect between value and investment creates risk  
4 for our nation. Further exacerbating the situation, the  
5 Space Force has been asked to accept new responsibilities  
6 and missions, forcing tough choices between delayed  
7 readiness, reduced capacity, and unaddressed  
8 vulnerabilities.

9 To illustrate my point, in the past 3 years the Space  
10 Force has been asked to take on new missions like ground-  
11 and air-moving target indications and adding new space  
12 control capabilities. We are taking on additional  
13 responsibilities associated with modeling and simulation,  
14 force design analytics, and a threefold increase in launch  
15 tempo at our national space ports, along with new advanced  
16 training requirements. These requirements have driven the  
17 need for increases in end strength, military construction,  
18 new education and training curriculum, and expanded  
19 information technology requirements.

20 The most recent addition in our mission set is the  
21 space-based technology associated with the Golden Dome  
22 program, which will depend heavily on Space Force sensors,  
23 data fusion, and communication capabilities. These are not  
24 modernization efforts or shifts from legacy mission. They  
25 represent new and emerging requirements for missions that

1 have never before been accomplished by military space  
2 organizations. These new mission areas will require new  
3 and stable resources over time to deliver. In fiscal year  
4 2026, we will have developed the blueprint and laid the  
5 foundational groundwork to continue these efforts in  
6 earnest. If the resources are made available, the Space  
7 Force will be postured to use them effectively in pursuit  
8 of these critical priority missions.

9 Space gives us an incredible strategic advantage, but  
10 any advantage can become a vulnerability when held at risk.  
11 In the future, defending the homeland will demand that we  
12 first defend the satellites that make that defense  
13 possible. To be successful in this effort, we must be able  
14 to control the space domain, protecting our capabilities in  
15 space while denying an adversary the ability to use space  
16 against us. That, in essence, is why we have a Space  
17 Force. It is the job of a military service to achieve  
18 superiority in its domain, and that is what we do for  
19 space.

20 But if we want a force that can secure our nation's  
21 interests and from and to space, we must resource it  
22 accordingly. In pursuit of this mission imperative, my  
23 priorities have remained consistent -- build comprehensive  
24 domain awareness, deploy resilient mission architectures,  
25 and develop the capacity to hold an adversary's space

1 assets at risk.

2 To enhance our situational awareness we are investing  
3 in additional sensors, data fusion capabilities, and the  
4 networks to rapidly put this information in decision-  
5 makers' hands.

6 To assure our missions are resilient to attacks we are  
7 investing in proliferated constellations, we are investing  
8 in launch infrastructure to ensure steady and cost-  
9 effective deployment of capabilities, and we are developing  
10 protective measures for our satellites and networks. And  
11 finally, to hold an adversary's space assets at risk, we  
12 are investing in counter-space systems designed to defeat  
13 any attempt to use space capabilities to target our forces  
14 or our homeland.

15 Because of the work we have already done, additional  
16 resources given to the Space Force will enable accelerated  
17 delivery and expanded capacity in each of these areas.

18 Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Space  
19 Force's fiscal year 2026 posture. Our guardians stand at  
20 the forefront of the newest warfighting domain. With the  
21 support of this Committee, I am confident the Space Force  
22 will hold the line and advance our national advantage in  
23 space. I look forward to your questions.

24 [The prepared statement of General Saltzman follows:]  
25

Chairman Wicker: Thank you, General Saltzman.

Secretary Meink.

1           STATEMENT OF HON. TROY E. MEINK, SECRETARY OF THE AIR  
2       FORCE

3           Mr. Meink:   Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and  
4       distinguished Committee members, General Allvin, General  
5       Saltzman, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to  
6       talk today, and personally I would like to give my sincere  
7       thanks for the support during the hearing process, and I am  
8       glad to be back here so soon.

9           The Department of the Air Force is at an inflection  
10      point.  We are engaging in a fast-paced race for technology  
11      superiority against a well-resourced strategic opponent.  
12      However, we simultaneously face personnel and platform  
13      challenges affecting our immediate readiness.  We must  
14      balance our requirements to generate readiness and project  
15      power today with the imperative to rebuild our military and  
16      develop capabilities so that we can continue deterring our  
17      adversaries tomorrow.

18          Our fiscal priorities are focused on addressing the  
19      balance between these realities and supporting United  
20      States national security objectives as outlined in Interim  
21      National Strategic Guidance.

22          The scope and severity of the threat to our homeland  
23      and national interests are significant and increasing.  We  
24      now face one of the most dangerous security environments in  
25      our history.  The Department of the Air Force has

1 structured for long term strategy around belief that China  
2 is our pacing threat, and this reality directly influences  
3 the Department's fiscal priorities.

4 China's defense budget has nearly doubled during the  
5 past 11 years, growing 6 percent annually, on average.

6 U.S. defense spending has grown around 3 percent over the  
7 same period, increasing below the inflation level over the  
8 last 5 years, and many of our allied partners' defense  
9 spending rates are even lower. These limitations have  
10 allowed China to start closing the gap in capabilities.

11 Defending the homeland is the Department of the Air  
12 Force's top priority. We will do so by continuing to  
13 modernize our nuclear forces, especially through the  
14 Sentinel, B-21 long-range standoff weapon programs as well  
15 as the nuclear command and control communication that  
16 support these systems.

17 We are also eager to support the President's Golden  
18 Dome for America. While still in the conceptual stage,  
19 there is no question that the Department of the Air Force  
20 will have a significant role in this project.

21 Our next priority is to deter China and others. We  
22 will do this through investing in our people, our  
23 readiness, and our posture within the Indo-Pacific region.  
24 We believe that our people are, and will continue to be,  
25 our nation's key competitive advantage. We are working to

1 train our airmen and guardians to confront the brutal  
2 challenges that warfare without sanctuary presents. We are  
3 emphasizing readiness standards by creating new  
4 inspections, assessments, and exercises geared towards  
5 preparing our personnel for this environment.

6 Finally, we are strengthening our posture within the  
7 Indo-Pacific region, conducting high-level operational  
8 exercises that will test our ability to deploy and operate  
9 in austere environments.

10 Lastly, the Department of the Air Force is preparing  
11 to provide critical capabilities and forces to our joint  
12 warfighter in order to defeat our adversaries if deterrence  
13 fails. We will concentrate our efforts in two areas, first  
14 in our ability to fight tonight, and second, in our ability  
15 to fight in the future.

16 Through our current and future investments, the  
17 Department aims to establish a balanced high-low mix of  
18 combat capabilities, optimized to project power both from  
19 within and outside of adversary threat environments. The  
20 Department of the Air Force is also looking to streamline  
21 our force wherever possible. This includes finding  
22 creative ways to remove excess infrastructure and retire  
23 obsolete inventory. We also recognize our need and  
24 responsibility to pass an audit as soon as possible, and we  
25 are working to make that a reality.

1           The Department of the Air Force is extremely proud of  
2 all of our airmen and guardians defending our nation and  
3 its interests, every hour of every day. We commit to  
4 working with this Committee to secure the fiscal year 2026  
5 budget request, which will directly support airmen and  
6 guardians in their uncompromising mission.

7           We thank you for your time, and look forward to your  
8 questions.

9           [The prepared statement of Mr. Meink follows:]

1 Chairman Wicker: We thank each of you for your  
2 testimony. Quick yes-or-no answer from each of you. Much  
3 of the funding of the defense reconciliation bill will be  
4 unspecific because of House and Senate rules, and will  
5 technically be at the discretion of the Department of  
6 Defense, although we will write recommendations for them.

7 A quick yes or no from each of you. Do you commit to  
8 follow, unequivocally, Congress' spending recommendations  
9 and defense reconciliation. General Allvin?

10 General Allvin: Yes.

11 Chairman Wicker: Secretary Meink?

12 Mr. Meink: Yes, Chairman.

13 Chairman Wicker: General Saltzman?

14 General Saltzman: Yes, sir.

15 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much.

16 Now, General Allvin, you made a statement that I think  
17 I very much agree with. You said there has got to be a  
18 better way. I think you were talking about then these  
19 frequent continuing resolutions, were you not?

20 General Allvin: Yes, Chairman. That is what I was  
21 referring to.

22 Chairman Wicker: Okay. Thank you very much about  
23 that. General Saltzman, I think you said the Space Force  
24 consumes about 3 percent of the defense budget. You are  
25 talking on additional responsibilities. I think you agree

1 that those additional responsibilities are correctly  
2 directed toward the Space Force.

3 General Saltzman: Yes, sir, I do.

4 Chairman Wicker: And do you think the 3 percent in  
5 the next 5 to 10 years is going to remain a correct  
6 percentage of the overall national security budget?

7 General Saltzman: I think that depends on what the  
8 denominator is, but I definitely think we need more  
9 resources in order to accomplish those new missions.

10 Chairman Wicker: Okay. Now, General Allvin, let's  
11 talk about the F-47, and let's compare it to the  
12 development of the F-35. I understand there is a  
13 completely new acquisition approach. Do not take the full  
14 3 minutes I have left, but what is the difference there,  
15 and how is this going to affect the taxpayer and the  
16 warfighter and national security?

17 General Allvin: Thank you, Chairman. I will go as  
18 fast as I can because I could go on for about an hour. The  
19 primary difference is that we now have more control over  
20 the project as it moves forward. We have insourced more.  
21 We have more ownership of the tech base. We have guided a  
22 government-reference architecture. So we own the mission  
23 systems. Others can come in and play, but we own the  
24 development, the upgrade. So the upgrades can come at the  
25 speed of software, not hardware, can come at the speed of

1 our engineers understanding how fast to advance versus  
2 dealing with the contractor and paying the extra costs.

3 Chairman Wicker: All right, sir. This is a major  
4 change in approach, is it not?

5 General Allvin: One hundred percent, Chairman.

6 Chairman Wicker: How is going to affect the taxpayer?  
7 How is it going to affect the timeliness of this project?

8 General Allvin: Chairman, I think we are going to  
9 have some conversations about the F-35 and how we do not  
10 want to repeat that. So it is going to affect the  
11 taxpayer. My sense is that we are going to be able to be  
12 more agile, and as more disruptive technology comes into  
13 play, to be able to develop more advanced systems, we will  
14 be able to more rapidly integrate them, not only into the  
15 F-47 but into those two collaborative combat aircraft, the  
16 YFQ-42 and the YFQ-44, that are currently under prototype.  
17 They are all going to be under the same mission systems  
18 architecture.

19 So we will not just be upgrading one platform. We  
20 will be upgrading a system. So the American taxpayer will  
21 get more combat capability out of their money.

22 Chairman Wicker: What do we mean by mission  
23 capability? And we are told there are some fairly poor  
24 numbers, 60 percent readiness rates for some of our  
25 aircraft. What do you mean by that and how are we going to

1 address that issue?

2 General Allvin: So mission capable rate, obviously,  
3 you assess the missions for which it is designed and the  
4 air crew are trained, whether that be air-to-air combat,  
5 air-to-ground, the certain capabilities. So the aircraft  
6 has to have the systems that are working that enables all  
7 those missions to happen.

8 So when we say mission capable, it gets pretty  
9 detailed. There is fully mission capable, partial mission  
10 capable, non-mission capable.

11 Chairman Wicker: Let's talk about the F-16. What is  
12 our capability rate? Is it where it ought to be?

13 General Allvin: For its age, I would say the F-16 is  
14 about where it ought to be, for its age and for its  
15 sophistication. Because, obviously, the more complex the  
16 system, the tougher it is to keep up those mission systems.

17 Chairman Wicker: But where is it?

18 General Allvin: The F-16 -- and I am cheating because  
19 I do not have it all committed to memory -- but the F-16  
20 aircraft availability, which includes depot time, is now  
21 hovering around 50 percent. That deceives you a little bit  
22 because aircraft availability includes the time when it  
23 goes into the program depot. So its mission capable rate  
24 is higher than that, and I can get that for you here. It  
25 is 62 percent mission capable rate.

1 Chairman Wicker: Okay. Well, you probably will want  
2 to supplement your answer there, but thank you very much.

3 Senator Reed, you are now recognized.

4 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr.  
5 secretary, the Air Force is one of the most highly  
6 technical services, and the Space Force, together, and you  
7 have a workforce that is very talented and critical. The  
8 proposed reductions in the civilian workforce at the  
9 Department of Defense, are you anticipating losses, and  
10 will you be tracking those losses? Because you have people  
11 working for you that could walk out the door the next day  
12 and get a substantial job. And while these early  
13 retirements, et cetera, are complicating, your comments,  
14 please.

15 Mr. Meink: Yes, Senator, we are watching it, and yes,  
16 we do expect to lose personnel. We already are. You know,  
17 and just to reiterate your comments that the technical  
18 skill base that the Air Force requires is always  
19 competitive. That is a very competitive skill base. That  
20 is why I think recruiting and retention activities, which I  
21 intend to focus quite a bit of my time on, are going to be  
22 critical going forward, because it is a rapidly evolving  
23 environment and we have to make sure we are recruiting the  
24 right talent.

25 In the end it is prioritization. Over my career we

1 have gone through a number of these ups and down with  
2 respect to personnel. We have to prioritize and then make  
3 sure how we are doing our recruiting and retention and  
4 bringing on the new people are focused on the areas of  
5 priority.

6 Senator Reed: Thank you. General Saltzman, again you  
7 have a highly technical force, particularly with a  
8 significant number of civilians. Have you seen retirements  
9 and people leaving because they are uncertain of the  
10 climate?

11 General Saltzman: We have certainly seen people  
12 leaving, a combination of incentives, deferred retirement  
13 program, resignation program, and others. We also were in  
14 a hiring freeze for some time. We were in a period of  
15 managed growth, and so there was a deficit, when we were  
16 trying to get to a larger civilian workforce and we were  
17 asked to stop and then offer some to resign early. Total  
18 reductions have been almost 14 percent of our civilian  
19 workforce inside the Space Force. Part of that is a result  
20 of having smaller numbers, so small numbers more  
21 drastically affect our percentages. But we understand the  
22 desire to reduce the civilian workforce. It is just having  
23 a little bit of an outsized impact on the Space Force.

24 Senator Reed: Well, I would ask all of you, if you,  
25 in a particular agency, see a point where the civilian

1 workforce has essentially reached the point of breaking, if  
2 you will, you must alert us to that. Because again, we are  
3 not going to do all these great scientific and development  
4 and modernization issues without these critical workers.

5 General Saltzman, in your publication, "United States  
6 Space Force Warfighting: A Framework for Planning," you  
7 lay out the very sophisticated offensive and defensive  
8 weapon systems that you need in the future. But do you  
9 agree that these systems should be the property of the  
10 Space Force, a Title 10 armed force? Because there has  
11 been some discussion of leasing pieces of equipment and  
12 things like that, so you would have, perhaps, a civilian-  
13 owned system in a kill chain, which raises some serious  
14 issues.

15 General Saltzman: Yes, sir. We take very seriously  
16 our Title 10 responsibilities to wield military force. We  
17 believe those should be government systems, and we are  
18 actively going through an assessment process to determine  
19 precisely what are inherently governmental, inherently  
20 military functions that we would not want to contract out  
21 as commercial services. There are some fine lines there  
22 between the data they use and how that data is acquired and  
23 then how it is used in terms of targeting, et cetera. We  
24 are trying to be very precise so that we retain  
25 governmental control for those things in the kill chain.

1           Senator Reed: Thank you. General Allvin, could you  
2 estimate how much, in cost, facilities that you have that  
3 you do not need and that you have to maintain? How much is  
4 that a year, do you guess?

5           General Allvin: Senator Reed, as far as the volume,  
6 we estimate we have about 23 percent excess vertical  
7 infrastructure, about a 60 percent horizontal. So overall  
8 the dollar value is about 30 percent. Our estimate, our  
9 rough estimate, is it costs us an addition maybe \$1.5  
10 billion a year just to be able to maintain that. So that  
11 was sort of the source of my, I guess, ill-delivered issue  
12 on that. I am not lamenting Senate's very strong interest  
13 in making sure our airmen have a place to work and live  
14 that makes sense. It is the excess that we do not need.

15           I think there are probably some innovative solutions  
16 we can work on together, and I would love to see that at  
17 the enterprise level.

18           Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much. I think you  
19 are right. I think we have to look at an innovative way to  
20 reduce these facilities, free up \$1.5 billion perhaps in  
21 the Air Force and put it back into quality of life or into  
22 system. Thank you, Gentlemen.

23           Chairman Wicker: General Allvin, you can allow for  
24 that excess and still comply with the statute, can you not?

25           General Allvin: We must, because it is in law. Yes,

1 absolutely, Chairman, recognize that.

2 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Senator  
3 Fischer.

4 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary  
5 Meink, at your confirmation hearing you committed to  
6 utilizing all available tools to accelerate Sentinel  
7 emplacement and ensuring that our nation's ICBM capability  
8 does move forward.

9 The Nunn-McCurdy review concluded that the  
10 continuation of Sentinel is essential to our national  
11 security, and thanks to the thoroughness of that review we  
12 can make smarter changes to the program that will reduce  
13 the projected cost and schedule of the program.

14 However, the Air Force needs to start making design  
15 decisions that will get us to Milestone B. The longer you  
16 wait, the more likely it is that costs will increase. I  
17 also do not want to see the Air Force choose to raid  
18 Sentinel budget lines to pay for other programs because the  
19 Air Force has delayed Milestone B decisions.

20 So Mr. Secretary, I know you have been in this  
21 position for all of about a week now, but next time you  
22 come before the Committee I would want to have a robust  
23 discussion on Sentinel's progress and the risks that we  
24 would incur if the program is arbitrarily delayed or  
25 underfunded.

1           Also, sir, USSTRATCOM Commander, General Cotton, has  
2 recommended that the Air Force procure at least 145 B-21  
3 bombers to meet his requirements as STRATCOM Commander.  
4 How do you intend to work with STRATCOM to understand these  
5 requirements and ensure that the Air Force procures enough  
6 B-21s so that we can meet that projected threat?

7           Mr. Meink: Thank you for the question, Senator. With  
8 respect to Sentinel, yes, ma'am. The fifth day into the  
9 job I will be having that first deep dive into the Sentinel  
10 program, so this Friday it is scheduled.

11          Senator Fischer: Great.

12          Mr. Meink: That will just be a start. So yes,  
13 Senator, it is something we have to get on. Obviously, the  
14 Nunn-McCurdy led to some restructuring of the program.  
15 What exactly that is going to be, I will be working with  
16 the team, and I am happy to get back with the Committee  
17 when I get more detail on that.

18          B-21, yes, Senator, I understand that General Cotton -  
19 - and I do expect to be meeting with General Cotton soon, I  
20 hope, to discuss their portfolio. But B-21 is a big part  
21 of that. But my understanding is that the Department is  
22 working with STRATCOM as well as Joint Staff throughout the  
23 Administration, the SecDef, to help define what is that  
24 long-term requirement and do we need to increase beyond  
25 100. So we are looking at that, and it is one of the

1 areas. And thankfully, that is one of the programs that is  
2 actually executing pretty well within the department.

3 Senator Fischer: Right. The STRATCOM Commander does  
4 have to express his needs, his requirements, so he can  
5 address the threats, and then it is up to the services to  
6 step forward and to meet those requirements. Am I stating  
7 that correctly?

8 Mr. Meink: Into the Joint Staff, and then, yes, the  
9 service executes on that requirement.

10 Senator Fischer: Okay. Thank you. General Saltzman,  
11 all of the other services are investing heavily in long-  
12 range fires, and as I have said many times we cannot shoot  
13 what we cannot see. We are going to need to rely heavily  
14 on our space-based systems to track objects beyond the line  
15 of sight. How does Space Force work with your sister  
16 services to understand what space capabilities they will  
17 need to rely on so that they can close those kill chains?

18 General Saltzman: Yes, ma'am. We were designated the  
19 Joint Space Requirements Integrator by the JROC on the  
20 Joint Staff, and one of the ways that we execute those  
21 responsibilities is we stood up a requirements integration  
22 cell in the J8, where all the services can put their  
23 requirements in. We vet them all and make sure there is  
24 proper attention given to each requirement and there is not  
25 too much redundancy, but no gaps in the capabilities, as

1 well. Programs like our Ground Moving Target Indicator,  
2 soon to be our Air Moving Target Indicator, account for  
3 these requirements, what the fidelity of the data is, what  
4 the latency of the data to support weapon systems, in-  
5 flight updates, et cetera. We make sure we account for all  
6 of those things as we develop the programs.

7 Senator Fischer: Thank you. And Mr. Secretary, in  
8 the submitted Air Force posture statement you describe SAOC  
9 crucial to any future warfare endeavor. I agree with that.  
10 And it is for this reason that I was disappointed that  
11 President Biden, his budget request last year did not  
12 include any military construction funding necessary to  
13 support SAOC.

14 Do you agree that the Air Force should be planning for  
15 SAOC's associated military construction projects, those  
16 hangars and ramps, for example, to be completed by the time  
17 that SAOC is expected to reach the initial operating  
18 capability by 2032?

19 Mr. Meink: Yes, Senator, we should be planning for  
20 that, and I have already had some discussions on that to  
21 make sure that we are ready.

22 Senator Fischer: Will you continue to have the Air  
23 Force work to ensure that those projects are going to be  
24 completed in a timely manner?

25 Mr. Meink: Yes, Senator.

1           Senator Fischer: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Mr.  
2 Chairman.

3           Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Senator  
4 Hirono.

5           Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would  
6 like to start by noting a very questionable act by  
7 President Trump recently, wherein he confirmed that he is  
8 planning to accept a \$400 million Boeing 747 gift from the  
9 Qatari royal family. Let's call this what it is. The  
10 President is using the DoD to accept -- you could even call  
11 it launder -- an impermissible gift to skirt constitutional  
12 limitations on the acceptance of personal gifts from  
13 foreign governments without congressional approval.

14          Even more brazenly, he is placing the burden to  
15 retrofit the aircraft on the Air Force, which experts say  
16 is likely to cost more than \$1 billion, before transferring  
17 it to his own personal use post presidency. And, of  
18 course, of particular concern to this Committee as well as  
19 other committees, accepting this gift brings with it  
20 significant counterintelligence risks. And as we sit here  
21 concerning ourselves with the use of taxpayers' money from  
22 both an operational, security, and financial management  
23 standpoint, it makes little sense that this should even  
24 occur.

25          Mr. Chairman, I wanted to make a note of what, it is

1 not just me but others consider very questionable behavior  
2 by this President.

3 Moving on to questions for General Saltzman, the Space  
4 Force is planning to install up to seven additional  
5 telescopes on Haleakala on Maui to support space domain  
6 awareness. Monitoring and tracking the increasing number  
7 of objects in orbit is critical to supporting the joint  
8 force. However, Haleakala holds cultural significance to  
9 the Native Hawaiian community, and given the unique  
10 environmental and cultural significance of Haleakala, will  
11 you commit to working with and listening to the concerns of  
12 local stakeholders to ensure transparency and community  
13 engagement as the Space Force considers options for this  
14 project?

15 General Saltzman: Absolutely, Senator. We have  
16 conducted several community engagements, and we will  
17 continue to do that as we progress with the project.

18 Senator Hirono: I appreciate that because I know that  
19 what you are contemplating is very important, and the last  
20 thing we need is for the community to not have the kind of  
21 awareness and support that it needs to enable us and you to  
22 go forward.

23 For General Allvin, with the ongoing retirement of the  
24 aging E-3 fleet, Pacific Air Forces has identified an  
25 urgent need to find a replacement as soon as possible, and

1 I have discussed this with other. Also, my understanding  
2 is the Air Force is planning to spend an addition \$400  
3 million in fiscal year 2025 for an advanced procurement of  
4 the E-7 Wedgetail replacement aircraft. Can you talk about  
5 the importance of rapidly fielding an E-3 replacement  
6 aircraft to support operations in the Indo-Pacific??

7 General Allvin: Thank you very much, Senator, and we  
8 could not be more on target there with the idea of being  
9 able to maintain our ability to do airborne warning and  
10 battle management, and the E-3 has been a fantastic  
11 platform, but it is sort of self-divesting. It is really  
12 getting old.

13 So as we look to the future, we understand there is a  
14 future there where, working with my brother in the Space  
15 Force, that we will be able to sort of migrate some of that  
16 into space. We have to make sure that we can migrate it  
17 all into space, not only just the sensing but the sensing  
18 and the making sense and then the deciding, based on that.

19 So the E-7 offers advantages that the E-3 does not  
20 have with respect to enhanced capability, range, and some  
21 of the other capabilities that it has. So the ability to  
22 maintain a viable battle management, especially in the  
23 Indo-Pacific, and some redundancy between the air and space  
24 layer as the space layer matures, is going to be very  
25 important going into the future.

1           Senator Hirono: This replacement situation has been  
2 already delayed, and my understanding is that the  
3 Administration may still be considering whether to cancel  
4 the E-7 altogether in favor of a space-based system. But  
5 that is going to take time, and I think that you need to  
6 have the replacement for aircraft that are over 50 years  
7 old, much sooner than moving to a space-based system.  
8 Would you agree?

9           General Allvin: I do believe that we need to maintain  
10 that viability, and I do not want to get ahead of where the  
11 Administration is on this budget, but you are correct, in  
12 the '25 position did have us advancing those two  
13 prototypes.

14          Senator Hirono: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I will  
15 submit other questions for the record.

16          Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Hirono. Senator  
17 Cotton.

18          Senator Cotton: General Allvin, you talked about the  
19 need to buy new aircraft to replace our oldest fighters.  
20 Why is that? Under the current fighter production plans we  
21 are going to be flying some of our oldest aircraft into the  
22 2040s. Would purchasing more kids of new fighters now both  
23 increase deterrence and improve our ability to defend the  
24 homeland while projecting power abroad in the near term?

25          General Allvin: Senator, that is a great point, and

1 having not only the right capacity but the capability for  
2 those, to make sure that we have the right mix of the high  
3 end to be able to dominate and be relevant in an Indo-  
4 Pacific fight as well as other fighters that may not need  
5 to be as sophisticated as sort of our fifth generation,  
6 sixth generation, so to build out the whole capacity of the  
7 Air Force.

8 Senator Cotton: Will the CCA Increment 1 be able to  
9 replace manned fighters like the Strike Eagle and F-16?

10 General Allvin: Senator Cotton, we are on sort of the  
11 nascent part of the Collaborative Combat Aircraft, but my  
12 assessment as of right now, it will not replace that. It  
13 will be a great augmentation, and its threshold is to be  
14 able to work with the F-35 and F-22, even before the F-47  
15 gets fielded. So it will help us deliver more combat  
16 capability at a better cost point, but as far as replacing  
17 the manned fighters, that remains to be seen. What we have  
18 built into Increment 1, my assessment right now is that  
19 would not be a good one for one replacement, but it does  
20 augment.

21 Senator Cotton: I did not think so, and given that  
22 the President has made the decision to move forward with  
23 the F-47 as a manned fighter, if it cannot be replaced by  
24 autonomous aircraft, you would not think it could do so for  
25 the 16 or the Strike Eagle either.

1 Focusing on just the next decade then, our current  
2 acquisition options are pretty limited. We have got just a  
3 couple of airframes right now going. Would you be able to  
4 use newly built U.S.-configured Block 80 F-16s to  
5 strengthen our strike fighter fleet, if Congress can find  
6 additional funds for such an effort?

7 General Allvin: Senator Cotton, to give you good  
8 advice on that I would really have to look at what the  
9 defense industrial base can do on that, because my sense is  
10 that the current Block 70 is really eating up a lot of the  
11 production line and the production capacity in all of the  
12 FMS sales.

13 Looking at what that would be to take that export  
14 variant and adapt it to a Block 80 and the time it would  
15 take and where that would fall in the production line, I  
16 would have to get back with you with more details to see if  
17 that would be an advisable situation.

18 Senator Cotton: Well, I am glad you raised the FMS  
19 issue with the Block 70. For the quickest fielding  
20 timeline, would you be able to use modern block 70s that  
21 are being made for our allies to meet critical needs, if  
22 that option were available?

23 General Allvin: I would have to take that one for the  
24 record, because I do not want to give you a yes or no  
25 because specifically, understanding what the export variant

1 can and cannot do and any sort of adjustments we would have  
2 to make to make it more easily integrable with our U.S.-  
3 built fighters. So I would need to see what the  
4 integration opportunities and costs would be before I could  
5 give you a good answer on that, if I could take that for  
6 the record and give you a bit more detail.

7 Senator Cotton: I would like, yeah, more details, to  
8 get back to the Committee on that.

9 General Allvin: Yes, sir.

10 Senator Cotton: Because getting to your first point,  
11 it is not just about the most highly capable fighters, the  
12 22s, the 35s, and ultimately the 47s, but about the  
13 capacity, just the sheer number we have. And there are  
14 pretty significant shortfalls over the next decade. Isn't  
15 that right?

16 General Allvin: Well, as we continue to keep the  
17 older aircraft they do become more and more expensive to  
18 maintain. And as we mentioned before, the mission capable  
19 rate, it is not what we would like it to be. Again, the  
20 average F-16 that we have right now was built right about  
21 the time that the Cold War ended. So even those F-16s are  
22 getting pretty old.

23 Senator Cotton: Finally, beyond the fighter aircraft,  
24 you have said the country needs more Air Force. Could you  
25 elaborate specifically on what you mean, in practical

1 terms, and what specifically Congress can do to best  
2 support the country getting more Air Force?

3 General Allvin: Thank you, Senator, and I will go  
4 very quickly. I think when we look at all of the things  
5 that we will discuss here today, I would love to have a  
6 more rapidly modernized and capable refueling force,  
7 because it is about range in the Pacific. So having  
8 survivable tanking to be able to do that.

9 More Air Force, so as we do our operations in the  
10 Indo-Pacific in agile combat employment, to ensure base  
11 resiliency, base survivability, so some more airbase air  
12 defense. To have more capabilities not only in the  
13 platforms but in the munitions. Our munitions portfolio  
14 needs to increase.

15 So there are so many things -- and oh, by the way, I  
16 have not even talked about the nuclear, which we cannot  
17 take our eyes off the ball on that, as well as what it is  
18 going to take for defending the threats to the homeland.

19 So all of those things, when you stack them up, and we  
20 try and prioritize with the limited budgets, there are many  
21 unhappy folks here that we do not have all that we would  
22 like to have. So I think it is not only just more capacity  
23 but also putting more lethality into that capacity.

24 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

25 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Cotton. General

1 Allvin, how are we going to get more range in our refueling  
2 in the near term?

3 General Allvin: Actually, I was talking about the  
4 survivability. So more tails in the air. So ensuring that  
5 we continue the recapitalization of the KC-135 fleet into  
6 the future. And then, really Chairman, we can talk about  
7 this in another session, but making sure that as they get  
8 into a more and more contested environment, and they do  
9 those things that air refueling does so well, which allows  
10 our combat capability to have the loitering time and all of  
11 the time to be able to spend more time prosecuting targets,  
12 we need to make sure that those air refuelers that we have  
13 can stay in the air and can maintain more survivability.  
14 So it is not only just the modernization of it but also  
15 looking to make it more survivable.

16 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, General, and thank you,  
17 Senator Cotton. Senator King.

18 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to  
19 follow up on that very question. One way to help on the  
20 tanker capacity is KC-46s at Bangor, affectionately known  
21 as "the MAINEiacs." As you know, they provided enormous  
22 support during the Gulf War, and anything on the east side  
23 of the United States in terms of Europe, the Middle East,  
24 it is going to be an incredibly important capacity. They  
25 are doing fantastically with their present fleet, but the

1 KC-46s is the next generation. And as you pointed out  
2 yourself, tankers are the heart and soul of being able to  
3 keep our forces over the target. So I hope that is  
4 something on your agenda.

5 General Allvin: Absolutely, Senator, and the  
6 MAINEiacs are on the list as part of one of the candidate  
7 locations, and the final preferred location will happen in  
8 the fourth quarter of this year.

9 Senator King: I appreciate that. Thank you very  
10 much.

11 Mr. Chairman, I think we could save a lot of money on  
12 the F-47 because Secretary Meink is the only Secretary of  
13 the Air Force I know of who has ever designed, built, and  
14 flown his own experimental aircraft. So we could just have  
15 him do the F-47 himself, right, Secretary Meink?

16 Chairman Wicker: Is that in the form of a motion?

17 [Laughter.]

18 Mr. Meink: I do not think my garage has the  
19 infrastructure to build a 46.

20 Senator King: Thank you. General Allvin, I am  
21 concerned about availability and mission availability. You  
22 mentioned a couple of figures -- 50 percent, 62 percent.  
23 The commercial air fleet is in the high 90s. Now granted,  
24 there are more complicated systems in the military, but I  
25 believe -- and this applies to the Navy, as well -- that we

1 really do not put enough emphasis on maintenance and  
2 availability. We are talking about very expensive products  
3 here, very expensive aircraft, and if we had more of them  
4 ready to fly we perhaps would not have to buy as many new  
5 ones.

6 So I see that, closing that gap between 62 percent and  
7 98 percent, which is the commercial availability rate,  
8 would go a long way toward helping us with our budget and  
9 also helping us with our readiness.

10 General Allvin: Senator, thank you for that. I would  
11 say that one of the big challenges is that the airlines  
12 have a profit model. They have a different business model.  
13 So as they look at that, they generate their value --

14 Senator King: Yeah, the difference is they have to  
15 meet a profit realization rate, and we do not, the military  
16 does not. And I am just saying, surely we can get beyond  
17 62 percent.

18 General Allvin: I do believe, Senator, we do need to  
19 improve that. I think one of the big challenges, though,  
20 what I was trying to drive at, the KC-135s, the average one  
21 is as old as me, and I am no spring chicken. So the  
22 airlines, they just throw theirs out after a certain amount  
23 of time, because it becomes cost ineffective for them to  
24 maintain older platforms that it can still have enough  
25 seats, passenger seats, to maintain a profit. So they will

1 dump those off to the side.

2 Senator King: I understand that. But do you believe  
3 that we can do better than 62 percent?

4 General Allvin: I do believe we can do better, and I  
5 think it becomes more challenging the older the aircraft  
6 get, because we are discovering new things all the time  
7 because they are breaking in new and different ways.

8 But yes, Senator, we can continue to do better. We  
9 put more money against it every year. Unfortunately, for  
10 the past few years, despite the increased money that we put  
11 into weapon systems sustainment, because of the increase of  
12 age it takes more man hours and more mechanical hours. We  
13 are not getting that much of an increase because we are  
14 spending more time trying to fix those.

15 But that is a challenge we are constantly working. We  
16 do need to improve.

17 Senator King: Thank you. General Saltzman, you have  
18 been very diplomatic today, but if we were starting with a  
19 blank sheet of paper in terms of the threats that we are  
20 facing, particularly the militarization of space by both  
21 the Russians and the Chinese, 3 percent of the defense  
22 budget for Space Force is totally inadequate. And I hope  
23 you can comment on that, understanding that you are under  
24 the subject of the defense budget and all those kinds of  
25 things. But as far as I am concerned, we need to vastly,

1 significantly increase the availability of funds to the  
2 Space Force, given the magnitude of the mission to which  
3 you have been assigned.

4 General Saltzman: I agree, Senator. The last 3 years  
5 of funding has not allowed me to go as quickly as possible,  
6 putting counterspace capabilities together, that address  
7 the targets that I am being asked to address by U.S. Space  
8 Command, amongst other combatant commanders.

9 Senator King: One of the ways I like to think about  
10 these things is if you were starting with a blank sheet of  
11 paper for allocation of defense funds today, I do not think  
12 there is any question that the Space Force would get  
13 substantially more resources, given the development of the  
14 threat, which is the first hours or days of any conflict  
15 with a major adversary are going to take place in space.  
16 And as you have mentioned, and Senator Fischer mentioned,  
17 sensors, GPS, everything is going to depend on our ability  
18 to defend that domain.

19 So I certainly hope to work with members of the  
20 Committee to see that you have resources adequate to meet  
21 the challenges that you have been asked to meet. Thank  
22 you, Mr. Chairman.

23 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator King. Senator  
24 Rounds.

25 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, let

1 me just say thank you to all three of you for your service  
2 to our country. Secretary Meink, I know that you are doing  
3 kind of a fire hose right now, so I am not going to get  
4 into all of the current situation with regard to the Air  
5 Force. But I would like to discuss something that I think  
6 is critical, and I know that you have got a background in  
7 it, and that is -- and it will come to no surprise to the  
8 rest of the Committee -- I want to talk about spectrum for  
9 just a minute.

10 We have heard from -- I know, no surprise, right? --  
11 we have now heard from 24 senior DoD officials in hearings  
12 over the last 2 years, including every service chief and 8  
13 combatant commanders, that vacating the 3.1 to 3.45 GHz  
14 band of the spectrum would have extremely serious and  
15 negative consequences for our warfighting capabilities. In  
16 fact, the Department of the Navy alone has estimated that  
17 relocating their systems to a different part of the  
18 spectrum band would cost them approximately \$250 billion.

19 How would forcing the Air Force to vacate the 3.1 to  
20 3.45 GHz and other critical bands of the electromagnetic  
21 spectrum impact the service's warfighting capabilities?

22 Mr. Meink: First of, Senator, thank you for the  
23 support on this particular issue. As you mentioned, we  
24 have been discussing this for quite some time, and for  
25 other members of the Committee and other parts of Congress

1 and support in this area.

2 One of the things we discussed a little bit is what  
3 would it cost to do that and what would be the impact. I  
4 think one of the things we are struggling with a little bit  
5 is that just due to the nature of the physics of how these  
6 systems operate and how the atmosphere absorbs energy, that  
7 is a pretty special band. And it is difficult, and maybe  
8 in some ways almost impossible, just to move to other  
9 bands.

10 So in some cases it may be very difficult, if not  
11 impossible, to totally replicate some of the capabilities  
12 we have in that band, and it would take quite some time to  
13 do so, even if we could.

14 So I think that is what we are struggling with now,  
15 Senator, is how do we do that now, to figure out what we  
16 could do and how we would move, and what spectrum we would  
17 move to. So it is difficult to quantify.

18 Senator Rounds: Our near-peer adversaries know that,  
19 do they not?

20 Mr. Meink: Oh, of course, Senator, and the impacts  
21 would be pretty significant.

22 Senator Rounds: They would love to see us voluntarily  
23 abandon that particular part of the spectrum from what we  
24 used it for, which is radar. Fair to say?

25 Mr. Meink: I would agree with that, Senator.

1 Senator Rounds: I would be an unforced error for us  
2 to ever give up that part of the spectrum for one of its  
3 highest rated uses. The physics involved in it means that  
4 this is the place where radar really works.

5 Mr. Meink: Without a much better transition plan and  
6 understanding of how we would do that, it would be a  
7 mistake, Senator.

8 Senator Rounds: Thank you. Do you have any kind of  
9 an estimate as to what it would cost if we could migrate  
10 someplace else, even if it would not provide us as good of  
11 capabilities? Any idea yet at all?

12 Mr. Meink: We actually had this discussion last  
13 night. I actually do not think, just because that we do  
14 not have a coherent plan of where and how we would move, we  
15 actually do not have a good number for you, Senator.

16 Senator Rounds: Thank you. General Saltzman, based  
17 on what you know, the potential path forward for building  
18 out President Trump's Golden Dome, is it possible to make  
19 it work if the Department of Defense were forced to vacate  
20 portions of the 3.1 to 3.45 GHz band and other unnamed,  
21 critical bands of the spectrum that the Space Force  
22 currently uses, as well?

23 General Saltzman: Senator, as we evaluate the sensors  
24 that are going to be necessary to pick up hypersonics, to  
25 pick up cruise missiles, to pick up ballistic missiles, the

1 radars are essential in that area, and that 3.1 to 3.45, as  
2 the Secretary mentioned, the physical properties of that  
3 spectrum range are ideal for that kind of detection using  
4 radar. And so the sensing part of the Golden Dome would  
5 suffer if we had to vacate.

6 Senator Rounds: This is a tiered system. It is not  
7 one which is just totally space based. There are certain  
8 assets in space that will help us to detect incoming weapon  
9 systems, but it is critical that it is tiered with other  
10 systems that are based on the terrain and in the area of  
11 the targets that we are protecting. Correct?

12 General Saltzman: Most of our space domain awareness,  
13 which is what is required to close that kill chain as  
14 things transit through space, most of those sensors are  
15 ground based. The system that we are building, the DARC  
16 system, lives in this particular spectrum band, as well,  
17 and it is critical to space domain awareness.

18 Senator Rounds: Thank you. Very, very quickly,  
19 General Allvin, we are contracted right now for 100 B-21s.  
20 Anywhere close to the number that we are going to need?

21 General Allvin: Senator, if we could snap our fingers  
22 right now I would take as many as we could get right now.  
23 So as we look to the path of how many we get into the  
24 future and we look at opportunities, we also need to look  
25 at the B-52 modernization program. If it goes worse than

1 we hope then we would need more, if it goes better than we  
2 hope. I would say right now I would take all I can get  
3 with the funding. But it is an incredible capability that  
4 turns out right now it is testing pretty well.

5 So the 100 minimum is certainly something we can stand  
6 behind. When we look at what the maximum is, I really want  
7 to look at the risk over time and opportunities over time.

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

9 Chairman Wicker: Thank you. Senator Peters, you are  
10 recognized.

11 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary  
12 Meink, following the Air Force's announcement last year to  
13 base 12 brand-new KC-46 refueling tankers at Selfridge Air  
14 National Guard Base in Michigan, I was proud to have, at  
15 that time, secured the Air Force's commitment that that  
16 decision did not preclude Selfridge from receiving a future  
17 fighter mission.

18 Following this commitment, and after years of advocacy  
19 by myself as well as the entire Michigan delegation, both  
20 Democrats and Republicans, the Administration announced  
21 last month that Selfridge would also receive 21 F-15EX  
22 fighter jets to replace the base's aging A-10s. I am  
23 certain proud, as all Michiganders are, of Selfridge's  
24 exceptional 108-year legacy defending our nation, and with  
25 this announcement I am certain that legacy will continue

1 for decades to come.

2 Sir, you have already publicly committed to honoring  
3 the KC-46 basing decision during your nomination hearing,  
4 which I appreciate. So my question for you is, following  
5 Selfridge's F-15EX announcement, do I have your commitment  
6 that future Air Force spending will support the  
7 recapitalization of Selfridge's A-10s with these new F-  
8 15EXs?

9 Mr. Meink: Thank you for the question, Senator.  
10 Based on the President's decision, the Air Force is  
11 planning to execute the placement of F-15EXs at Selfridge.

12 Senator Peters: Thank you. Thank you for that  
13 commitment.

14 General Allvin, on that same note, Selfridge's F-15EX  
15 fighters and the KC-46 tankers will require some  
16 specialized infrastructure and ground support equipment,  
17 including modifications at the flight lines as well as to  
18 some hangars, although we have already made pretty  
19 substantial investments into that base, but we are going to  
20 need more. This will include KC-46 unique refueling  
21 requirements, and the F-15EX specialized maintenance  
22 demands.

23 So my question for you is, how is the Air Force  
24 prioritizing bases like Selfridge with near-term military  
25 construction needs to support these flying missions that

1 are imminent?

2 General Allvin: Thank you, Senator. Our target is,  
3 obviously, as the decisions are made, we want to ensure  
4 that as we lay in the platforms, the platforms do not go  
5 there with the supporting infrastructure. So as we look at  
6 the timing, that timing may adjust the timing of the  
7 platforms or of the infrastructure, one of the two. So we  
8 look at those both holistically on pairing up the abilities  
9 so when the platforms get there you can use them as well as  
10 the prioritization across the Department for the most  
11 critical infrastructure that we need to put MILCON against.

12 So our target is to make sure that when the platforms  
13 get there, they are able to be used as soon as possible.

14 Senator Peters: Well, I like the option where we are  
15 going to make sure the platforms do not get pushed back any  
16 further, to make sure that the construction is happening  
17 first. So I would hope that would be a priority of you,  
18 that we could work with you on that. Obviously, we have  
19 these older platforms; the A-10, particularly, is leaving.  
20 If there is too large a gap, that causes all sorts of  
21 personnel issues and all of the complications that you are  
22 well aware of. So hopefully we can focus on that.

23 My question is to you as well as Secretary Meink, as  
24 well. I have discussed with both of you the critical  
25 importance of Collaborative Combat Aircraft, and as both of

1 you know, CCAs are autonomous systems which will work in  
2 tandem with our manned fighters, including the F-15EXs, to  
3 increase their lethality and decrease risk to our manned  
4 platforms. Also can work with the KC-46s in a great  
5 manner, as well. As these programs develop, I remain  
6 hopeful that this cutting-edge technology will also be  
7 concurrently fielded with Air National Guard units.

8 So my question to is, given the National Guard's  
9 evolution from strategic reserve into a true operational  
10 force, how is the Air Force planning for concurrent  
11 fielding of CCAs to include Air National Guard, and would  
12 you plan on fielding these systems with existing fighter  
13 squadrons, including F-15EXs?

14 General Allvin: Senator, I will take a shot at it and  
15 see if the Secretary has anything to add. First,  
16 fundamentally, I think what we do not want to do is fall  
17 into the trap of treating them like any other manned  
18 platform. This is an opportunity to think about a unique,  
19 new way that we are not only going to operate them but also  
20 comes with a unique, new way we may want to sustain them,  
21 to house them, to train with them.

22 We have an Experimental Operations Unit that is  
23 getting stood up at Creech right now, that is really going  
24 to uncover some of that, to figure out what is the best way  
25 to manage them. How much do we train? How much is done in

1 the synthetic environment and how much is done actual  
2 flying, since these are autonomous? So as those unfold so  
3 will our strategy for how and where we actually end up  
4 posturing those across.

5 Senator Peters: Mr. Secretary?

6 Mr. Meink: That was a good answer.

7 Senator Peters: Very good.

8 Chairman Wicker: Your time has expired.

9 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Senator Ernst.

11 Senator Ernst: Great. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and  
12 thanks for our witnesses for being here today. I know all  
13 of you do murder boards before you come in front of us, so  
14 you all should know exactly what I am going to talk about  
15 today, and General Saltzman, you can take a breather. We  
16 are not going to talk Space Force today.

17 But everyone knows I am a proud National Guardsman,  
18 and even though it was Army Guard, I appreciate our Air  
19 Guard brothers and sisters. So I deeply understand the  
20 critical role our Air National Guard plays in defending our  
21 homeland. The Air Force's top priority, as outlined in the  
22 Fiscal Year 2026 Posture Statement, is defending the  
23 homeland, and that starts with maintaining a geographically  
24 distributed force.

25 So we are going to talk a little bit about our Air

1 National Guard in Iowa and the 185th Refueling Wing, a very  
2 important unit to the Midwest. And General Allvin, I have  
3 written down a few phrases you have said over the course of  
4 the hearing. "More tails in the air." "Survivability."  
5 "Resilience." And one that I love, "When the platforms get  
6 there, the MILCON is there."

7 In 2003, our F-16s were taken away from the Sioux  
8 City, Iowa, Air National Guard, with the Air Force's  
9 commitment that when they received the KC-135 they would  
10 have a new runway that would support the weight of the 135.  
11 That has not happened. Twenty years and the MILCON has not  
12 been there.

13 Secretary Meink, please take notes on this, as well.

14 Twenty years the Air Force has let this go. The fear  
15 in Sioux City now is that because we cannot support the 46  
16 that we will never upgrade to the 46. We will lose our  
17 unit. I am really concerned about this. This has gone on  
18 for way too long, and I have talked to way too many people,  
19 in the Air Force and in the Air National Guard, and it has  
20 not happened. We are concentrating these tankers all in  
21 various regions. They are concentrated. We need  
22 geographic dispersement.

23 Let me talk to you a little bit about Sioux City and  
24 the history there, and how proud we are of those units that  
25 have occupied this air field. And let's just start by

1 saying the name of the airfield is the Colonel Bud Day  
2 Airfield. For those folks in the Air Force that do not  
3 know who Colonel Bud Day is, you need to go back and figure  
4 out your history.

5 This gentleman is a Sioux City native that was awarded  
6 the Medal of Honor and the Air Force Cross, and I believe  
7 he is probably the only person in the Air Force to have  
8 done that. He grew up there and he ended his career in  
9 Sioux City.

10 Other folks notable that are related to units that  
11 have crossed through Sioux City, Jimmy Stewart, famous  
12 actor. He is also a cousin of my great-grandfather. Louis  
13 Zamperini, known for the movie "Unbroken." Lieutenant  
14 Colonel Kelly Cook, whose remains have never been returned  
15 from Vietnam. These are all folks that are connected to  
16 this area. We have a proud history there.

17 And I would just like to know how many more times,  
18 General Allvin and Secretary Meink, do I have to bring this  
19 up in personal meetings in my office and in front of the  
20 Committee to get a commitment to get the MILCON done for  
21 this runway? General Allvin, please.

22 General Allvin: Thank you, Senator Ernst, and also  
23 thank you for sort of publicly acknowledging Bud Day, as  
24 well, because I am sure there are going to be a lot of  
25 Google searches.

1 Senator Ernst: I knew him. He is phenomenal.

2 General Allvin: So when we first spoke about this,  
3 you and I spoke about this 2 years ago. And I said, "Yes,  
4 ma'am, we are going to do that," and we started working on  
5 the design. Last year we put the money in to start towards  
6 35 percent of that. As you know, the MILCON has to go  
7 through the design phase, it has to get to a certain  
8 maturation before it goes from design that can compete for  
9 funding. You just get through the 35 percent design. It  
10 is now a 65 percent design, which means I can now, if it  
11 competes in the MILCON prioritization, with everything  
12 else, then it wins. If not, I have the opportunity for it  
13 to compete in my unfunded priority list. I could not do  
14 that until we got past the 35 percent design. We are now  
15 past the 35 percent design.

16 So I feel like my communications with you have been  
17 fairly consistent and will continue that in the future.

18 Senator Ernst: But can we have a commitment that this  
19 will be done?

20 General Allvin: You have my commitment that I will  
21 continue to push on this, and yes, I think that is the key.  
22 It is all about the funding to be able to support it. The  
23 design is limiting any of the obstacles on our path to  
24 being able to actually do it. But now we are at 65 percent  
25 design.

1 Senator Ernst: Thank you, sir. Secretary Meink?

2 Mr. Meink: Yes, Senator. As the chief mentioned, at  
3 65 percent complete design we can now start working it into  
4 the ranking for MILCON, and once I see that I will make  
5 sure I come talk to you about it, Senator.

6 Senator Ernst: Okay. Thank you. I appreciate the  
7 commitment today in front of the public, and we look  
8 forward to seeing this completed in the near future.

9 Chairman Wicker: Thank you. Senator Kelly.

10 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General  
11 Allvin, last September the Air Force activated the  
12 Integrated Capabilities Command to integrate requirements  
13 and development in emerging capabilities and to modernize  
14 the force. The formation of this command is very timely as  
15 the service moves towards NGAD, the F-47.

16 General Allvin, I am interested in the F-47 and how  
17 you see this new command, the Integrated Capabilities  
18 Command, supporting future development both for the F-47  
19 and the B-21, and anything beyond that.

20 General Allvin: Yeah, thank you, Senator, and we are  
21 now to the point where we have the Integrated Capabilities  
22 Command in a provisional status. It was part of the series  
23 of activities that we had paused. And now we have a  
24 Secretary in the seat who can evaluate those and make sure  
25 that we are on the right path for evolving that into where

1 it needs to be.

2 In its current stantiation, the vision is the value of  
3 the Integrated Capabilities Command is it does not develop  
4 the platform to be the best platform in the world. It  
5 understands what we are doing now is going through mission  
6 threads. What does that capability have to integrate with?  
7 It has to integrate with the C3 and battle management. It  
8 has to integrate with the other capabilities, the crypto  
9 modernization, all those things.

10 Senator Kelly: Does it do the integration with the  
11 CCAs?

12 General Allvin: It will ensure -- so that is the  
13 other value of it. It ensures that that system integrates  
14 with the others to develop an operational outcome, not just  
15 a performance parameter. So it will ensure that. It will  
16 also ensure that as we move forward, some of the good  
17 ideas, we ensure that the good ideas meet the force design,  
18 not just make the platform better. If they make the  
19 platform better but they do not make the platform perform  
20 better across the whole mission, then it is probably not  
21 worth spending the money on.

22 So it will help us also make better use of every  
23 dollar, to where that F-47 and those CCAs and the B-21, and  
24 everything that goes with it gets a better combat outcome.

25 Senator Kelly: And is it fully staffed at this point?

1           General Allvin: Not at this point. It has got the  
2 provisional. So it is doing modest work now, and as we  
3 look towards the next level of that, it will now take the  
4 sort of federated approach, from some of the capability  
5 development being done in Langley and some in Barkstone,  
6 some at Scott. It will actually put those together and  
7 say, what does one Air Force force design look like, and  
8 that is its vision.

9           Senator Kelly: Is it pretty high level or do you have  
10 like software engineers there to make sure software between  
11 platforms is integrated?

12          General Allvin: The value of setting it up like it  
13 is, the software engineers and the technical experts, they  
14 are very tightly linked with the current office called the  
15 Agile Development Office. But they are the ones who take  
16 the good ideas from the operator and say, "Is that  
17 technically feasible?" And it also has one-stop shopping  
18 for outside industry to come in and say, "Hey, I have got a  
19 new design. I have got a good product here." We can let  
20 them know, yes, go ahead and spend your IRAD dollars on  
21 that because that is going to be a part of our future force  
22 design or not. It also helps industry, as well. But it  
23 has got all the smart software engineers working with our  
24 Air Force material command.

25          Senator Kelly: Thank you. Unrelated subject. As the

1 Department continues to embrace multidomain warfare, I am  
2 concerned about the lack of training space available where  
3 we can integrate all domains and we are dealing with  
4 airplanes that are flying faster and higher and air-to-air  
5 missiles that have a greater range. The stick is getting  
6 bigger. The ranges are not getting bigger. We need cost-  
7 effective training for our pilots and the ability to  
8 actually engage in a contested EW environment.

9 Last year at this hearing we talked about  
10 opportunities to integrate the Air Force, Army, and Marine  
11 Corps training ranges in the State of Arizona to do  
12 multidomain operationals and to have the ability to do just  
13 longer runs.

14 So since then, General, what steps have you taken to  
15 stitch together, to bridge these training areas in the  
16 State of Arizona to get better training for the joint  
17 force?

18 General Allvin: Yeah, thank you, Senator. I would  
19 say that we are still in the forming phase. Last year we  
20 had a lot of exercises like the Bamboo Eagle exercises,  
21 where we understood what the operational joint exercise  
22 would look like. We have not yet looked at the stitching  
23 together. But your point was right last year and it is  
24 still right this year. There is the opportunity, because  
25 of the geography of Arizona, and actually leaking into New

1 Mexico, as well, to --

2 Senator Kelly: We can go from Goldwater through the  
3 Outlaw and Jackal MOA, you are going to stitch those two  
4 together, and then beyond that to the White Sands Missile  
5 Range. And then you have a training range that I think is  
6 maybe, you know, unmatched maybe in CONUS, obviously in  
7 Alaska that is -- Senator Sullivan is here and he likes to  
8 talk about that.

9 General Allvin: It still has great value because  
10 right now, in order to do some of that long-range training  
11 we are out in the Whiskey area. So we are out just over  
12 the oceans, which obviously limits us from geography. So  
13 getting together the multidomain exercises to figure out  
14 where we are short and where we do not want to do it  
15 synthetically -- we actually want to do it in the physical  
16 space -- it is still --

17 Senator Kelly: The conversations with the FAA?

18 General Allvin: Those are going to need to be key,  
19 but we need to get together with the Army and the other  
20 services, and actually ask the FAA exactly what we need to  
21 ensure that we can do that. Not ask for the moon but what  
22 is practical.

23 Senator Kelly: So you have had no conversations with  
24 the FAA.

25 General Allvin: Not at the joint level. At the Air

1 Force level we have, but we really want to stitch that  
2 together with the other joint force.

3 Senator Kelly: Okay. Can you get me an update on  
4 this in a few months?

5 General Allvin: Yeah, we will do that.

6 Senator Kelly: Thank you, General.

7 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Kelly. Senator  
8 Cramer.

9 Senator Cramer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank  
10 you, gentlemen, for being here, and congratulations, Dr.  
11 Meink, on finally getting the job for good. I hope you are  
12 sleeping occasionally. We will try to take it easy on you.  
13 Although I have to say, after listening to Senator Ernst  
14 and Senator Peters get after you guys, I feel like I have  
15 been a little easy on you, General. But I will try to keep  
16 my cheerful demeanor here.

17 But I want to get right to something important,  
18 General Saltzman, because I noticed they have been leaving  
19 you out a little bit. I was reading about Golden Dome -- I  
20 do a lot of that these days -- and noticed that two of our  
21 least favorite dictators in the world, Xi Jinping and  
22 Vladimir Putin, have put out a joint statement worrying  
23 about Golden Dome having a, quote, "destabilizing effect,"  
24 and suggesting that the United States might be leaning  
25 towards weaponizing space, which is rich coming from those

1 two guys.

2 Do our enemies have weapons in space, that you know  
3 of, General?

4 General Saltzman: Yes, Senator, they do. Over the  
5 last few years we have observed, for instance, the Russians  
6 have performed some very aggressive on-orbit capabilities  
7 in terms of plane matching, getting very close to some of  
8 our most sensitive satellites in aggressive ways. They  
9 have released what could be presumed to be kinetic kill  
10 vehicles that we have watched on orbit. The PRC has  
11 demonstrated the ability to use a grappling arm to grab a  
12 satellite and pull it out of its operational orbit, return  
13 it. All of these are demonstrated capabilities that could  
14 be used as anti-satellite technology.

15 Senator Cramer: So as is often the case, I find  
16 myself following Senator King and agreeing with him with  
17 regard to your budget, and maybe this is a redundant  
18 question. But are you adequately funded to meet this kind  
19 of a threat in space, as well as, obviously, the rest of  
20 the world that you have to protect?

21 General Saltzman: It is just about the scale, sir. I  
22 have often used the analogy that it is like transforming  
23 the Merchant Marine into the U.S. Navy or United Airlines  
24 into the U.S. Air Force. There is a lot of new equipment.  
25 There is new training. There are new people. We cannot

1 just take what we had and presume that we can gain space  
2 superiority with that equipment. That new equipment  
3 requires new resources. So that is where the disconnect  
4 comes, I think, in full funding.

5 Chairman Wicker: Your answer to that is that we are  
6 not adequately funded. Is that correct, General?

7 General Saltzman: We are not adequately funded for  
8 the new missions that I have been given in space  
9 superiority.

10 Chairman Wicker: Thank you.

11 Senator Cramer: Yeah, thank you for that, Mr.  
12 Chairman, because scale matters. I mean, if we have the  
13 world's greatest weapons but not enough of them to defeat  
14 the enemy then we are not adequately funded.

15 By the way, thank you for being so open about the  
16 shortcomings, because we are here to help, and we cannot  
17 help if we do not know where we are short, and you have all  
18 been great this morning so I thank you for that.

19 I think I am going to skip over the Sentinel stuff  
20 because I think you handled that very well, Dr. Meink, with  
21 Senator Fischer. Although I will say I have been concerned  
22 about some of the rumors I have been hearing about a  
23 billion-dollar cut maybe, priorities. I think she  
24 referenced something to that effect. I am just going to  
25 not even ask you -- we just need to do more. I guess the

1 bottom line is my commitment is we need to do more to make  
2 sure we are not falling backwards anywhere and that we are  
3 projecting forward everywhere that we can.

4 So General Allvin, I will just simply go to MQ-9s.  
5 ISR, my favorite topic, as you know. My concern with the  
6 Air Force both retiring and in the case of MQ-9s attriting  
7 some of our ISR capability. Do you have enough MQ-9s -- I  
8 am quite familiar with the aircraft, as you know -- MQ-9s  
9 to sort of meet the current demand? I know there is never  
10 enough, but are you concerned? Should I be concerned about  
11 the MQ-9 population?

12 General Allvin: Well, as it stands right now, you  
13 mentioned, Senator, that we have lost several in combat in  
14 operations. As it exists today, Our A3 is working with the  
15 joint staff in understanding how to alter the force  
16 offering, but as we continue to attrite more it becomes mor  
17 and more critical. I can probably give you a little bit  
18 more at a higher level. But it is getting to the point  
19 where we need to ensure that every one of them is as  
20 survivable as possible.

21 Some of the areas where we are hoping to improve, as  
22 you are well aware, some of the things we are looking to  
23 improve on are putting the capability for the enhanced  
24 proliferated LEO architecture, to be able to put that on  
25 the MQ-9. This is where I might make my pitch for more

1 funding flexibility, because right now it is a \$17 million  
2 ask, and because that is above the below-threshold  
3 reprogramming, we are having to go through a longer process  
4 with us in Congress to get that approved.

5 But the more we could have that flexibility to be able  
6 to accelerate the fielding of those proliferated LEO  
7 architecture on those MQ-9s, it will make them more  
8 survivable.

9 Senator Cramer: Well, just as scale matters, so does  
10 speed, right. So we have got a lot of things to figure  
11 out, and we are grateful, Mr. Secretary, you are there to  
12 help us do that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Cramer. Senator  
14 Warren, you made it by a matter of seconds. You are  
15 recognized.

16 Senator Warren: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

17 So look, we all want the Air Force to have the money  
18 it needs to keep us safe, and we all want those funds to be  
19 spent as effectively and as efficiently as possible. The  
20 Air Force's budget request was about \$220 billion last  
21 year, and many of those billions go into develop weapon  
22 systems. But even then, contractors try to withhold  
23 technical data right, preventing servicemembers from repair  
24 equipment that the Air Force itself owns.

25 So Secretary Meink, you know this problem. During

1 your confirmation process you said that in a contested  
2 logistics environment, quote, "airmen will need to be  
3 authorized and empowered to manufacture parts and fix their  
4 equipment." I agree with you on this. When DoD secures  
5 repair rights, that increases our battlefield readiness and  
6 it lowers costs.

7 When Tinker Air Force Base needed to replace a  
8 pressure door handle for the C-5 transport aircraft, the  
9 Air Force manufactured the part itself and saved 95 percent  
10 of the cost because it was not tripped up by contractor  
11 restrictions.

12 So, Mr. Secretary, do you agree that this type of  
13 major cost savings makes right-to-repair a strategic  
14 priority for the Air Force and for its budget?

15 Mr. Meink: Thank you, Senator. Yes, I do agree with  
16 that, and that is something I have already had discussions  
17 with the team on in the first couple of days. I think it  
18 is not only from a cost perspective, Senator. I think from  
19 a readiness perspective, as General Allvin has discussed  
20 multiple times, both are affected with our ability to have  
21 more flexibility in how we do parts sustainment.

22 Senator Warren: Absolutely. Okay. Cost and  
23 readiness. So it is no surprise that new polling just  
24 released today found that over 70 percent of voters  
25 overwhelmingly favor Congress passing a Defense right-to-

1 repair law. Americans know that this is a big opportunity  
2 to save billions of dollars.

3 Secretary Driscoll is leading the way with the new  
4 Army Transformation Initiative, released earlier this  
5 month, making it a standard for Army contracts to include  
6 right-to-repair from day one. But airmen far from home  
7 need to be able to fix their own equipment, as well. They  
8 should not be waiting, in some cases we know, up to 6  
9 months for a refurbished T-38 trainer engine.

10 So, Mr. Secretary, shouldn't the Air Force adopt a  
11 service-wide right-to-repair policy like the Army's policy,  
12 so that we can get grounded jets back into the air faster?

13 Mr. Meink: Senator, I am not familiar with the  
14 details of what Secretary Driscoll has proposed, but the  
15 idea of having that flexibility I fully support. And  
16 again, that is one of the things we are going to be looking  
17 at.

18 Senator Warren: I love hearing that you like the  
19 idea, but what we have got to do is we have got to put that  
20 idea into action.

21 Right-to-repair is one important tool for the Air  
22 Force to protect its budget. But contractors will find any  
23 way they can to overcharge the military right up until the  
24 moment they get caught.

25 Last year, DoD's inspector general found that Boeing

1 charged the Air Force 80 times -- that is eight, zero times  
2 -- the available commercial price for a soap dispenser  
3 during a C-17 sustainment contract. Now, that overcharge  
4 was found only through an investigation after the fact, and  
5 sort of by happenstance. It makes you wonder what kind of  
6 other overcharges are going unnoticed. And that is why the  
7 IG recommended that contracting officers be notified when a  
8 price for an item, like a spare part, increases over 25  
9 percent.

10 Mr. Secretary, would the Air Force be in a better  
11 position to detect this kind of price gouging if you are  
12 contracting officers had to be notified when there was a  
13 price spike?

14 Mr. Meink: Yes, Senator. More data in this area  
15 would be always helpful.

16 Senator Warren: All right. Good. You know, I am  
17 working with my colleagues across the aisle to get this  
18 type of price information into the hands of all of our  
19 contracting officers, but the Air Force needs to be  
20 updating its own policies, as well. Because we all agree,  
21 the Air Force's hundreds of billions of dollars should be  
22 spent efficiently, to benefit our servicemembers and our  
23 taxpayers, not just to benefit contractor executives. If  
24 we can get airmen the right to repair and contracting  
25 officers the information they need to stop price gouging,

1 the Air Force can start buying smarter service-wide. And I  
2 look forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, and all of  
3 my colleagues on this Committee to get it done.

4 Thank you.

5 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator. The Senator  
6 from Alaska.

7 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and  
8 gentlemen, thank you for your testimony today. Mr.  
9 Secretary, congratulations. We are really excited to see  
10 you here.

11 I am going to bring up this map again. This is our  
12 Russian-Chinese incursion map in Alaska. You know, we talk  
13 about defending the homeland. This is defending the  
14 homeland. We had another incursion in April. Some Navy  
15 stuff going on with the Russians that was happening very  
16 recently, all in our ADIZ, all in our EEZ.

17 Mr. Secretary, you have done these ADIZ Alaska  
18 missions. Isn't that true?

19 Mr. Meink: Yes, Senator, many, many years ago, with  
20 F-15s.

21 Senator Sullivan: They are not easy, right. You have  
22 got to tank probably three or four times just to get out to  
23 the EEZ. It is a big state. Isn't that correct?

24 Mr. Meink: Yes, Senator. There is a lot of airspace  
25 up there.

1           Senator Sullivan: So during your hearing, and this is  
2 an issue I have only been pressing the Secretary of the Air  
3 Force and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force I think 10  
4 years now, you committed to three additional KC-130s, 135s,  
5 to support the airmen who are doing these great, important  
6 intercept missions. Can you give me a timeline for the  
7 rebasing of those aircraft to be part of active affiliation  
8 up in Alaska, where we need these tankers, for sure.

9           Mr. Meink: I am going to call on a friend here.  
10 General, do you know the timeline on this?

11          General Allvin: Yeah. Thank you, Senator. Of  
12 course, there was four, with the one that is up there. We  
13 are still going on the final three. The final three are  
14 going to be sourced out of Kadena, and so because that  
15 requires an overseas force structure change piece, it is  
16 with Joint Staff and OSD, because most of the folks at  
17 Kadena spend a lot of time in Alaska doing that support  
18 mission. So that is in process.

19          It is going to be about a plus-up of 175 airmen, as  
20 well, so we wanted to ensure that they also have the right  
21 housing. As you know, we have discussed several times  
22 about ensuring that we have good, off-base housing for  
23 them.

24          Right now the overseas force structure change process  
25 is going on with OSD and Joint Staff, so that is moving

1 forward. And that really was triggered after last fall's  
2 Housing Research and Marketing Analysis saying, yes, we  
3 believe now that the community housing is satisfactory  
4 enough to be able to start moving families up there.

5 Senator Sullivan: So what does that mean in terms of  
6 timeline? Do you have a sense, an estimate?

7 General Allvin: I am going to have to take that for  
8 the record. Again, that is out of ours, but it depends on  
9 how fast it moves through the OSD process.

10 Senator Sullivan: Okay. Well, let's get them moving.  
11 Like I said, I have only been pressing this issue for 10  
12 years. And it makes strategic sense. It is not some kind  
13 of gimme. This is JPARC training. This is real-world  
14 missions that our great airmen are doing up in Alaska all  
15 the time.

16 By the way, everybody thinks these are real easy  
17 missions. When you are in an F-16, taking four different  
18 times, going over the Arctic Ocean, in February, in the  
19 middle of the night, you lose an engine, you are screwed,  
20 right. These are tough missions, and the men and women you  
21 guys are in charge of do such a great job doing it, but  
22 they make it look easy, but they are not easy. And more  
23 tankers, more AWACs, we all need it. These are frontline  
24 missions that can be dangerous.

25 Real quick, this is a little bit of a broader issue,

1 but you talked earlier about strengthening our posture in  
2 INDOPACOM. One issue I have raised with the Secretary of  
3 the Navy and his leadership in the INDOPACOM Commander, we  
4 sure seem to be overconcentrating on Guam. Air Force  
5 assets, Navy assets. My numbers that I have are between  
6 now and 2033, we might have up to \$50 billion more in  
7 MILCON on Guam. My goodness. I think it is a lack of  
8 strategic imagination by the Pentagon.

9 Do any of you have a view on that? Are we  
10 overconcentrated on Guam? I mean, is Anderson Air Force  
11 Base going to take several missiles in the first days of a  
12 conflict with China and we are going to be like, "Wait, why  
13 are we having all the Navy and all the Air Force in  
14 INDOPACOM on Guam? That was a really dumb idea." But what  
15 do you gentlemen think?

16 General Allvin: Yeah, Senator, you make a good point.  
17 The key is that right now, for the Air Force, Guam is not  
18 the ultimate destination of our Indo-Pacific posture, and  
19 so we are working on the regional-based cluster.

20 Senator Sullivan: Yeah.

21 General Allvin: I think you have seen, we have built  
22 out Tinian, which is an amazing story I could tell you with  
23 more time, and Yap, and Palau. So our concept is as we can  
24 build more resilience in some of those clusters, to go  
25 beyond Guam. But as you said, the Department of Defense

1 has invested a whole lot. We believe that in order to be  
2 more survivable you cannot just only defend and do robust  
3 defense on Guam, but we are actually pushing out into that  
4 second island chain to some of the base clusters.

5 Senator Sullivan: Well, this Committee has taken a  
6 hard look at Adak, two 8,000-foot runways, a big hangar.  
7 Go look at a map. That is about as strategic terrain as it  
8 gets, not just for the Navy but for the Air Force. And I  
9 do think it is something we need to look hard at in terms  
10 of being overconcentrated on Guam. I think the Navy is. I  
11 think the Air Force is, and I think in terms of our  
12 oversight we need to get to the right mix.

13 And I agree with you, General. The Air Force has a  
14 good plan on dispersion of forces, your ACE plan, but we  
15 need to do more on that.

16 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Sullivan.  
18 Senator Slotkin.

19 Senator Slotkin: Thank you, Chairman. Thanks for  
20 being here. A couple of questions, Secretary. Selfridge  
21 Air Force Base, just following on some of the questions  
22 from Senator Peters. I know that was a decision many of us  
23 worked very hard, over a decade, to try and get and could  
24 not get, and it breaks a lot of china to have our F-15s  
25 show up to replace our A-10s. We thank you for that. We

1 are very happy about that decision. But can you commit to  
2 making sure it happens on time? We have an issue where we  
3 could lose a lot of airmen if our A-10 pilots and crews go  
4 off, they are allowed to go back into normal civilian life,  
5 and then years later we get our F-15s. So can you commit  
6 to doing all the environmental studies, all the pieces that  
7 have to go into place in order to have them arrive on time,  
8 as the President announced?

9 Mr. Meink: Yes, Senator. We are working out the lay  
10 in that plan, based on the President's decision, and as we  
11 have more detail we will make sure to provide that.

12 Senator Slotkin: Okay, great. Thank you. The other  
13 issue is also related to the Air Force. It is on the issue  
14 of PFAS and forever chemicals, particularly in Oscoda, at  
15 Wurtsmith Air Force Base. The Air Force does not dispute,  
16 over the past decade, that it was the PFAS from the  
17 firefighting foam on the base that contaminated local  
18 people's water, their lakes. These are like their kids  
19 that swim in those lakes, their water that is drank by an  
20 entire community. And last year the EPA put a scientific  
21 standard on how much PFAS you can have on water before it  
22 makes you sick.

23 We were thrilled, and the Air Force, to their credit,  
24 came into action and said, "We will now begin taking  
25 interim measures to clean up PFAS in Oscoda, Michigan,

1 among other places." Last week, the Administration  
2 reversed that decision, and now does not care about the  
3 health standards of PFAS in our water. And I am wondering,  
4 will the Air Force continue to take interim measures to  
5 clean up the water around Wurtsmith Air Force Base?

6 Mr. Meink: Senator, I am not familiar with the  
7 decision you reference, but the Department will continue to  
8 work to make sure that both our people and the surrounding  
9 communities are prioritized, and we will work to clean up  
10 and be transparent about it.

11 Senator Slotkin: Okay, because we are a decade -- we  
12 tried to get the Air Force to move. They would not until  
13 last year. And then the EPA standards were again slid  
14 backwards, despite this Administration's interest in making  
15 American healthy again. I guess that does not matter when  
16 it comes to forever chemicals in our water.

17 So I just ask your help in committing to continuing  
18 those interim measures. They are gradual. They are not  
19 steep. But we need to hold the Air Force, you know, you  
20 have to clean up what you messed up for this community that  
21 cannot drink its water, that cannot safely swim in its  
22 water.

23 And then, lastly, let me just ask, you know, we had a  
24 lot of debate and discussion about the gift of the Qatari  
25 jet that was given to the President for Air Force One. Has

1 the country of Qatar, General Allvin, submitted a request  
2 to buy F-35s, an official request to the Pentagon?

3 General Allvin: I have not received that request for  
4 them to buy F-35s.

5 Senator Slotkin: Mr. Secretary, are you aware, that  
6 has been reported publicly, that they have now submitted  
7 recently a request to buy F-35s.

8 Mr. Meink: I am not aware of that, Senator, but I  
9 will take it for the record.

10 Senator Slotkin: Okay. I think it is important,  
11 because we just had a four-star Navy, number two in the  
12 Navy, convicted yesterday of bribery for a very similar  
13 type of thing, pay for play. We give you a gift, we give  
14 you an opportunity, you make things happen for us inside  
15 the Pentagon. It was embarrassing to have a four-star  
16 admiral convicted in court yesterday, highest ranking in  
17 American history.

18 So I just ask, as the President is moving to try and  
19 accept a gift of a jet, that we do not do something as  
20 stupid and as obvious as pay for play on selling the  
21 Qataris F-35s. So I would ask you to very, very rigorously  
22 look at that issue. And I yield back.

23 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Slotkin. Senator  
24 Scott.

25 Senator Scott: Thank you, Chairman. First off,

1 thanks to each of you for your service. To General Allvin  
2 and Secretary Meink, let me first talk about Homestead. As  
3 you know, our adversaries -- Russia, China, and Iran -- are  
4 doing more and more in Latin America. Cuba is 90 miles  
5 away. All of them are doing bad things down there.

6 So can you just talk about the importance of Homestead  
7 Air Force Base and what you think the future of Homestead  
8 Air Force Base is.

9 General Allvin: Homestead, of course, has been a  
10 longtime very important base for the Air Force and for the  
11 nation, and will continue into the future. It is a very  
12 supportive community. They run a great mission down there.  
13 So I believe Homestead is one of those that you should be  
14 very proud of the community and the mission there that they  
15 conduct.

16 Senator Scott: So you both believe it will continue  
17 to be a crucial military asset?

18 Mr. Meink: Yes, Senator, I do.

19 Senator Scott: Okay. All right. Next, General  
20 Saltzman. How important are our satellites for  
21 communications, missile detection, and operations?

22 General Saltzman: Very important.

23 Senator Scott: So the satellites we are depending on,  
24 if China was able to just destroy a dozen or so and leave  
25 all that debris in space, how big of an impact would that

1 have?

2 General Saltzman: I believe the Joint Force would  
3 struggle to meet its objectives, certainly in the Western  
4 Pacific and maybe elsewhere.

5 Senator Scott: Okay. So a couple of things. When  
6 systems are compromised, is it harder to disable a large,  
7 distributed satellite network?

8 General Saltzman: Indications are that the more  
9 targets you have to disrupt or destroy in order to achieve  
10 a mission effect, the more resilient that architecture is.

11 Senator Scott: Yeah. So if they were smaller, more  
12 distributed, that would be better for us, right?

13 General Saltzman: They would be more resilient.

14 Senator Scott: So also we face a lot of procurement  
15 delays like we do with it seems like everything in the  
16 military. Does that impact your ability to defend our  
17 country?

18 General Saltzman: Yeah, the slower the capabilities  
19 are delivered to the warfighter the less they can use them,  
20 obviously.

21 Senator Scott: Do you think we need to do more  
22 public-private partnerships where we have private companies  
23 that are willing to invest their own capital and scale up  
24 quicker than what we are doing?

25 General Saltzman: We have got tremendous efforts

1 already trying to get as much IRAD, as much industry  
2 investment in R&D as possible, to try to drop the technical  
3 risks associated with key platforms. So there is a  
4 tremendous amount of investment, but more is always better,  
5 I think, in this area.

6 Senator Scott: Are you using agencies like the Space  
7 Development Agency to work with commercial players who are  
8 ready to deliver quickly, with the scale, speed, and  
9 innovation we need to stay ahead of our adversaries and  
10 maintain peace through strength?

11 General Saltzman: Yes, sir. We have got substantial  
12 investments, as I mentioned, in the commercial sector to  
13 develop those technologies. The Space Development Agency's  
14 sole acquisition model, the strategy, is about leveraging  
15 rapidly what commercial industry is producing in order to  
16 go fast and put capabilities in the hands of our  
17 warfighters.

18 Senator Scott: So are you optimistic that we are  
19 going to be able to afford to put satellite systems up that  
20 we will be able to make sure that China is not able to  
21 destroy our ability to communicate or missile detection,  
22 any of these things?

23 General Saltzman: Resiliency is not cheap. I can  
24 tell you that. Obviously, we have a lot of architectures  
25 to redesign so that they are more resilient. But I think

1 the Space Development Agency is a perfect example, where  
2 they are moving fast. We have the funding we need to put  
3 Tranche 2 in orbit. That will give us an initial  
4 operational capability that demonstrates that kind of  
5 resiliency.

6 Senator Scott: And are there quite a few private  
7 companies that are willing to put their money at risk to  
8 try to put systems up, that you can work with?

9 General Saltzman: I cannot really speak to what their  
10 risk tolerance is, but I can say there is a great interest  
11 in the commercial sector to engage with the government.

12 Senator Scott: All right. I want to thank each of  
13 you for your service.

14 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Senator Rosen.

15 Senator Rosen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I would  
16 also like to thank Secretary Meink, General Allvin, General  
17 Saltzman, for testifying today, for your service to our  
18 country. And General Allvin, thank you for taking the time  
19 to meet with me last week. I really appreciated our  
20 conversation ahead of this hearing, and I am going to  
21 continue the discussion we had with both you and Secretary  
22 Meink on documenting exposure at classified locations.

23 At General Caine's confirmation hearing I raised the  
24 issue of documenting exposure at data-masked locations,  
25 where the duty station and even its existence are

1 classified. This is to ensure that servicemembers' records  
2 accurately reflect the service-connected injuries incurred  
3 at those sites. I have heard from constituents who have  
4 served at such locations within the Nevada Test and  
5 Training Range. They believe they were exposed to  
6 radiation from our days of conducting explosive nuclear  
7 weapons testing, and in addition to toxins from burn pits,  
8 which dispose of classified waste.

9       However, DoD does not classify the range as a place  
10 where exposure occurred, despite the Department of Energy  
11 providing a presumption of exposure for their personnel who  
12 served at these exact same locations within the range, such  
13 as the Tonopah Test Range. And because their service is  
14 data-masked, these veterans cannot even prove to the VA  
15 that they were ever actually stationed there. Imagine  
16 that. So all of this has prevented them from being able to  
17 receive the veterans' benefits they deserve.

18       To Secretary Meink and General Allvin, I have a little  
19 bit more on this, so if you will be brief, will you work  
20 with me to ensure that this Committee ensures the  
21 Department of the Air Force provides a presumptive exposure  
22 at relevant Air Force locations, and where the Department  
23 of Energy has done so for their personnel, we want to  
24 ensure that those who served there, currently serving at  
25 these sites, receive sufficient documentation to support

1 their health-related claims, all while still being able to  
2 protect the classified nature of their service. Secretary?

3 Mr. Meink: Yes, Senator, we take the health of our  
4 workforce seriously, and we need to deal with this issue.

5 Senator Rosen: Thank you. Department of Energy has.  
6 General?

7 General Allvin: Absolutely, Senator. I would say  
8 that I do not know whether the Department of Air Force can  
9 do its own policy, but we certainly would be within the  
10 Department of Defense policy we need to work. What I need  
11 to make sure of, on the Air Force side, is if it is  
12 determined that airmen, past or present, are qualified for  
13 those, they should not be restricted from that because of  
14 the process, and the process of being the data mask. That  
15 is something we need to work through.

16 Senator Rosen: I have a solution. So you have teed  
17 me up for my next question, because specifically, will you  
18 ensure, both of you, that your staff meets with my staff  
19 and the Committee staff in the next few weeks so that we  
20 can correct this issue in the fiscal year 2026 NDAA? We  
21 think that there is a fix for this.

22 General Allvin: Senator, obviously I will defer to my  
23 Secretary, but I think this is something -- that part is  
24 easily done, to understand that once they are deemed  
25 qualified we need to ensure that our process does not

1 restrict them because of our --

2 Senator Rosen: There is a template there that the DOE  
3 has been using for years.

4 Mr. Meink: We would be happy to meet with your staff,  
5 Senator.

6 Senator Rosen: Thank you. I appreciate it. I want  
7 to talk a little bit about CCAs and the future of Creech.  
8 General Allvin, with the arrival of Experimental Operations  
9 Unit at Creech Air Force Base and the future deployment of  
10 the Collaborative Combat Aircraft, CCA, if they are to be  
11 permanently based at Creech, which I am really hopeful for,  
12 I am curious what investments will be made to address  
13 housing deficiencies and support services in the area.

14 Creech is remote, has limited housing, limited  
15 services nearby, and airmen have to commute so many miles  
16 to the base from where they live. It is an even longer  
17 commute for those folks who have kids. They have to drop  
18 them off at daycare, drive an hour to work at Nellis Air  
19 Force Base. Nellis is on the opposite end of the Las Vegas  
20 Valley, excuse me.

21 So if CCAs are to be permanently based at Creech, what  
22 does the future of the base infrastructure look like and  
23 how can we help support our personnel there, please.

24 General Allvin: Thank you, Senator, and of course we  
25 are very excited about the Collaborative Combat Aircraft,

1 what it means for the future of our Air Force. Creech is a  
2 natural location, not only because of the community support  
3 there but also because of the range.

4 But to your point, we do need to ensure that a place  
5 that can already be challenging for the airmen who serve  
6 there now, as we add more airmen in, we need to make sure  
7 they are well cared for. So we have a Site Activation Task  
8 Force that is going there now and assessing all of the  
9 needs, everything from, as you mentioned, the childcare,  
10 making sure we have a better process and more rapidly  
11 expand the family childcare, because between the RPA pilots  
12 who now operate on off-hours and what that might mean in  
13 the future for CCA, we need to make sure we have a more  
14 robust capability to take care of the families.

15 Site Activation Task Force should be there. The  
16 Experimental Operations Unit will also be able to give us a  
17 sense of how many we think long term. We are uncovering  
18 new ground here. But between the Site Activation Task  
19 Force and the first months and years of the Experimental  
20 Operations Unit, we should understand, sort of have a  
21 bracket about what it really takes to take care of those  
22 airmen. We are committed to do that.

23 Senator Rosen: Well, perfect. I look forward to  
24 scheduling a meeting. I want to talk about infrastructure  
25 adaptations, airspace control, and electromagnetic spectrum

1 availability. Thank you.

2 Chairman Wicker: Senator Tuberville.

3 Senator Tuberville: Good morning, gentlemen. How are  
4 you? The Army just released its Transition Initiative to  
5 prepare for future threats in budgets. This is for all  
6 three of you, if you want to have time just to answer it.  
7 It is kind of a three-part question. Does this have any  
8 impact on your organization? Do you anticipate similar  
9 initiatives in your organization? And when and what will  
10 they look like? General Saltzman?

11 General Saltzman: Yes, sir. There are some  
12 connections. I have actually been charged by Congress to  
13 be the Force Design Architect for Space for the Armed  
14 Forces. So as the Army goes through its transformation to  
15 figure out exactly how it will use space capabilities to  
16 protect its organic forces, we will be connected to that, as  
17 well, to make sure we are sharing technology, we are not  
18 being redundant where we do not need to be. So there will  
19 be an overarching aspect to that.

20 But in a broader sense, we are also using this year to  
21 build the objective force of the Space Force. What do we  
22 need to look like in the next 10, 15 years, and how will  
23 that connect to the other services to make sure that all of  
24 the joint force requirements are met.

25 Senator Tuberville: How is that communication? Does

1 it work pretty well?

2 General Saltzman: Between the services?

3 Senator Tuberville: Yeah.

4 General Saltzman: Yes, sir. We collaborate through  
5 the Joint Staff in a lot of places, but the JROC is where  
6 we share requirements across the services. We do it at the  
7 working group level all the way up to the four-star  
8 generals.

9 Senator Tuberville: Mr. Secretary, since you have  
10 been here for about 48 hours, what is your thought?

11 Mr. Meink: First off, I have to agree with General  
12 Saltzman. Yeah, I have not had a chance to read their  
13 transition plan in detail, but at a high level a lot of  
14 things are focusing my range fires, things like that, and  
15 that threat environment. Those are the same things we are  
16 having to deal with, so there is a lot of connectivity  
17 there.

18 And in many cases, what both the Space Force delivers  
19 and the Air Force delivers, from ISR and other capability  
20 for targeting, is as critical for the Army as it is for the  
21 entire joint force.

22 Senator Tuberville: If anybody has got to switch  
23 gears it has got to be you guys, you know, for what we have  
24 seen and the things that China is doing. General, your  
25 thoughts?

1           General Allvin: Very well aligned, Senator. I think  
2 as the Army goes through their Transformation Initiative,  
3 as with all the services, we need to make sure we do not do  
4 it in a vacuum, understanding that as the Army transforms,  
5 we are going to be dependent on them, and them on us, for  
6 base resiliency in the Indo-Pacific, as they look to sort  
7 of streamline some of their ways to do acquisition,  
8 consistent with some of the basic tenets of the FORGED Act.

9           We want to make sure that we are integrated there, and  
10 I think we have been undergoing a bit of that ourselves  
11 with the way we are developing our new force design, not  
12 only what we are building but how we are building it. And  
13 I think having those common practices and the collaboration  
14 between the services, as Salty said, is going to be key  
15 going forward.

16          Senator Tuberville: Thank you. Since you are on a  
17 roll I will stay with you, General. We will go back to the  
18 KC-46. I think we have availability around 90 now, of KC-  
19 46s. Is that correct?

20          General Allvin: I think we are 89 on the ramp, yes.

21          Senator Tuberville: Yeah. What is their  
22 availability? I mean, since they are new we have heard the  
23 problems that they are having, up and down, and some that  
24 are in and out of service. What is their availability?

25          General Allvin: See, I knew I was going to be asked

1 this. I cannot remember them all, so I have it right here.  
2 The KC-46 availability right now is just at 51 percent.  
3 And the challenges with that, there are several challenges.

4 Senator Tuberville: 51?

5 General Allvin: Yeah, 51 percent, and that includes  
6 those that are in the depot maintenance. So again, that is  
7 not a number that we are proud of, but there are several  
8 issues that we have been working through with Boeing to  
9 help ensure that we deliver combat capable jets right off  
10 the production line.

11 There are still some deficiency reports that we are  
12 sorting through with Boeing, having to do with the upgraded  
13 remote visualization system and drain lines and those sorts  
14 of things. But right now the 52 percent is where we are  
15 at.

16 Senator Tuberville: Does that have the capability  
17 that we need for the Indo-Pacific, in terms of what it can  
18 carry, the range?

19 General Allvin: It actually does, Senator. It is  
20 actually quite a capable platform, as it is available. One  
21 thing we are looking at into the future is not just the  
22 amount of gas that it carries, but as we go forward into  
23 the next decade or so we need to ensure that we enhance  
24 their survivability, whether that be with onboard systems  
25 or with offboard support. Going into the future it is not

1 just the tyranny of distance, which is extant, but it will  
2 be also the tyranny of operating consistently in a more  
3 contested environment.

4 So as we move forward in the next generation of aerial  
5 refueling system examination we are looking at what the  
6 next capabilities will be, whether it is a new platform or  
7 more defensive systems on the current character platform.

8 Senator Tuberville: So we are looking for new  
9 capabilities, not just sitting around thinking the KC-46 is  
10 going to be the --

11 General Allvin: We are. The most important thing is  
12 the continued recapitalization of the KC-135, which, as I  
13 mentioned, average KC-135 age is older than me. So a 63-  
14 year-old average jet is not something that we want to  
15 continue to try and discover new parts that break. So in  
16 the immediate future, the capacity and the capability that  
17 the KC-46 is, is sufficient, and as we are looking for a  
18 long term we want to make sure that in next couple of  
19 decades we can have more survivable taking capability.

20 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. I had the opportunity  
21 to fly around the world in a KC-135 with a bunch of other  
22 coaches at one time. Damn near froze to death.

23 General Allvin: Did you refuel another aircraft? Did  
24 you get to do that?

25 Senator Tuberville: We did.

1 General Allvin: All right.

2 Senator Tuberville: Yeah, we did. Antiquated is my  
3 explanation for that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 Mr. Meink: Yeah, the environmental controls of the  
5 back of a 135 are not awesome.

6 Chairman Wicker: General Allvin, do not sell yourself  
7 short at age 63. Senator Gillibrand.

8 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Dr.  
9 Meink, Space Force NRO, and NGA are working to establish  
10 the policies and procedures that will guide the DoD's use  
11 of space-based tactical ISRT. Now that you are Secretary,  
12 what is your assessment of this progress, and what do you  
13 believe must still be resolved?

14 Mr. Meink: I think at a high level the agreement on  
15 how we are going to allocate resources and allow for  
16 commanders to task and get what they need -- I am talking  
17 about the combatant commanders -- I think that is all laid  
18 flat now. I think the devil is in the details, though, how  
19 you actually do that, right. We are just starting to field  
20 capability now and starting to do experimentation with that  
21 now, and fielding tools to allow that to happen. There is  
22 obviously still a lot of work to go, but I think there has  
23 been great progress made. And the fact that we already  
24 have systems that we can start doing testing with and start  
25 doing exercising, supporting INDOPACOM and other theaters,

1 will be critically important.

2 I guess I would see if General Saltzman has any  
3 additional comments.

4 General Saltzman: The TacSRT is an important  
5 capability that we have offered to the combatant commands.  
6 It fills a niche where you have unclassified capabilities  
7 that can get quickly into the planners' hands. It is  
8 intended to complement what the intelligence community NRO  
9 and NRG provide to combatant commanders, writ large.

10 Admiral Whitworth and I have been working very  
11 closely. We have working group-level discussions. We are  
12 refining the procedures and policies to make sure there is  
13 not overlap, there is not too much redundancy. We do not  
14 want to pay for imagery twice, for example. And I hope  
15 later this week to be able to sign a Memorandum of  
16 Understanding that outlines those procedures, and we will  
17 be in a much better place.

18 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, General Saltzman.  
19 Last week, at the testimony before the House Armed Services  
20 Committee, it was revealed that Space Force will lose about  
21 10 percent of its civilian workforce. For the service that  
22 is already lean, and by many accounts, should be growing,  
23 how will this loss of these civilian professionals impact  
24 guardians and the Space Force's mission?

25 General Saltzman: Thank you, Senator. We rely

1 heavily on our civilian workforce. They bring expertise  
2 that we do not have in the active duty. They bring  
3 corporate continuity across all of our processes and  
4 procedures. Although the raw numbers might be kind of  
5 small, 10 percent is a large hit. And obviously, we use a  
6 lot of our civilian workforce in the acquisition of our  
7 systems, which is a critical capability that we bring.

8 So I am worried about replacing that level of  
9 expertise in the near term as we try to resolve it and make  
10 sure we have a good workforce doing that acquisition work.

11 Senator Gillibrand: And General Saltzman, you and I  
12 have talked about the Cyber Academy and how important it is  
13 to train young people to do some of these civilian jobs and  
14 to make sure that they can aspire to be in the Space Force  
15 and to aspire to be in the DoD in different capacities as  
16 civilians.

17 We have heard recent reports that because of the  
18 hiring freeze that these young graduates from the Cyber  
19 Academy are not able to get the job that they need to enter  
20 into Space Force NRO and NGA, are unable to do that. Do  
21 you have any insight into what we can do to unstick that  
22 pipeline that we are so desperate to try to grow?

23 General Saltzman: Well, we were in a period of  
24 managed growth. The civilian workforce, by the end of  
25 2025, was supposed to be almost 1,000 larger than it is

1 going to end up being. That is a part of not just the  
2 incentives that we have given for people to resign or  
3 retire early. We have also kind of stopped the growth that  
4 we had planned to accomplish these missions, and cyber  
5 defense is a perfect example of one of those missions that  
6 we have suspended hiring until we figure out exactly what  
7 the size of the civilian workforce is going to be, and then  
8 we will rebalance the force.

9 Cyber is not going to go away. We need to make sure  
10 we are recruiting those people, because that is a skill set  
11 we desperately need.

12 Senator Gillibrand: And, General, do you know how  
13 long it will take to finish the assessment of the numbers  
14 of who you have and what you have and rebalancing the  
15 force, how long might that take? Because again, one of the  
16 challenges that we created the Cyber Academy to address is  
17 that onboarding took so long for organizations like NRO or  
18 CIA or other capacities that rely on cyber-heavy skill sets  
19 that we would lose these extraordinarily gifted young  
20 people to the private sector. We have created the Cyber  
21 Academy specifically to ramp them on to public service.

22 So there is an urgency, and if you have any estimate  
23 in times or any ways that you would suggest to the  
24 Administration that we could maybe surge resources to get  
25 this done sooner than later.

1           General Saltzman: I was really proud at how fast we  
2           were able to onboard our civilian hires. I thought the  
3           Space Force had done a nice job of reducing that timeline.

4           You know, the DoD is really looking at what the size  
5           of the civilian workforce is, and so as those incentives to  
6           reshape to workforce affect the Space Force, I am not sure  
7           exactly where we are going to end up, what our final size  
8           is going to be. As soon as I understand what that size is,  
9           then we will redistribute and reallocate the civilian  
10          workforce, as necessary.

11          Senator Gillibrand: Thank you. Thank you all for  
12          your service.

13          Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Gillibrand.  
14          Senator Budd, you are recognized, and you have the gavel  
15          for 5 minutes.

16          Senator Budd: Understood, and thank you, sir. Again,  
17          thank you all for being here. I want to thank you, in  
18          particular, for your leadership. General Allvin, with  
19          communicating the need for more Air Force, it is something  
20          that I support and something I agree with.

21          Last month we received the Air Force's Report to  
22          Congress, which lays out the plan to sustain and  
23          recapitalize the fighter fleet. The plan goes out, as you  
24          know, to 2035, and it hinges on production and procurement  
25          assumptions over the next 10 years in order to work.

1           So in that sense, how important are the fighter  
2     production lines and stable funding to those lines in your  
3     effort to modernize the fleet?

4           General Allvin: You nailed it, Senator Budd, there.  
5     Absolutely critical. That stable funding helps us not only  
6     understand how to develop the pilot pipeline but where are  
7     they going to be stationed, the whole thing. It is  
8     critical.

9           Senator Budd: One thing that stuck out to me was the  
10    arrival of the F-35s at Lakenheath Air Base, and that once  
11    they are up and running, two Strike Eagle units will be  
12    returning stateside. So has a decision been made on where  
13    those aircraft will end up?

14          General Allvin: Senator, the final decision has not  
15    been made, but I will tell you that when we are looking at  
16    the right place to have them land -- because those have the  
17    newer 229 engines in them.

18          Senator Budd: Versus the 220 engines.

19          General Allvin: Versus the 220 engines. So  
20    understanding Seymour Johnson has the 220s. We are looking  
21    very closely at the opportunity, because, of course,  
22    Seymour Johnson is going to be critical to the F-15E and EX  
23    community as far as the training unit and the operational  
24    unit for the E. So that certainly is an attractive landing  
25    spot right now. We have not made the final decision, but

1 it is pretty attractive.

2 Senator Budd: General, as you know, Seymour Johnson,  
3 which you mentioned, it hosts both combat and training  
4 missions, and it is home to the oldest Strike Eagles in the  
5 fleet. So does the return of those Lakenheath jets, does  
6 it create flexibility for managing the F-15 fleet and  
7 keeping those missions alive?

8 General Allvin: It absolutely does, Senator.

9 Senator Budd: So if you were able to divest those  
10 oldest jets, those Dash 220 jets, at Seymour Johnson,  
11 unencumbered by the current law, and replace them with  
12 newer ones, does that make it easier to sustain both the  
13 combat and the training missions at Seymour Johnson?

14 General Allvin: That absolutely does. It does,  
15 Senator.

16 Senator Budd: Thank you. Now, I want to be  
17 supportive, and if there are commonsense decisions that are  
18 held up by technicalities or factors outside of your  
19 control I want to hear about it, and I am willing to work  
20 with all of you on that.

21 Secretary Meink, again congratulations on your new  
22 role, your swearing in. What can you tell us about the  
23 plan to reoptimize the Air Force for great power  
24 competition?

25 Mr. Meink: So I think it is, like I mentioned in my

1 opening comments, I think there are two things we have to  
2 look at. We have to look at the near-term Indo-Pacific  
3 theater and what we need to do there, and we have talked a  
4 little bit about that from a readiness perspective, how we  
5 are filling more capability out there and dispersing that  
6 capability. I think in the near term that is something we  
7 have to worry about. At the same time, there are  
8 modernization efforts we have going on across the service  
9 to be able to push deeper in there as China fields more and  
10 more capability.

11 I think we have talked a lot about modernization, but  
12 one of the things we could maybe talk a little bit more  
13 about in this meeting is that in some cases, particularly  
14 in the Space Force, it is not just modernization. It is  
15 creation. It is the new mission that we are not just  
16 modernizing. These are new missions that did not exist 4  
17 or 5 years ago. So we are creating new missions, and that  
18 has to be done because those capabilities, those new  
19 missions are going to be critical, both in the Golden Dome  
20 for America but also in the competition with China and  
21 other potential adversaries.

22 So it is a mix of both of those things. It is  
23 maintaining readiness now. It is making sure our  
24 modernization and the creation missions, missions we are  
25 creating, are on schedule and delivered, and that is going

1 to be the focus of my mind is just execution. You have to  
2 execute to get those systems online.

3 Senator Budd: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. General  
4 Allvin, back to you. I am interested in the Deployable  
5 Combat Wing concept. It makes a lot of sense for a wing to  
6 train as a unit and then be able to deploy and fight  
7 together as a unit, if called upon. As one of the first  
8 Deployable Combat Wings, I am particularly interested in  
9 what this means for Seymour Johnson. So will additional  
10 airmen need to be stationed there to support this concept?

11 General Allvin: Yes, Senator, they will, because when  
12 we do that, when we assure we have sequestered those, to  
13 train as units to go and train how they may have to fight,  
14 we still need to ensure that the base is still taken care  
15 of. So we anticipate about 200-or-so airmen coming in, and  
16 we have done an advanced team to go and look and to ensure  
17 that everything is taken care of with the ability to house  
18 and feed and do all those sorts of things with those  
19 additional airmen.

20 I have got to tell you, when we put out the call for  
21 airmen to volunteer to go to these Deployable Combat Wings,  
22 we flooded the zone. There were a lot of airmen who were  
23 very excited about this concept, see themselves rather than  
24 deploying as individuals, training as units and deploying  
25 as units. And I think Seymour Johnson is going to be the

1 great recipient of that and sort of leading the charge for  
2 how the Air Force is going to do, going forward. We are  
3 very excited.

4 Senator Budd: Thank you, General. Chairman?

5 Chairman Wicker: [Presiding.] Yes, before I  
6 recognize Senator Duckworth, let's say this. We are going  
7 to get to everybody, but we are going to reconvene in the  
8 Senate Visitor's Center, Room 217, at 12:25. So people  
9 should be advised and staff members should be advised.

10 Senate Visitor's Center, Room 217, 12:25.

11 Senator Duckworth.

12 Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank  
13 you to our witnesses for being here today.

14 Senator Hirono touched on this Qatari gift plane, and  
15 I wanted to follow up on it. Look, the bipartisan concern  
16 expressed in the lead-up to and during today's hearing  
17 simply underscores how bizarre and disturbing it was to  
18 watch President Trump proudly defend his decision to  
19 create, at the very least, the pathetic appearance that our  
20 commander in chief can be bought by an ally of Iran and  
21 Hamas, all for the price of the Qatari royal family's  
22 luxury, so-called "palace in the sky."

23 And that does not even address the outrageous reality  
24 that far from saving money, this unconstitutional action  
25 will not only cost our nation its dignity, but it will

1 force taxpayers to waste over \$1 billion in taxpayer  
2 dollars to overhaul this particular aircraft when we  
3 currently have not one but two fully operational and fully  
4 capable Air Force One aircraft.

5 Secretary Meink, I wrote a letter to you last week  
6 about the very real operational security risks involved in  
7 President Trump's unconstitutional proposal to accept a  
8 \$400 million luxury aircraft from the Qatari royal family  
9 and retrofit it to serve as Air Force One. And I look  
10 forward to hearing from you and hearing your thorough  
11 response about what the Air Force has been directed to do  
12 to support this.

13 But I have several questions for you here today. As  
14 you know, any platform used for presidential travel must be  
15 fully secure, survivable, and -- and this is the important  
16 part -- capable of supporting uninterrupted command and  
17 control under the most demanding conditions, including in  
18 the event of a nuclear crisis.

19 This is not just about ensuring presidential  
20 protection, though that is very important. This is about  
21 our national security and protecting all Americans from the  
22 dangers posed if the President's sensitive communications  
23 are intercepted or if he is out of contact, God forbid,  
24 with our nation's military during a crisis.

25 Secretary Meink, General Allvin, do you concur that

1 the upgrades required for a foreign-provided plane to meet  
2 the operational security standards of Air Force One would  
3 be significant?

4 Mr. Meink: Senator, thanks for the question. So the  
5 Secretary of Defense has directed the Air Force to  
6 basically start planning to modify the aircraft. We are  
7 postured to do that --

8 Senator Duckworth: That is not my question.

9 Mr. Meink: -- and we will look at all of those --

10 Senator Duckworth: My question is do you concur these  
11 are significant?

12 Mr. Meink: Well, we will have to look at all of those  
13 issues you just addressed in those modifications, Senator.

14 Senator Duckworth: General Allvin, would you say that  
15 to upgrade a foreign aircraft to Air Force One standards  
16 would require significant modifications?

17 General Allvin: I align myself with the Secretary's  
18 opinion that we will be postured to make the modifications  
19 necessary.

20 Senator Duckworth: That is not my question. My  
21 question is, do you concur that it would take significant  
22 modifications to take a civilian 747 and upgrade it to Air  
23 Force One standards?

24 Mr. Meink: So Senator, any civilian aircraft will  
25 take significant modifications to do so, and as I said,

1 based on the Secretary's direction, we are postured and we  
2 are off looking at that right now, what it is going to take  
3 for that particular aircraft.

4 Senator Duckworth: If President Trump insists on  
5 converting this plane to a hardened Air Force One before  
6 2029, I worry about the pressures you may be under to cut  
7 corners on operational security. I have already seen  
8 concerning press reports that requirements have been  
9 loosened for construction of two other Boeing 747-8s  
10 intended to modernize the Air Force One fleet, that  
11 taxpayers have already been paying for to accelerate this  
12 delivery.

13 Can I have your commitment, Mr. Secretary, that you  
14 will strongly advise the President against cutting any  
15 corners or reducing any requirements on operational  
16 security standards for aircraft to be used as Air Force  
17 One?

18 Mr. Meink: So Senator, I am unaware of any  
19 requirements. Now, I have only been on the job 2 days, but  
20 I am unaware of any requirement changes to the current  
21 program. And yes, as we lay out the plan we will make sure  
22 that we do what is necessary to ensure security on the  
23 aircraft.

24 Senator Duckworth: Do I have your commitment that you  
25 will advise the President not to reduce any requirements

1 that will lower operational security for any aircraft to be  
2 used as Air Force One?

3 Mr. Meink: Senator, I will be quite clear and discuss  
4 that with the Secretary, up to the President, if necessary,  
5 if we feel there is any threats that we are unable to  
6 address.

7 Senator Duckworth: If the President insists on this  
8 dangerous course of action, I urge you not to let this  
9 distraction -- and it is a distraction -- divert resources  
10 that would otherwise support delivering the two aircraft  
11 already under contract and paid for by American taxpayers  
12 in a manner consistent with our critical security standards  
13 to protect Air Force One from compromise, disruption, or  
14 attack.

15 Thank you. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

16 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator. Senator  
17 Schmitt.

18 Senator Schmitt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would  
19 note, though, by the way, that Joe Biden designated Qatar  
20 as a major non-NATO ally, but here we are.

21 General Allvin, I want to ask you a couple of  
22 questions about sort of the changing on the battlefield,  
23 the use of drones, unmanned support. And there is a lot of  
24 conversation and discussion about that being for fifth-gen  
25 and sixth-gen platforms, F-47s, which we are very happy

1 about in St. Louis.

2 Will CCA be able to integrate, in your view, with sort  
3 of 4.5-generation platforms like the F-15EX? Is that  
4 something you contemplate?

5 General Allvin: You used the right term. We are  
6 definitely contemplating, the threshold platform that we  
7 are looking for right now to be able to have those two,  
8 which, by the way, we have two of them that are prototyping  
9 very strongly right now, to integrate with the F-35 and F-  
10 22, and obviously it will be sort of born to integrate with  
11 the F-47. We will look at the integration challenges and  
12 opportunities to go back with the 4.5th gen. But the more  
13 we can, the better, because the sooner we start our Air  
14 Force on this human machine teaming piece, the better off  
15 we are going to be as far as better cost exchange ratios as  
16 well as better combat capability.

17 Senator Schmitt: Dr. Meink, I wanted to ask you. We  
18 have heard a bunch of times, and I think it is pretty well  
19 known, the role, the legacy F-15E has played in recent  
20 operations in the Red Sea. Still incredibly valuable.  
21 Still very important. And there is a balancing act here,  
22 right? The F-37 is the future, but we have these legacy  
23 platforms.

24 Would you agree, though, they still play a very, very  
25 important role?

1           General Allvin: Yes, Senator. It has been  
2 demonstrated time and time again that those platforms are  
3 very effective and provide significant combat capability.  
4 Obviously, there are areas where they are challenged and  
5 would not be the primary, but that does not mean they do  
6 not provide operational capability in many cases.

7           Senator Schmitt: And I want to ask you something that  
8 obviously plays into our national defense but somewhat  
9 parochial. At Whiteman Air Force Base, we have got the B-  
10 2, we have got the B-21 obviously on its way. You have got  
11 the A-10 that is being phased out, and that is coming  
12 pretty quickly now, that the F-15E could be a suitable  
13 bridge before you have a longer-term solution like the F-  
14 15EX as a follow-on mission there. Dr. Meink?

15           Mr. Meink: Yeah. So, yes, I think that is one of the  
16 locations that on the list competing for future fighter  
17 wings. Yes, Senator.

18           Senator Schmitt: General Allvin, do you agree with  
19 that?

20           General Allvin: I would. I am really in close  
21 contact with the Lieutenant General John Healy, too, the  
22 Air Force Service Commander, and looking at opportunities  
23 for staying in the global strike community, the B-2, the B-  
24 21, and how many we are going to buy of those, and is there  
25 a better association there. But specifically to the A-10,

1 more resources available, that is where we look at where we  
2 might be able to place and offset the loss of the A-10.

3 Those are all things that, more Air Force, we might be able  
4 to pursue.

5 Senator Schmitt: And I wanted to speak with you, and  
6 we will have plenty of conversation, General Allvin, about  
7 this, I think, down the road. But I was disappointed that  
8 the 139th Airlift Wing did not get the C-130Js. St. Joe is  
9 ready. They, ironically, do the training for others. Like  
10 when the country of India comes in to train on the C-130Js  
11 they do the training for the C-130Js but do not have the C-  
12 130Js.

13 I am not going to put you on the spot right now on  
14 this, but we thought it was going to happen this go-around.  
15 Will you commit to working with me to make sure that that  
16 actually, that we land that plane?

17 General Allvin: Senator, 100 percent. What we do owe  
18 you, we can provide to you, is an understanding of where  
19 the areas were where it did not compete well and where it  
20 did compete well. That is why we try and do with all of  
21 these, when we go from the enterprise definition to the  
22 candidate location to the preferred location, to be able to  
23 understand what some of those discriminators were and give  
24 you a sense of, hey, if there is something that might make  
25 this particular location more competitive next time around,

1 this is where it might be. I think we owe you that, and we  
2 will certainly be happy to do that.

3 Senator Schmitt: Well, I look forward to doing that  
4 again, because we took those comments to heart and I think  
5 addressed those issues. But we will continue to work with  
6 you. Thanks for your service. Thank you.

7 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Schmitt. Senator  
8 Banks.

9 Senator Banks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was not  
10 going to ask about this, but General Allvin, the dumbing  
11 down of the conversation about the Air Force One from Qatar  
12 I think deserves some more attention. Can you talk about  
13 whether it is a domestically made aircraft or an aircraft  
14 that is gifted to us from Qatar, wherever the aircraft  
15 might come from, there would be major security protocols  
16 before the commander in chief would fly on the airplane.  
17 Isn't that correct?

18 General Allvin: Yes, Senator, that is correct. And I  
19 think, if it is possible, because any time we are talking  
20 about things having to do with the security of the  
21 commander in chief, we can do that at the closed session.  
22 There are many more things --

23 Senator Banks: I totally understand. But the public  
24 deserves to know that major security protocols would  
25 happen, no matter where the plane comes from.

1 General Allvin: Yes, Senator.

2 Senator Banks: Right. And the public can be assured  
3 of that being the case because the United States Air Force  
4 is not going to allow the President of the United States to  
5 fly on a plane that is not secure.

6 General Allvin: Yes, Senator. We will comply with  
7 the requirements for his security and all those that are  
8 given to us by the White House.

9 Senator Banks: Yeah, thank you. Mr. Secretary, we  
10 have talked about this before, but can you talk about just  
11 how important the Air National Guard and the Air Force  
12 Reserves are to you and this Administration and what kind  
13 of goals we have over the next 4 years to strengthen those  
14 important institutions might be?

15 Mr. Meink: Yeah, I would be happy to. I just want to  
16 make sure that this airplane, the one that we are talking  
17 about here, was actually domestically produced.

18 Senator Banks: Understood.

19 Mr. Meink: Just like the current platforms are.

20 With respect to the Air National Guard and the  
21 Reserves, yeah, I actually was in the Reserves so I have a  
22 long history of working in that environment. I think it is  
23 critical across board. I think we have already had a  
24 number of discussions where additional aircraft are being  
25 modernized within the Guard and Reserve force or new

1 aircraft are being brought in to the Guard and Reserves.

2 So yeah, it has always been and will continue to be a key  
3 part of the Department of the Air Force's strength and  
4 combat capability.

5 As you know, from the Space Force perspective, there  
6 is a lot of transition going on. General Saltzman can  
7 maybe talk to that a little bit.

8 General Saltzman: Yeah. In accordance with the NDAA,  
9 the transfer of the space capabilities of the Air National  
10 Guard flow into the Space Force, and we are working on all  
11 the planning because those capabilities are critical. The  
12 work that is being done both in the Air Force Reserve and  
13 the Air National Guard for space is critical.

14 Senator Banks: Yeah, I appreciate that. Last month,  
15 as you know, the President came to the Midwest and he spoke  
16 at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, as Senator Slotkin  
17 alluded to a moment ago. And he said, quote, "The previous  
18 administration was willing to surrender Air National Guard  
19 fighter units across the country by retiring aircraft that  
20 were not being replaced. But under the Trump  
21 administration we are correcting that in justice."

22 Mr. Secretary, can you talk about the President's  
23 direction on the need to invest more in these Air National  
24 Guard fighter units, which is important to me whether it is  
25 Michigan or Indiana or across the country. Can you talk

1 about what that investment looks like?

2 Mr. Meink: Yeah. I mean, I think that and many of  
3 the other President's comments kind of reiterate his  
4 perspective on the importance of bringing more air combat  
5 power into the service, and as General Allvin has been  
6 championing. So I think as we bring more of that combat  
7 capability in as we build out more aircraft, both in the  
8 active duty units but also in the Reserve units and Guard  
9 units, that that will be critical to get those platforms  
10 into those locations.

11 Senator Banks: And General Allvin, as we see this  
12 investment and the focus by this Administration, what  
13 should Air Guard units around the country be doing at the  
14 moment to prepare for this future? Even though there might  
15 be a transition to F-15s in Michigan or F-16s in Indiana,  
16 what does an Air National Guard Base need to do now to  
17 prepare for F-35s, F-47s down the road?

18 General Allvin: Senator, I say the short answer to  
19 that is really what they have been doing, which is ensuring  
20 that they maintain the quality of their aircrew, the  
21 quality of the maintenance, the quality of the support that  
22 has made them an integral part of our ability to deploy and  
23 fight overseas for the last quarter century and before.

24 So I think the Air National Guard, and, of course,  
25 working as a total force because we are a total force,

1 continuing to integrate into our deployment scheme. The  
2 Air National Guard is integrating into our new Deployable  
3 Combat Wing scheme. So they are much like the Air Force  
4 Reserves. They are transforming right along with the rest  
5 of the Air Force. And as we do that, then we are able to  
6 have a more balanced and even approach to modernizing our  
7 Air Force. I think they are doing all the right things.

8 Senator Banks: I appreciate that very much. I yield  
9 back.

10 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator. This concludes  
11 what I would say has been a very informative open portion  
12 of today's hearing. I want to thank our witnesses for  
13 their testimony. Members' questions for the record will be  
14 due to the Committee within 2 business days of the  
15 conclusion of the hearing.

16 We will commence the closed portion of this hearing in  
17 Senator Security at 12:25.

18 [Whereupon, at 11:56 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]  
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