

Stenographic Transcript  
Before the

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

**UNITED STATES SENATE**

TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATIONS OF:  
MR. MICHAEL D. PAYNE TO BE DIRECTOR OF COST  
ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM EVALUATION, DEPARTMENT  
OF DEFENSE;  
MR. ALEXANDER J. VELEZ-GREEN TO BE DEPUTY UNDER  
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY;  
MR. TIMOTHY D. DILL TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF  
DEFENSE FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS;  
AND DR. MAURICE L. TODD TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
OF DEFENSE FOR READINESS

Thursday, November 6, 2025

Washington, D.C.

ALDERSON COURT REPORTING  
1029 VERMONT AVE, NW  
10TH FLOOR  
WASHINGTON, DC 20005  
(202) 289-2260

1 TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATIONS OF:

2 MR. MICHAEL D. PAYNE TO BE DIRECTOR OF COST ASSESSMENT AND  
3 PROGRAM EVALUATION, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE;

4 MR. ALEXANDER J. VELEZ-GREEN TO BE DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY  
5 OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY;

6 MR. TIMOTHY D. DILL TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
7 FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS;

8 AND DR. MAURICE L. TODD TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF  
9 DEFENSE FOR READINESS  
10

11 Thursday, November 6, 2025  
12

13 U.S. Senate

14 Committee on Armed Services

15 Washington, D.C.  
16

17 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m.,  
18 in Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Roger  
19 F. Wicker, chairman of the committee, presiding.

20 Members Present: Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds,  
21 Ernst, Sullivan, Cramer, Scott, Budd, Schmitt, Sheehy,  
22 Reed, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine,  
23 Duckworth, and Kelly.  
24  
25



1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROGER F. WICKER, U.S.

2 SENATOR FROM MISSISSIPPI

3 Chairman Wicker: The hearing will come to order. I  
4 welcome our witnesses and their families, and I thank them  
5 for being here this morning. We face a threat environment  
6 more dangerous than any since World War II, and we face it  
7 together, and the members of this panel will be very much  
8 involved in answering that call, and I do appreciate them  
9 standing forward and doing that.

10 Mr. Timothy Dill has been nominated to serve as  
11 Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve  
12 Affairs. If confirmed, he will oversee nearly all of the  
13 Department's policies affecting careers and quality of life  
14 for our military and civilian workforce. He would play a  
15 key role in ensuring the Department fosters a culture  
16 rooted in merit, a culture that recognizes excellence,  
17 supports families, and remains competitive with the  
18 civilian sector. President Trump and Secretary Hegseth  
19 have refocused the Pentagon on readiness and warfighting,  
20 eliminating policies, such as DEI, above merit and  
21 performance. I look forward to hearing Mr. Dill's vision  
22 for strengthening the ways the Department manages military  
23 and civilian personnel, rewards top performers, and  
24 sustains the positive momentum our administration has  
25 generated, and recruitment.



1        Mr. Maurice Todd has been nominated to serve as  
2        Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness. The  
3        Department faces significant hurdles, including maintenance  
4        backlogs on our aircraft and naval fleet, supply chain  
5        disruptions, and a lack of flying hours. If confirmed, Mr.  
6        Todd must accelerate reforms in his office. These reforms  
7        should help build better tools for senior leaders,  
8        equipping them to fix readiness challenges. Then they must  
9        ensure that readiness is measured and reported to Congress  
10       in a way that is transparent and fosters accountability.  
11       Today, we hope to hear Mr. Todd's perspectives on how we  
12       can improve Joint Force readiness, leverage emerging  
13       technologies and predict readiness gaps, and ensure that  
14       our industrial base can sustain operations in a protracted  
15       conflict.

16       Mr. Michael Payne has been nominated to serve as  
17       Director of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation, or  
18       CAPE. If confirmed, he would be responsible for the  
19       critical work of providing independent cost analysis for  
20       the Department's acquisition programs. However, he would  
21       be also inheriting a fractured relationship with Congress,  
22       and we need to talk about that today. Congress previously  
23       considered actually fully de-establishing CAPE. Instead,  
24       Section 902 of the fiscal year 2024 National Defense  
25       Authorization Act was passed into law to reform the office.



1 Unfortunately, there has been limited reform to date. Now  
2 the House defense appropriators have contributed their  
3 voice to the mix, adding a provision to shrink CAPE, a  
4 provision which I support. The congressional defense  
5 committees routinely ask the Department to justify massive  
6 decisions about DOD weapons programs. In response, we  
7 often hear that CAPE analyses and advocacy played a  
8 determinative role in these decisions and resulting  
9 setbacks. We need a strong, centralized civilian analytic  
10 group to support the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary,  
11 but that group needs to be honest about its biases, willing  
12 to revisit assumptions, and mindful of the fact that simple  
13 modeling analysis cannot possibly capture the complexity of  
14 the decisions the Pentagon must face, and that's not what  
15 we have right now.

16 And finally, Mr. Velez-Green has been nominated for  
17 the position of Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for  
18 Policy. If confirmed, he would serve as the Principal  
19 Advisor to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. He  
20 would have the full power and authority to execute the  
21 duties of Under Secretary Colby and would be heavily  
22 involved in managing the policy enterprise, including its  
23 relationship with other executive branch actors. Sound  
24 judgment is the principle attribute required of the  
25 individual serving in this position. He must also bring



1 deep experience in defense policy and in managing large  
2 organizations.

3 Mr. Velez-Green no doubt watched the committee's  
4 hearing on Tuesday. He saw that many on this committee  
5 have serious concerns about the Pentagon's Policy Office  
6 and how it is serving the President of the United States  
7 and the Congress. On Tuesday, several members reviewed a  
8 number of actions taken by the Pentagon's Policy Office.  
9 We discussed Ukraine security assistance, force posture  
10 moves, AUKUS, Japan policy, the National Defense Strategy  
11 and where it stands, and more. I want to be clear from the  
12 outset of this hearing, we asked these questions based on  
13 extensive discussion with other administration personnel  
14 and with U.S. allies. We do not simply rely on articles  
15 from the press. No one at this dais takes everything the  
16 press says as gospel truth. Certainly, the President has  
17 been treated terribly by the media since he walked down  
18 that escalator, but to put it simply, I do not believe  
19 members are asking about any of this simply because we read  
20 it in the papers or hear it on the airwaves.

21 Members of this committee are in regular contact with  
22 people inside the executive branch, both career civilians  
23 and political appointees. We talk to the Japanese, we talk  
24 to the Taiwanese, the Koreans, and the Baltic nations. In  
25 many of these conversations, we hear that the Pentagon



1 Policy Office seems to be doing what it pleases without  
2 coordinating, even inside the U.S. executive branch. Some  
3 might hope to chalk up such accusations to faulty news  
4 reporting, but as I've said, it is not that simple. Either  
5 all of these other administration officials and senior  
6 foreign officials are deliberately misleading us, or we  
7 have a problem coming from this office at the Pentagon, and  
8 that problem needs to be cleared up.

9 One way to clean this up is for the Policy shop to  
10 meet its statutory requirement to consult with this  
11 committee. It is a statutory requirement to consult with  
12 this committee rather than simply informing us of a  
13 decision after the fact. I say this at the outset because  
14 I think we're going to have more questions today, and as I  
15 said on Tuesday, I'm under no illusion that everyone  
16 involved in U.S. foreign policy agrees on everything, but  
17 we need a process that works for the President and the  
18 Article I branch of the government. Unfortunately, we do  
19 not have such a process at this moment. That makes it more  
20 difficult for the President and the Congress to align our  
21 national security against Xi Jinping and all the other  
22 junior partner dictators. During today's hearing, I hope  
23 to hear how Mr. Velez-Green would improve the Policy  
24 Office's performance so that it aligns more closely with  
25 the President on these consequential matters so that the



1 office works and consults with Congress in a productive  
2 way.

3 With that, I thank my colleagues for their attention,  
4 and I turn to my colleague Ranking Member Reed.

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25





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

3           Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.  
4 Good morning to our witnesses, and congratulations on your  
5 nominations. I'd also like to extend my best wishes to  
6 your family members and friends who are with you here  
7 today.

8           Mr. Payne, you are nominated to be the Director of  
9 Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation, CAPE. If  
10 confirmed, you'll be responsible for providing independent  
11 analysis on all aspects of defense programs, including  
12 weapon systems and force structures, evaluation of program  
13 performance, and the cost effectiveness of defense systems.  
14 Your long career with CAPE and the Air Force should serve  
15 you well in this role. There are a number of challenges to  
16 address. In the near term, you must work with Congress to  
17 improve the quality and timeliness of acquisition data by  
18 establishing streamlined methods to reduce bureaucratic  
19 burdens while enabling congressional oversight. Longer  
20 term, CAPE must improve estimates for operation and  
21 sustainment costs and develop accurate methods for  
22 reporting the growing portion of the Pentagon's budget  
23 spent on contracted services. You will also need to  
24 balance rigorous cost estimates with the need for speed and  
25 tailored acquisition approaches. Mr. Payne, I would like



1 to know how you plan to improve CAPE's transparency with  
2 Congress and what are your views on CAPE's role and the new  
3 Requirements and Resourcing Alignment Board.

4 Mr. Velez-Green, you are nominated to be Deputy Under  
5 Secretary of Defense for Policy, a critical position  
6 responsible for advising the Under Secretary and shaping  
7 defense policy and strategy at a consequential moment. The  
8 policies we set today will shape America's security for  
9 decades. China and Russia have made no secret of their  
10 aggressive ambitions, and we must focus our time,  
11 resources, and attention on competing effectively with  
12 them. You have argued that the United States must avoid  
13 distractions from wars of choice in low-priority theaters,  
14 and I agree. However, with that in mind, I would like to  
15 know how you and Under Secretary Colby reconcile this  
16 theory with the Department's ongoing military campaign and  
17 buildup in South and Central America. Is this not  
18 precisely the kind of strategic distraction you have both  
19 warned against?

20 You have also written extensively in favor of steep  
21 reductions to America's role in Europe, the Middle East,  
22 and elsewhere. I would like to know why you support that  
23 approach, and, if confirmed, how would you work to repair  
24 our standing with allies and restore our competitive  
25 position, particularly as we seek credibility in the Indo-



1 Pacific? I'm concerned by reports that the forthcoming  
2 National Defense Strategy will make an alarming turn to  
3 heavily refocus the Department of Defense inward on  
4 American soil and homeland security. Mr. Velez-Green, you  
5 have served in OSDP since day one, including 4 months as  
6 acting Under Secretary. The committee expects clear  
7 answers on whether you believe the Department's focus  
8 should be on homeland security missions or on long-term  
9 competition with China and Russia.

10 Mr. Dill, you are nominated to be Assistant Secretary  
11 of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. This role is  
12 responsible for overseeing policies for military and  
13 civilian personnel, reserve component integration, and  
14 total force readiness, serving as a principal advisor to  
15 the Secretary of Defense on manpower and military community  
16 policy. Mr. Dill, I'm troubled by this administration's  
17 treatment of our military. President Trump and Secretary  
18 Hegseth have held campaign rallies on military bases, fired  
19 senior officers without cause, and threatened to deploy  
20 troops against domestic political opponents, among other  
21 divisive orders. These actions threaten the 250-year  
22 tradition of an apolitical military, a tradition that has  
23 made our armed forces the most trusted institution in  
24 America. If confirmed, you would be responsible for  
25 protecting and advocating for every single military service



1 member and defense civilian, regardless of their personal  
2 political preferences or demographics. I would ask you to  
3 commit to this committee today that you understand the  
4 critical importance of maintaining an apolitical military  
5 and that you'll defend this principle, even if it's  
6 unwelcome by other leaders in the administration.

7 Finally, Dr. Todd, you are nominated to be Assistant  
8 Secretary of Defense for Readiness. In this role, you  
9 would advise the Secretary on readiness and training,  
10 oversee policies ensuring the Joint Force is prepared for  
11 assigned missions, and maintain responsibility for the  
12 safety of more than 2.7 million uniformed and civilian  
13 personnel. There has been a troubling pattern of mishaps  
14 across the Department this year. Just last week, two  
15 aircraft from the USS Nimitz crashed in the South China Sea  
16 within 1 hour of each other. The USS Truman has suffered  
17 repeated incidents at sea. Last month, an artillery  
18 exercise in California dropped shrapnel onto Highway 5 and  
19 several patrol vehicles were hit, and there have been  
20 multiple fatal helicopter crashes this year. While our  
21 service members perform dangerous work, peacetime accidents  
22 must be minimized, and I think you understand it very  
23 clearly, and I'd like to know what your plan is to assure a  
24 culture of safety across the force. Additionally, I am  
25 concerned about readiness impacts from President Trump's



1 domestic and border deployments. I'd ask for your plan to  
2 address lost training and readiness from missions unrelated  
3 to the goal of lethality of the military.

4 Thank you again to our nominees. I look forward to  
5 your testimonies. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25



1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Ranking Member.

2 Senator Cruz, our colleague, is here to introduce Mr. Dill,  
3 and, sir, you are recognized.

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25



1 STATEMENT OF HON. TED CRUZ, U.S. SENATOR FROM TEXAS

2 Senator Cruz: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking  
3 Member, distinguished members of the committee. It is  
4 great to be back before the mighty Senate Armed Services  
5 Committee. I greatly enjoyed the 6 years I served with you  
6 on this committee, and I'm very glad to be back. Today, I  
7 have the great privilege of introducing my friend and  
8 former Military Legislative Assistant and National Security  
9 Advisor, Tim Dill, as President Trump's nominee to serve as  
10 Assistant Secretary of War for Manpower and Reserve  
11 Affairs.

12 Tim was born in Grand Prairie, Texas, and although he  
13 grew up in Ohio, being a Texan is a permanent condition,  
14 and we proudly claim him. Only a small percentage of young  
15 Americans volunteer to serve in the Army, and of those who  
16 do, only 2 percent earn the Green Beret, and Tim is part of  
17 that elite group. He served 10 years on active duty as an  
18 Army officer in the infantry and special forces, deploying  
19 in Afghanistan, Iraq, and multiple countries in Africa.  
20 During his service to our country, he earned the Combat  
21 Infantrymen Badge, the Special Forces Tab, the Ranger Tab,  
22 the Pathfinder Badge, and the distinction of Jumpmaster.  
23 After his time defending our Nation, he attended Duke  
24 University where he earned both his J.D. and M.B.A. and  
25 developed a terrible habit of rooting for Duke in



1 basketball.

2 [Laughter.]

3 Senator Cruz: Later, he joined my office as my  
4 Military Legislative Assistant and National Security  
5 Advisor where he served from December 2022 to January 2025.  
6 While on my staff, Tim worked tirelessly for a stronger  
7 military and a safer America. To ensure the lethality of  
8 our forces, he visited every active duty military  
9 installation in Texas and worked closely with service  
10 members and veterans to improve their care and treatment.  
11 Tim played a key role in numerous legislative initiatives,  
12 including the AMERICANS Act, the COMMAND Act, and the MEDAL  
13 Act, as well as leading authorization for additional  
14 funding for Joint Task Force North to counter transnational  
15 criminal organizations along our Southern border.

16 Beyond his distinguished service, remarkable sacrifice  
17 and leadership in the Army, Tim is a man of great  
18 character. He is a warrior and a true patriot. He is a  
19 proud husband to Andrea and the father of two, who you have  
20 been hearing from this morning. From leading soldiers in  
21 combat to shaping legislation that strengthens our national  
22 defense and security, Tim understands the weight of  
23 responsibility that comes with leadership. I know he will  
24 work every day to ensure our military remains ready to  
25 fight and win, and I'll tell you, on top of that, he





1 actually has a decent post game in basketball, which is a  
2 requirement for working in my office.

3 Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I cannot think  
4 of anyone more qualified, more prepared, more principled to  
5 lead this critical office in the Department of War. Tim  
6 served Texas service members and their families with  
7 dedication, and he will do the same for the 3 million  
8 American service members and their families. I strongly  
9 encourage you to support his nomination. Thank you.

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25



1 Chairman Wicker: Senator Cruz, thank you very much  
2 for your introduction and endorsement. It means a lot. I  
3 do understand that in some 12 minutes, you must gavel the  
4 Commerce Committee to order, a committee that I'm a member  
5 of. If you really, really need me, send for me, but I'll  
6 probably be in this room for the duration.

7 Senator Cruz: Go with God, my friend.

8 Chairman Wicker: All right. Thank you very much, and  
9 do your duty.

10 Senator Kaine: Mr. Chair? Mr. Chair? We were  
11 hoping for some questions for the senator.

12 Chairman Wicker: Okay.

13 Senator Cruz: On the advice of counsel, I plead the  
14 Fifth.

15 [Laughter.]

16 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator Cruz.  
17 And now, Mr. Dill, having been generously introduced,  
18 you're recognized for your opening statement, sir.

19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25



1 STATEMENT OF TIMOTHY D. DILL TO BE ASSISTANT

2 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS

3 Mr. Dill: Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and  
4 distinguished members of this committee, I'm honored to  
5 appear before you today as President Trump's nominee for  
6 Assistant Secretary of War for Manpower and Reserve  
7 Affairs.

8 First and foremost, thank you to my Lord and Savior  
9 Jesus Christ for guiding my steps throughout my life.

10 Thank you to President Trump for nominating me and  
11 Secretary Hegseth and Under Secretary Tata for their  
12 confidence and support. Thank you to Senator Cruz for the  
13 opportunity to serve on his staff and for his kind  
14 introduction today. It was an honor to work on behalf of  
15 the people of Texas, and my time as a Senate staffer  
16 deepened my appreciation for the role that the Senate and  
17 specifically this committee plays in overseeing our armed  
18 forces.

19 Behind me is my beautiful wife, Andrea, a  
20 constitutional law attorney, who's so graciously supported  
21 my career, our daughter, Naomi, and our son, Claymore. I'm  
22 also joined by my father, Doug, and my mother, Annie, my  
23 sister, Bethany, my brother, David, and his wife, Aleta.  
24 My sister, Emily, and her husband, Rob, could not be here  
25 today because Rob is stationed in Germany as a long-serving



1 Department of the Army civilian. I'm also joined by my  
2 wife's parents, Scott and Christie Beathard, aunts and  
3 uncles, Liz and Jerry August and Herb and Patty McCracken,  
4 friends and fellow soldiers from various points in my Army  
5 career. Thank you to each of you and a special thanks to  
6 my mother for so patiently homeschooling me for 11 years,  
7 and to my father for modeling a lifetime of servant  
8 leadership.

9 I grew up in Akron, Ohio, across the street from Sam  
10 McNeill, a World War II veteran who earned the Silver Star  
11 while serving in the 82nd Airborne Division. Both my  
12 grandfathers also served in World War III, William Knapp in  
13 the Army and Leslie Dill in the Navy. I was 16 when the  
14 World Trade Center Towers fell, and like many of my  
15 generation, that defining event in our Nation's history  
16 called me to military service, and I commissioned as a U.S.  
17 Army officer in 2007 through Army ROTC. I served 10 years  
18 on active duty, first in the footsteps of my neighbor, Sam,  
19 in the 82nd Airborne Division, and later as a Green Beret  
20 in the 3rd Special Forces Group. I was honored to lead  
21 soldiers in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other countries in the  
22 Middle East and North Africa. My military service was  
23 transformational, giving me more than I could ever give  
24 back and deepening my love for my country. Serving  
25 alongside our Nation's finest paratroopers and Green Berets



1 challenged me to give my all and shaped my future steps.

2 When I took off my uniform for the last time, the GI  
3 Bill covered my graduate degree at my dream school, which  
4 is where I met my wife, Andrea, giving me the best  
5 transition to civilian life that I could've asked for. I'm  
6 grateful to have a new opportunity to serve, and if  
7 confirmed, I'll strive for excellence in my role as a  
8 senior civilian leader in the Department on behalf of three  
9 groups. First, my comrades in arms who gave their lives to  
10 preserve our freedom. I hope from my service to honor  
11 their memory and further the cause for which they fought.  
12 The second is the 3 million soldiers, sailors, airmen,  
13 marines, guardians, and Department civilians who now have  
14 the watch, including many of the outstanding men and women  
15 with whom I was honored to serve. Third is the generation  
16 who will next carry the torch. That generation may include  
17 my own children, and I hope to ensure their opportunity to,  
18 like me, serve their country in a merit-based military that  
19 molds the next generation of leaders.

20 Our military has long fielded an all-volunteer force,  
21 and the Department must continue to inspire our finest  
22 young men and women to serve both in uniform and as members  
23 of our critical civilian workforce. We must also persuade  
24 the best among them to stay and become senior leaders. To  
25 do those things, the Department must continue to



1 communicate the high calling of military service, the same  
2 call that led me to an army ROTC recruiter 19 years ago,  
3 and must also provide them with desirable opportunities,  
4 relevant training, and a good quality of life, including  
5 for their families. The Assistant Secretary of War for  
6 Manpower and Reserve Affairs shoulders each of those  
7 responsibilities and more, and if confirmed, I will welcome  
8 that challenge.

9 Thank you for considering my nomination, and I look  
10 forward to answering your questions.

11 [The prepared statement of Mr. Dill follows:]  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25



1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Mr. Dill, and  
2 as an ROTC graduate myself, I very much appreciate you  
3 pointing that out.

4 Mr. Payne, you are now recognized, sir.



1           STATEMENT OF MR. MICHAEL D. PAYNE, TO BE DIRECTOR OF  
2   COST ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM EVALUATION, DEPARTMENT OF  
3   DEFENSE

4           Mr. Payne:   Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and  
5   distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to  
6   appear before you today as President Donald Trump's nominee  
7   to be the Director of Cost Assessment and Program  
8   Evaluation.

9           First, I would like to express my gratitude to God for  
10   his many blessings.  I also want to explicitly thank  
11   President Trump, Secretary Hegseth, and Deputy Secretary  
12   Feinberg for the confidence and trust they have placed in  
13   me to serve in this critical position.  Finally, I want to  
14   acknowledge my family, including my wife, Melissa, my  
15   daughter, Ellen, and her fiance, Josh, who are here with me  
16   today, and my son, John, and my mother and father, Karen  
17   and David Payne, who couldn't be here.  Thank you all for  
18   your continued love and support.

19          Growing up in a small village in upstate New York, I  
20   was surrounded by a family and community of people who love  
21   this country.  I was greatly influenced by the stories of  
22   World War II veterans, like my great uncle, Captain Jack  
23   Marshall, who served in the Army.  My uncles, Raymond and  
24   Carroll Welker, my cousin, Brian Welker, and my brother,  
25   Steve, also served in the Army.  Their example instilled in





1 me a strong sense of service and commitment to the security  
2 of the United States.

3 Today, our great Nation faces an urgent challenge.  
4 The rise of China, particularly their expanding military  
5 and deepening ties with Russia, Iran, and North Korea, is  
6 alarming and presents one of the most pressing challenges  
7 of our time. China continues to develop, test, and field  
8 advanced military capabilities at a rapid pace. Their  
9 progress and determination are unmistakable. We must meet  
10 this challenge with resolve. Strength remains our surest  
11 path to peace, yet we must also confront the hard truth:  
12 for too long our military has been asked to defend our  
13 Nation with systems that are outdated, over budget, and  
14 delayed, while our adversaries modernize with purpose and  
15 speed.

16 Under the leadership of President Trump and Secretary  
17 Hegseth, we will restore the military to unmatched strength  
18 and readiness. They set a clear vision and chartered a  
19 path to protect the homeland with the Golden Dome for  
20 America Initiative, they prioritized restoring America's  
21 maritime dominance by addressing our shipbuilding industry,  
22 and they have initiated efforts to shore up our Nation's  
23 supply chain, including munitions production. These  
24 efforts and many others will ensure peace is preserved  
25 through unmistakable American power.



1           If confirmed as the director of CAPE, I will support  
2   these efforts by focusing on three core priorities. First,  
3   during my time as a career civil servant in the Pentagon, I  
4   have worked both within CAPE and in the Air Force working  
5   with CAPE. I recognize that CAPE has often been viewed as  
6   operating beyond its mission responsibilities and has,  
7   consequently, been under heavy scrutiny. That is why, if  
8   confirmed, my first priority will be focusing CAPE on its  
9   defined mission of providing independent cost estimating  
10   and program evaluation analyses to the Secretary, Deputy,  
11   and other Department leaders. Objective, fact-based  
12   analysis is the cornerstone of sound defense decision-  
13   making that puts the most advanced capabilities in the  
14   hands of our warfighters.

15           Second, I will modernize CAPE processes and systems.  
16   We must leverage cutting-edge methods, tools, and digital  
17   systems to deliver faster, more accurate, and more relevant  
18   evaluations to keep pace with modern warfare and  
19   acquisition demands. Third, I will invest in the next  
20   generation of analysts and leaders. America's strategic  
21   advantage depends not only on technology, but also on  
22   people: dedicated professionals who think critically,  
23   challenge assumptions, and embody integrity and service to  
24   the Nation. CAPE has exceptionally talented men and women.  
25   If confirmed, I will do everything possible to enhance



1 their professional development and uphold the independence  
2 and integrity that define their work.

3 I believe strongly in the Department's mission to  
4 deter conflict, defend our Nation, and ensure every  
5 taxpayer dollar strengthens the security of the United  
6 States. If I am fortunate enough to be confirmed, I will  
7 work tirelessly to uphold these principles and provide the  
8 objective, rigorous analysis that national security  
9 demands. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward  
10 to your questions.

11 [The prepared statement of Mr. Dill follows:]  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25



1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Mr. Payne. Mr.  
2 Velez-Green, sir, you're recognized.

3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25



1           STATEMENT OF MR. ALEXANDER J. VELEZ-GREEN TO BE  
2           DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY

3           Mr. Velez-Green: Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Reed,  
4           and distinguished members of the Armed Service Committee,  
5           it is an honor and a privilege to come before you today to  
6           be considered for the role of Deputy Under Secretary of War  
7           for Policy. I spent my formative years in government as  
8           National Security Advisor to a member of this committee,  
9           and it is with great respect, humility, and gratitude that  
10          I sit before you today.

11          With respect to my nomination, I would like first to  
12          thank President Trump for his historic vision and  
13          leadership. I believe deeply in the President's  
14          determination to restore peace through strength with a real  
15          desire for a durable peace on terms that leave Americans  
16          better off, but also recognition that we can only achieve  
17          that peace from a position of military strength. It is an  
18          extraordinary honor to be part of the President's  
19          administration, and I am deeply grateful for the  
20          President's confidence in nominating me for this role.

21          I would also like to thank Secretary Hegseth for his  
22          support and for his clear-eyed, thoughtful, and courageous  
23          leadership. Under the Secretary's direction, the  
24          Department is rightfully returning to its roots as a  
25          warfighting organization as the President has instructed.



1 It has been a privilege to be part of the Secretary's team,  
2 and I am deeply grateful to be considered for this  
3 opportunity to continue to support his critical work at  
4 this critical time. To Under Secretary Colby as well, I  
5 owe my very deep gratitude. The Under Secretary is a  
6 brilliant thinker, strategist, and leader. He is also a  
7 good and decent man, mentor, and friend. It has been a  
8 true honor to support him for many years, and I am honored  
9 even more to be considered to serve as his deputy.

10 Finally, I could not be here at all if not for the  
11 love and support of my wife, Megan, who is here with me  
12 today. Through countless long hours, late nights, and  
13 weekends spent at work away from her and our loved ones,  
14 she has stood behind me every step of the way and I can  
15 never thank her enough for her support and the sacrifices  
16 that she has made so that I can serve my country. I would  
17 also like to sincerely thank my parents, my sister, and  
18 other family and friends, many of whom are here today and  
19 to whom I am forever grateful.

20 To my parents, especially: to my mother, who was born  
21 to Puerto Rican migrants in an apartment in Hell's Kitchen  
22 and went on to be a social worker and serve on our town's  
23 board of education, and to my father, who grew up in a  
24 Jewish family in the Bronx and went on to become a teacher.  
25 Anything I have accomplished or will ever accomplish, it



1 will be because of the lessons that they taught me about  
2 being good to others, about hard work, determination and  
3 overcoming adversity, and about the value of serving our  
4 fellow Americans. My family's story, from humble  
5 beginnings in New York to this seat in our Nation's  
6 capital, I've been all around this world, and that story is  
7 only possible right here in the United States. For them  
8 and for that, I'm incredibly grateful, and it is my sincere  
9 honor to be considered for this opportunity to give back,  
10 especially in a period of such historic consequence on the  
11 world stage.

12 Members of this committee, if you'll allow me, the  
13 role of Deputy Under Secretary of War for Policy is to  
14 support the Under Secretary of War for Policy as he informs  
15 and helps to advance the Secretary's priorities in line  
16 with President Trump's commonsense America First peace  
17 through strength agenda. With respect to those priorities,  
18 Secretary Hegseth has been very clear. The Department is  
19 laser focused on defending the U.S. homeland, strengthening  
20 deterrence against China in the Indo-Pacific, increasing  
21 burden sharing with America's allies and partners, and  
22 supercharging our Nation's defense industrial base. In my  
23 view, each of these efforts is critical in its own right,  
24 and together, I believe they offer a path for the  
25 Department to deliver on President Trump's intent, not only



1 to defend our Nation's homeland, but also to achieve and  
2 sustain peace around the world.

3 They do so, first, by ensuring that the Joint Force is  
4 always ready and able to defend our Nation's interests  
5 against the most consequential and difficult threats that  
6 we face. At the same time, these lines of effort position  
7 the Department to work more closely with allies and  
8 partners around the world, building on the President's  
9 historic success at Hague, and making these relationships  
10 stronger, more equitable, and more sustainable than they've  
11 been in decades, if not longer, which is good for the  
12 United States, of course, but also vitally important for  
13 allies and partners, with whom we've worked together  
14 closely for many years, and I believe we should for many  
15 years to come.

16 In closing, under President Trump's leadership, at the  
17 direction of Secretary Hegseth, I believe that we have an  
18 opportunity to restore peace through strength, not just in  
19 this hemisphere, but around the world through a combination  
20 of focused, revitalized American military power and the  
21 fuller engagement of our allies and partners. And if I am  
22 fortunate enough to be confirmed for this role, you have my  
23 fullest and strongest possible commitment to dedicate  
24 myself to that effect. Thank you very much again for your  
25 time and your consideration. I look forward to your





1 questions.

2 [The prepared statement of Mr. Velez-Green follows:]

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25



1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Mr. Velez-  
2 Green. Dr. Todd, you're recognized.

3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25



1           STATEMENT OF DR. MAURICE L. TODD TO BE ASSISTANT  
2 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR READINESS

3           Dr. Todd: Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and  
4 distinguished members of the Senate Armed Services  
5 Committee, it is an honor and privilege to appear before  
6 you as the President's nominee for the Assistant Secretary  
7 of War for Readiness. I want to thank the President for  
8 this opportunity. I'm honored by the President's  
9 nomination and his trust. I am grateful for the time many  
10 of you have spent with me in recent weeks and thankful for  
11 the committee's attention to my nomination. I also thank  
12 Secretary Hegseth and Under Secretary Tata for their  
13 support.

14           In contemplating the duties of the Assistant Secretary  
15 of War for Readiness would entail, should I be confirmed, I  
16 recalled President George Washington's words in his first  
17 annual address to Congress in 1790: "To be prepared for  
18 war is the most effectual means of preserving peace." Now  
19 more than 200 years later, these words continue to ring  
20 true, capturing President Trump's vision to achieve peace  
21 through strength. Further, as Secretary Hegseth and the  
22 Department work to restore the warrior ethos through a  
23 refocus on lethality, meritocracy, and accountability, if  
24 confirmed for this position, I will be laser focused on  
25 ensuring that the total force is ready to deter and, if



1 called upon, to prevail against the most dangerous threats  
2 to American interests. To that end, if confirmed, I will  
3 dedicate my full attention to the following  
4 responsibilities:

5 I will assess the readiness of the total force, to  
6 execute the Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance,  
7 inform Department strategic planning and resourcing, and  
8 support congressional reporting requirements. I will help  
9 enhance readiness data analytics capabilities to provide  
10 the President and the Secretary with decision advantage  
11 critical to global operations. I will align military  
12 training and exercise investments with our national  
13 priorities to effectively build greater lethality and  
14 execute all domain warfare, and I will protect our  
15 warfighters and readiness by promoting the highest safety  
16 and occupational health standards. Working collaboratively  
17 across the Department, a focus on these efforts will  
18 reinvigorate our warfighting capabilities and competitive  
19 advantages to ensure we can achieve strategic objectives  
20 across threats and time horizons.

21 If confirmed, I look forward to bringing over 40 years  
22 of experience in international security affairs, focused on  
23 the defense of our country and the safety of the American  
24 people. As a former Army field artillery officer, Army  
25 aviator, foreign area officer, planner, intelligence



1 officer, strategist, and veteran of the first Gulf War,  
2 through a wide range of senior civilian positions spanning  
3 all geographic combatant commands, I intimately understand  
4 the many dimensions of our Nation's readiness, the  
5 importance of deterring our enemies, and the preparation  
6 required to prevail in conflict. I plan to bring this  
7 extensive experience, commitment, and passion to the role  
8 of Assistant Secretary of War for Readiness. Inspired by  
9 the honorable service of our service members and civilians,  
10 I will apply my full devotion as a public servant of the  
11 American people. Thank you for your consideration. I look  
12 forward to your questions.

13 [The prepared statement of Mr. Todd follows:]  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25



1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, gentlemen, and I now ask  
2 you a series of standard questions this committee poses to  
3 all civilian nominees. You may answer simultaneously just  
4 with a "yes" or "no."

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

7 [Chorus of yeses.]

8 Chairman Wicker: Have you assumed any duties or taken  
9 any actions that would appear to presume the outcome of the  
10 confirmation process?

11 [Chorus of noes.]

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

20 [Chorus of yeses.]

21 Chairman Wicker: Do you agree to provide records,  
22 documents, and electronic communications in a timely manner  
23 when requested by this committee, its subcommittees, or  
24 other appropriate committees of Congress, and to consult  
25 with the requester regarding the basis for any good-faith



1 delay or denial in providing such records?

2 [Chorus of yeses.]

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

8 [Chorus of yeses.]

9 Chairman Wicker: Will you cooperate in providing  
10 witnesses and briefers in response to congressional  
11 requests?

12 [Chorus of yeses.]

13 Chairman Wicker: Will those witnesses and briefers be  
14 protected from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

15 [Chorus of yeses.]

16 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, and now we're  
17 going to begin a round of 5 minute-questions. We'll  
18 perhaps take a second round, but as chair, I will try to  
19 hold members to the 5 minutes.

20 First of all, a quick "yes" or "no" from each of you.  
21 Much of the funding in the defense reconciliation bill is  
22 unspecific and will technically be at the discretion of the  
23 Department because of our Senate rules, though we have  
24 provided written recommendations for them. Do you commit  
25 to follow the Congress' spending recommendations in defense



1 reconciliation unequivocally, Mr. Dill?

2 Mr. Dill: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

3 Chairman Wicker: Mr. Payne?

4 Mr. Payne: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

5 Chairman Wicker: Mr. Velez-Green?

6 Mr. Velez-Green: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

7 Chairman Wicker: And Dr. Todd?

8 Dr. Todd: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

9 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very, very much. Now,  
10 then let me start with Mr. Payne, and I thank you for your  
11 testimony where you recognize that CAPE has often been  
12 viewed as operating beyond its mission responsibilities and  
13 has been under heavy scrutiny. I mentioned a proposal by  
14 the House Appropriations Committee and that you intend to  
15 make a priority of focusing CAPE on its defined mission.  
16 So, thank you for that, and I think it does acknowledge  
17 something that we all understand is out there.

18 So, 3 years ago, again, some people wanted to get rid  
19 of the CAPE Office. This committee, working with our  
20 colleagues, decided against that and we worked on a  
21 compromise, but it did involve some changes, and you're no  
22 doubt familiar with the law, Section 902 in the 2024 NDAA.  
23 It said that CAPE needs to do three things. First, it must  
24 create a working group on analytical methodology, and that  
25 was accomplished. Secondly, it must create an analytical





1 cell separate from CAPE to pressure test our most important  
2 studies. Third, it must create alternative analysis  
3 procedures within CAPE to ensure they're thinking about  
4 immediate problems and not just long-term problems. Those  
5 second and third legal requirements have not been  
6 implemented, have they?

7 Mr. Payne: Senator, I really appreciate you raising  
8 this issue. It's an important one to you and the committee  
9 certainly, and to me as well. In my 30 years of  
10 experience, both on active duty and as a --

11 Chairman Wicker: Well, we're going to be limited on  
12 time. They've not been implemented, have they?

13 Mr. Payne: Senator, as you mentioned, we have stood  
14 up the Analysis Working Group, but we absolutely need to do  
15 more. Red teaming is an important part of any scientific  
16 or analytic endeavor, and if I'm confirmed, I will make it  
17 a priority to ensure that we comply fully, working with  
18 you, your staff, and the committee.

19 Chairman Wicker: Okay. Well, let me just point out  
20 Mr. Payne, you've been deputy director since the law  
21 passed, and since January, you've been acting director, and  
22 yet the second and third directives of the statute passed  
23 by the Congress and signed into law by the Commander in  
24 Chief have not been implemented, and so that is a concern.  
25 Let me turn in the few seconds I have left to Mr. Velez-



1 Green. Yes or no, the Policy Office led the review of  
2 AUKUS, right?

3 Mr. Velez-Green: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

4 Chairman Wicker: Okay, and that review is now  
5 complete. Is that correct?

6 Mr. Velez-Green: Mr. Chairman, we're in the final  
7 stages in coordination with the Secretary.

8 Chairman Wicker: Okay. Well, when your colleague,  
9 Mr. Noble, was before us, he said AUKUS was focused on  
10 Pillar 1. We're familiar with Pillar 1. As a matter of  
11 fact, I faced a very lonely period in 2023 as a stick in  
12 the mud on this deal, which I did not intend to be. I  
13 wanted the Biden administration to invest more in the  
14 submarine industrial base, which eventually it did. But do  
15 we know anything more about the submarine industrial base  
16 now than we did before the review was complete, and what  
17 did we achieve by reviewing this deal for more than half a  
18 year that we didn't know beforehand?

19 Mr. Velez-Green: Mr. Chairman, the Secretary of War  
20 directed the Under Secretary of Policy to lead this review  
21 to ensure it aligned with the President's intent, which is  
22 for it to be as successful as possible on a sustainable  
23 basis. Part of that was taking into account the submarine  
24 industrial base, production timelines, capacity issues,  
25 many of which, sir, that you've led on, fixing over many



1 years but continuing to be a challenge now, as you know,  
2 testified recently. We did get, I think, additional  
3 insight into the state of things and where we are going on  
4 the production issue, on other aspects, and, again, all  
5 with a very clear and focus intent, collaborative across  
6 the interagency and with our Australian counterparts, with  
7 the goal of making this as strong and enduring as possible,  
8 because it is our view, consistent with what the President  
9 said with Prime Minister Albanese recently, that it is in  
10 our interest for this to work. We do gain significant  
11 benefit from it, and so we want to make it as strong as  
12 possible.

13 Chairman Wicker: Okay. Well, I have violated my own  
14 edict and gone 45 seconds over, but it would've been unfair  
15 to you not to let you answer the question. Supplement it  
16 in the second round, if you might, and in the questions for  
17 the record.

18 [The information referred to follows:]

19 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25



1 Chairman Wicker: I recognize Senator Reed. Thank  
2 you, sir.

3 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr.  
4 Velez-Green, you have been in the Policy shop since the  
5 very beginning. In fact, you were the acting Under  
6 Secretary until April 2025, then you became Secretary  
7 Colby's senior advisor, and as we all know, since September  
8 2, the administration has conducted 16 lethal strikes off  
9 the coast of Argentina and in the Pacific -- excuse me --  
10 Venezuela and in the Pacific, killing 67 individuals.  
11 What's your understanding of the strategic goal of this  
12 operation?

13 Mr. Velez-Green: Thank you, Mr. Ranking Member.  
14 President Trump has been very clear that the day in which  
15 narco-terrorists can operate freely in this hemisphere is  
16 over, and he has directed the Department of War, in close  
17 coordination with other members of the interagency, to see  
18 to that effect. The Department of War has been engaged in  
19 that effort, including, in part, through the operations  
20 that you're referencing. And it is my understanding that  
21 the core intent of that is, again, to protect the American  
22 people against narcotics that have, frankly, devastated  
23 this country. And I'll just offer, this is something I  
24 feel quite strongly and supported the President on, in part  
25 because I come from a community that was affected by this.



1 So, that is my understanding of the President's intent and  
2 why it matters.

3 Senator Reed: Now, since you've been there from day  
4 one, can you give me your best estimate of how much it  
5 costs to maintain multiple ships -- B-2 aircraft, F-35s, a  
6 marine detachment, et cetera? How much per day are we  
7 spending down there?

8 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, that information is  
9 available. I can confirm that I know exactly where I'll  
10 find it. I'm happy to come back to you and share as much  
11 of it as possible to make sure I give you accurate  
12 information.

13 Senator Reed: Well, if you know exactly what you'll  
14 find, can you give us your best estimate now?

15 Mr. Velez-Green: Mr. Ranking Member, I wouldn't feel  
16 comfortable estimating without having --

17 Senator Reed: I would feel comfortable if you  
18 answered the question. It's an estimate.

19 Mr. Velez-Green: Mr. Ranking Member, it would not be  
20 possible for me to give you an estimate with confidence  
21 that it is close to the number at this time.

22 Senator Reed: So, you are basically one of the key  
23 people in the Policy Department of the Department of  
24 Defense, and you don't even have a rough estimate of how  
25 much we're spending every day in a major operation. In



1 fact, we haven't had that many ships in the Caribbean since  
2 the Cuban Missile Crisis.

3 Mr. Velez-Green: Mr. Ranking Member, that information  
4 is part of the process. I want to make sure anything I say  
5 to you in this setting is accurate. That is why --

6 Senator Reed: So when will you deliver that answer to  
7 us, Mr. Green?

8 Mr. Velez-Green: I'm sorry, Mr. Ranking Member?

9 Senator Reed: When will you deliver that answer to  
10 us, Mr. Green?

11 Mr. Velez-Green: I would be pleased to deliver to you  
12 as quickly as possible --

13 Senator Reed: Which is tomorrow?

14 Mr. Velez-Green: Mr. Ranking Member, I'll work  
15 through it as quickly as possible with the Leg Affairs  
16 team.

17 Senator Reed: Thank you. Let me turn now to Mr.  
18 Dill. First of all, your children are extremely well  
19 behaved. Congratulations.

20 One of the aspects that I mentioned in my opening  
21 statement is that we have maintained an apolitical  
22 military, and included in that, the civilians in the  
23 Department of Defense. It's just been announced today that  
24 the OMB and OPM are directing that agencies set up hiring  
25 committees, and that Federal civilian employees will be



1 subject to these committees. They will be staffed by  
2 political appointees, the majority of them. Are you going  
3 to allow sort of political choices in the advancement or  
4 hiring of individuals in the Department of Defense?

5 Mr. Dill: Ranking Member Reed, I appreciate you  
6 bringing up the topic, and I appreciated your time  
7 yesterday --

8 Senator Reed: Yes, sir.

9 Mr. Dill: -- speaking about your thoughts on this  
10 matter. If confirmed, you have my commitment that I'll  
11 certainly not politicize and will respect the status of all  
12 career officials, whether that's in uniform or out of  
13 uniform, in the Department. I'm not familiar with the  
14 committee that you're referencing. I'll certainly take a  
15 look at that, if confirmed, and I will always be focused on  
16 honoring the nonpartisan status of our career workforce.

17 Senator Reed: But to my knowledge, and I suspect to  
18 your knowledge, too, hiring has been done very explicitly  
19 on nonpolitical grounds in the Department of Defense, and  
20 there is not as yet, I believe -- I could be corrected -- a  
21 committee of, principally, political appointees deciding  
22 who gets hired and gets appointed. Is that your  
23 understanding, too?

24 Mr. Dill: I'm not aware of that committee you're  
25 referencing, Ranking Member Reed. If confirmed, I would



1 certainly look into the status of such a committee, and I  
2 would always strive to honor the nonpartisan status of our  
3 career workforce.

4 Senator Reed: Thank you. Dr. Todd, I think a quick  
5 question. We talked about this yesterday, and I only have  
6 3 seconds, but we are, in some respects, suffering  
7 readiness issues with regard to deployment of troops to the  
8 border and to other missions that are not specifically  
9 focused on tactical operations, military operations. How  
10 do you propose make up that difference in readiness?

11 Dr. Todd: Well, Senator, if confirmed for the  
12 position, I would take a look at what missions they are  
13 performing on the border, how those missions impact the  
14 readiness to perform other warfighting missions, and then  
15 work with the services to identify any gaps and identify  
16 any refit and regeneration requirements so that they can  
17 meet other missions once they have redeployed.

18 Senator Reed: Thank you, sir. Thank you.

19 Chairman Wicker: Senator Fischer, you're recognized  
20 for 5 minutes and 40 seconds.

21 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's  
22 great. That's great.

23 [Laughter.]

24 Senator Fischer: Thanks to our members of our panel  
25 today and to your families as well for your willingness to





1 continue to serve this country. Mr. Velez-Green, do you  
2 agree that Congress has a significant role to play in  
3 developing American security policy?

4 Mr. Velez-Green: Yes, Senator.

5 Senator Fischer: Well, if that's true, I've been  
6 disappointed with the quality of engagement this committee  
7 has had from the Office of the Under Secretary of Policy,  
8 and as my colleagues noted on Tuesday and also today, that  
9 wasn't the case with the first Trump administration. I  
10 strongly support peace through strength, and I know that  
11 you and I all share many of those same goals, including  
12 significantly increasing munitions production capacity.  
13 Mr. Velez-Green, do you agree that meaningfully engaging  
14 with Congress is necessary for the Department to ultimately  
15 receive the authorities and the funding that are needed to  
16 implement peace through strength?

17 Mr. Velez-Green: Yes, Senator, and if I may, I would  
18 just offer my own deep respect for the Article I branch and  
19 this committee, in particular, the expertise of its members  
20 included. This was something I believe that the chairman  
21 referenced as well. I'm very cognizant of the distinction  
22 between notifications and consultations --

23 Senator Fischer: Okay. Thank you. If we do have  
24 areas of disagreement, for example, how best to support our  
25 allies, our partners, would you agree that a healthy



1 discussion with members of this committee would still be  
2 valuable?

3 Mr. Velez-Green: Yes, Senator.

4 Senator Fischer: And if you agree with all this, what  
5 steps would you take as the deputy to improve the quality  
6 of engagements between Policy and this committee?

7 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, thank you. I do  
8 recognize --

9 Chairman Wicker: Speak a little --

10 Mr. Velez-Green: I'm sorry for that. Not typically a  
11 problem I have. I do quite recognize the frustrations  
12 voiced today as well as earlier this week. If confirmed,  
13 you have my commitment to lean as far forward in engaging  
14 proactively with Congress, including on matters of  
15 consultation and not just notification, while, of course,  
16 doing my part to protect the Secretary's and President's  
17 decision space. That is something that I recognize to be  
18 valuable for all the reasons that you described, Senator,  
19 as well as personally having been on the receiving end of  
20 having difficulty getting information when I was staffing a  
21 member on this committee.

22 Senator Fischer: Thank you.

23 Mr. Velez-Green: So, you do have my commitment to  
24 this effect.

25 Senator Fischer: We've seen years and years of



1 underinvestment and, I think, shortsighted decision-making  
2 in the United States, and the country is now faced with the  
3 reality that we must modernize all aspects of our nuclear  
4 deterrent forces simultaneously. Mr. Velez-Green, if  
5 confirmed, will you commit to working within the Department  
6 and with this committee to fully modernize our nuclear  
7 forces, and that includes NC3 systems and infrastructure?

8 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, if confirmed I'll be a  
9 fierce advocate for that.

10 Senator Fischer: Thank you. As Under Secretary of  
11 Defense for Policy, you would become a member of the  
12 Nuclear Weapons Council, and in your role as the Deputy  
13 Under Secretary, you may be involved in working with the  
14 Council to execute their oversight responsibilities. What  
15 issues do you think are the most important for the Council  
16 to address?

17 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, I have not been involved  
18 with NWC meetings to this point, and it is something that,  
19 if confirmed, I would look forward to engaging on. With  
20 respect to the specifics that I would encourage them to  
21 focus on, it really would be through the frame that you  
22 referenced. I do believe our Nation's nuclear deterrence  
23 is the bedrock of our defense. I recognize we face very  
24 unique challenges sustaining the existing infrastructure  
25 while modernizing, developing, and fielding these new



1 platforms, in addition to thinking about some of the more  
2 theater-specific options that you have led on. If  
3 confirmed, that is the framework within which I would  
4 approach this, and what I would be looking for are the pain  
5 points where additional leadership attention or resourcing  
6 would be required to break through, and I would be  
7 committed, if confirmed, to working closely with you and  
8 this committee to that end.

9 Senator Fischer: I appreciate that answer. Thank you  
10 very much. Mr. Payne, thank you for meeting with me. I  
11 appreciated our conversation. I was encouraged to hear in  
12 your opening remarks that your top priority will be to  
13 focus CAPE on independent analysis. Why do you think  
14 that's so important?

15 Mr. Payne: Senator, I thank you very much as well for  
16 the opportunity to meet with you, and I appreciated our  
17 conversation. I think it's extremely important, and I  
18 agree with you that independent analysis is absolutely  
19 crucial I think, first and foremost, as Mr. Chairman  
20 mentioned earlier, so that it's not impacted by biases or  
21 other outside influences. I absolutely think that red  
22 teaming, an iron sharpens iron perspective, both internal  
23 to CAPE and external to CAPE, are very important, and I  
24 would look forward to working with you and the committee to  
25 ensure that CAPE operates in that manner.



1 Senator Fischer: Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr.  
2 Chair.

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

5 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome  
6 to all of our nominees. I ask the initial two questions  
7 that I will ask each of you, and we'll start with Mr. Dill  
8 and go down the line, relevant to fitness to serve. Since  
9 you became a legal adult, have you ever made unwanted  
10 requests for sexual favors or committed any verbal or  
11 physical harassment of a sexual nature?

12 Mr. Dill: No, Senator.

13 Senator Hirono: Go down the line, please?

14 Mr. Payne: No, Senator.

15 Mr. Velez-Green: No, Senator.

16 Dr. Todd: No, Senator.

17 Senator Hirono: Have you ever faced discipline or  
18 entered into a settlement related to this kind of conduct?

19 Mr. Dill: No, Senator.

20 Mr. Payne: No, Senator.

21 Mr. Velez-Green: No, Senator.

22 Dr. Todd: No, Senator.

23 Senator Hirono: We've had a number of hearings in  
24 this committee where various concerns have been raised  
25 about the politicization of various departments, clearly



1 the Department of Justice, but also the Department of  
2 Defense, and I've been concerned about the President and  
3 Secretary Hegseth's politicization of the military,  
4 basically, by sending military assets to our cities, for  
5 example. I'd like to get each of you to commit to  
6 supporting an apolitical military. Yes or no, please. Mr.  
7 Dill?

8 Mr. Dill: Yes, Senator. If confirmed, you'd  
9 certainly have my commitment to maintaining apolitical  
10 military.

11 Senator Hirono: Apolitical. Okay. Thank you. Go  
12 down the line, please.

13 Mr. Payne: Yes, Senator.

14 Mr. Velez-Green: Yes, Senator.

15 Dr. Todd: Yes, Senator.

16 Senator Hirono: Did you say yes?

17 Dr. Todd: Yes, Senator.

18 Senator Hirono: Thank you very much. Mr. Velez-  
19 Green, if confirmed, you will help write and implement the  
20 National Defense Strategy -- NDS. In your view, what is  
21 the most significant threat to U.S. national security and  
22 global stability?

23 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, thank you for the question.  
24 Secretary Hegseth has said publicly that the forthcoming  
25 National Defense Strategy will focus on defending the U.S.



1 homeland, strengthening deterrence against China in the  
2 Indo-Pacific, as well as increasing burden sharing with our  
3 allies and partners around the world, and revitalizing the  
4 American defense industrial base.

5 Senator Hirono: So, the question of the homeland  
6 security, that aspect, because up to now, we have been very  
7 focused on the Indo-Pacific and China as a pacing threat.  
8 And so, there are concerns about what direction this regime  
9 is going with regard to continuing to view China as a  
10 pacing threat and the assets that need to be there for us  
11 to contend with China. So, you acknowledge that China will  
12 remain a pacing threat, although I'm not quite sure how all  
13 of that is going to play out. So, I'm wondering, though,  
14 how is the commitment to recognizing China as a pacing  
15 threat, how is that being acknowledged when the Department  
16 is redirecting its focus and resources away from the Indo-  
17 Pacific, for example, such as moving an aircraft carrier to  
18 South America and other assets along those lines?

19 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, thank you again for this  
20 question.

21 Senator Hirono. Mm-hmm.

22 Mr. Velez-Green: The Secretary has said publicly that  
23 China remains our pacing threat for purposes of force  
24 management development and design. The question of how  
25 that interacts with our focus on homeland defense, that's



1 something that we work through on a daily basis. In  
2 effect, we've been tasked to do both, to prioritize both of  
3 these things, and so as we're working through that, we're  
4 very careful to deconflict resourcing requirements and  
5 ensure we are resourcing both those priorities consistent  
6 with the President's intent, as relayed and directed by the  
7 Secretary.

8 Senator Hirono: I think it remains to be seen how all  
9 of this is going to be reflected in the resources that will  
10 go toward the homeland. I mean, we're all for homeland  
11 security, of course, but it's how that is done in view of  
12 China's continuing activities, and particularly in the  
13 Indo-Pacific area. So, Dr. Todd, the DOD continues to fund  
14 costly non-reimbursable Department of Homeland Security  
15 border missions and continues to expand domestic  
16 deployments to American cities without being reimbursed.  
17 In a budget-constrained environment, how does continued  
18 non-reimbursable spending on the border mission impact  
19 DOD's ability to deter China's aggressive actions in the  
20 Indo-Pacific area, Dr. Todd?

21 Dr. Todd: Senator Hirono, the readiness of our forces  
22 is critical, and the missions they conduct contribute to  
23 their readiness for future operations abroad. I do not  
24 currently have information concerning the non-reimbursement  
25 for support through Homeland Security. My basic





1 understanding from my past experience is that there are  
2 statutes under Title 10 that allow support to Federal law  
3 enforcement and local law enforcement if it doesn't take  
4 too much from the requirements of the Department.

5 Senator Hirono: Well, I'm running out of time. Maybe  
6 I'll have another 30 seconds or so, but there is little  
7 question that a lot of resources are being deployed to the  
8 President's desire to enforce what he considers his  
9 immigration agenda, and there are questions as to how much  
10 of this aspect of what he wants to do is going to be using  
11 military or DOD resources. It's amounting to the millions.  
12 Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

13 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, and, of course, we will  
14 have an opportunity for a second round. Thank you very  
15 much, Senator Hirono. Senator Rounds.

16 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, let  
17 me just say thank you to all of you for your offer of  
18 additional service to our country.

19 Mr. Velez-Green, the one issue that I've continued to  
20 push here has been the issue of Spectrum and the defense of  
21 it. Forcing the Department to vacate the 3.1 to 3.45  
22 gigahertz and the 7.4 to 8.4 gigahertz bands of the  
23 Spectrum, or to share them with other users in a suboptimal  
24 manner, would have severe negative impacts on our  
25 warfighting capabilities, including homeland defense



1 missions and force protection of our deployed troops. I've  
2 heard from now 51 senior Defense officials who agree with  
3 that assessment. Do you agree with the assessment that  
4 forcing the Department to share those covered bans with  
5 commercial interests or with other Federal users in a  
6 suboptimal manner would negatively impact critical defense  
7 systems?

8 Mr. Velez-Green: Yes, Senator, and if confirmed, I  
9 look forward to supporting efforts to ensure the Department  
10 has access to Spectrum required to defend our Nation.

11 Senator Rounds: Including those areas that I just  
12 mentioned.

13 Mr. Velez-Green: Yes, Senator.

14 Senator Rounds: Thank you. Let me go on just a  
15 little bit. As you can tell from the discussions that have  
16 occurred here, there's a real concern here about not only  
17 the ability for our country to maintain and to be prepared  
18 for any kind of response in the Indo-Pacific Region with  
19 our pacing threat. There's also a concern that we have to  
20 be able to maintain our capabilities around the rest of the  
21 world. So, let me just work through this a little bit  
22 because I think one of the issues that you're going to get  
23 hit up with on this is that during your time at Heritage,  
24 you repeatedly called for prioritizing Asia over other  
25 theaters. You also argued that focusing Defense resources



1 on other theaters, such as Europe has "detracted from our  
2 ability to strengthen deterrence against China." So, I  
3 want to work my way through just a few questions with you,  
4 and we talked about this when you were in my office.

5 In June, the President Trump ordered strikes on Iran's  
6 nuclear facilities. Did this use of Defense resources in  
7 the Middle East detract from the President's counter-China  
8 policy? A simple "yes" or "no" would be good.

9 Mr. Velez-Green: No, Senator.

10 Senator Rounds: Okay. In September, President Trump  
11 issued an executive order assuring the security of the  
12 State of Qatar in which President Trump committed to acting  
13 militarily, if necessary, to defend the State of Qatar.  
14 Would the use of military force to defend Qatar detract  
15 from the President's counter-China policy, in your view?

16 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, if directed by the  
17 President --

18 Senator Rounds: Please --

19 Mr. Velez-Green: -- we would field forces to defend  
20 Qatar as directed, and in that process, we'd work to ensure  
21 that we do that in a way that reinforces our ability to  
22 deter China.

23 Senator Rounds: Okay. Saudi --

24 Chairman Wicker: Mr. Velez-Green, you're doing great,  
25 but if you'd just move the whole speaker system over



1 closer. That's good.

2 Mr. Velez-Green: Yeah.

3 Chairman Wicker: Thank you.

4 Mr. Velez-Green: Sorry for that.

5 Senator Rounds: Just we'll get comfortable there.

6 Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman will visit  
7 Washington later this month. Riyadh and the Trump  
8 administration are reportedly discussing a defense pact,  
9 and the Saudis have sought formal U.S. guarantees to defend  
10 the Kingdom as well as access to more advanced U.S.  
11 weaponry, according to writers. If President Trump signs  
12 such an agreement, would the dedication of defense  
13 resources to Saudi Arabia's defense detract from the  
14 President's policy of deterring China? A "yes" or a "no."

15 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator Rounds, here as well, if  
16 directed, we would flow force and impost them to support  
17 the President's intent in defending Saudi. I would also,  
18 Senator, just say unequivocally that it is my view the  
19 United States has an interest at stake in the Middle East,  
20 that we should not withdraw from the Middle East, and that  
21 we can and should adopt a posture in the Middle East that  
22 not only vindicates our interests in that region, but also  
23 and again complements and reinforces our ability to direct  
24 China at the same time.

25 Senator Rounds: Okay. Fair to say that the United



1 States has to be in a position with our defense strategy to  
2 look at deterrence in more than one theater?

3 Mr. Velez-Green: Yes, Senator.

4 Senator Rounds: Okay. Senator Sullivan, one of my  
5 colleagues here, as well as some of my other colleagues  
6 spoke on Tuesday about the fact that Congress has been left  
7 entirely in the dark on the Pentagon's strategic documents,  
8 the NDS, in particular. Setting that aside, I just kind of  
9 want to ask this in a little bit different way. First,  
10 given that you were the Acting Under Secretary of Defense  
11 for Policy at that time, what interagency engagements did  
12 you have with the National Security Council, the White  
13 House, State Department, and others during the development  
14 phase before its publication in March?

15 Mr. Velez-Green: This is with respect to the Interim  
16 National Defense Strategic Guidance, I believe.

17 Senator Rounds: Yep.

18 Mr. Velez-Green: We developed that document in direct  
19 coordination with the Secretary's front office support, his  
20 direction and intent. With respect to interagency  
21 coordination or notification, there were discussions, but  
22 I'm afraid it wouldn't be appropriate for me to discuss the  
23 particulars in this setting.

24 Senator Rounds: I understand. So, what I would ask,  
25 are you prepared to provide this committee with evidence of



1 those in a classified setting?

2 Mr. Velez-Green: I'd be prepared to share as much as  
3 possible, absolutely, in a classified setting.

4 Senator Rounds: Very good. I will ask for that in my  
5 questions for the record.

6 [The information referred to follows:]

7 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25



1           Senator Rounds: Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr.  
2 Chairman.

3           Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator Rounds.  
4 Senator Kelly.

5           Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you,  
6 all of you, for your continued willingness to serve our  
7 country.

8           Mr. Payne, I serve as the Co-Chair of the Defense  
9 Modernization Caucus with Senator Cramer where our focus is  
10 on driving innovation and ensuring that the United States  
11 can rapidly develop and acquire and field advanced  
12 capabilities to sustain our strategic advantage. And I'm  
13 very interested in the Department's proposed shift from the  
14 traditional defense acquisition system to what it's now  
15 calling the Warfighting Acquisition System, and this  
16 initiative aims to accelerate capability delivery, and  
17 that's an objective that I strongly support. But it also  
18 compresses decision timelines and may reduce the visibility  
19 into individual program costs that Congress has long relied  
20 on for oversight and accountability. So, Mr. Payne, if  
21 confirmed, what specific steps would you take so the Office  
22 of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation continues to  
23 provide Congress with clear, consistent, and auditable data  
24 across the new portfolio-based structure?

25           Mr. Payne: Senator, I appreciate your commitment and



1 the opportunity to discuss this issue. As you correctly  
2 have indicated, CAPE has an important role to play  
3 statutorily in the acquisition process, and that role is  
4 providing independent cost estimates prior to milestone  
5 decisions. If I'm confirmed, it'll be a top priority of  
6 mine to ensure that we as CAPE streamline the cost-  
7 reporting procedures, both to keep pace with the  
8 accelerated acquisition process, as well as to facilitate  
9 the entry of nontraditional vendors industry into the  
10 acquisition process. If confirmed, you'd have my  
11 commitment that we will deliver those cost estimates to  
12 you, to the committee, and to Congress.

13 Senator Kelly: I appreciate that. Thank you. And  
14 Mr. Velez-Green, I recently released an AI for America  
15 Roadmap that lays out some ideas for safe and ethical use  
16 of AI, but also how do we deal with, you know, the  
17 transition for folks to new careers and jobs and some of  
18 the infrastructure challenges that we will face with power  
19 and water. But on the safe and ethical use of AI, as  
20 competitors around the world accelerate the development of  
21 AI and autonomous systems, they often put in few  
22 safeguards, but here in the United States, we have to both  
23 maintain a technological edge in developing these systems  
24 while also sustaining high ethical standards and  
25 responsible governance. I think that's critical. So, if





1 confirmed, how do you plan to shape the Department's  
2 approach to AI and autonomous systems to maintain the U.S.  
3 strategic advantage in these systems while also upholding  
4 ethical standards?

5 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, thank you for your  
6 leadership on this issue. If confirmed, I do commit to  
7 supporting the development of these systems in a way that  
8 does enhance our warfighting advantage while maintaining,  
9 as you said, rightly so, our ethical standards. In terms  
10 of how specifically I would go about that, I've not worked  
11 closely on this issue to this point, but I expect that I  
12 would start with working with relevant teams to understand  
13 the requirements that these technologies can help us to  
14 support in an effective way and then working from there to  
15 understand, okay, what are the different ways it can do so?  
16 How does that map against ethical consideration, and making  
17 sure that we are meeting both of those targets at the same  
18 time as we elevate options for further consideration.

19 Senator Kelly: Do you think AI systems should be used  
20 as a decision-maker in the kill chain?

21 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, I had the opportunity to  
22 work closely early on in my career with some of the  
23 Nation's leading thinkers on where autonomy should exist  
24 and the man in the loop, on the loop, out of the loop with  
25 respect to different functions. To the question of where



1 AI can or should exist in a particular decision-making  
2 system, especially as we talk about the kill chain, I think  
3 it really depends on the specifics. But again, the  
4 framework within which I would address this problem, if  
5 confirmed, is exactly the one that you offered, which is  
6 what are the warfighting requirements we seek to support,  
7 and then how do we do that in an ethical manner,  
8 recognizing that both of those are very important.

9 Senator Kelly: So, it sounds like you don't have any  
10 red lines there, and, certainly, AI and autonomous systems  
11 could help compress timelines dramatically, make faster  
12 decisions on where to position forces, and I think we  
13 really need to consider how to, you know, quickly and  
14 safely integrate AI systems into our warfighting decision-  
15 making process. I think it could give us a strategic  
16 advantage. I also think we need to be careful about  
17 turning over some really key decisions, especially on using  
18 kinetic effects against, you know, people, targets. You  
19 know, at least right now, I think we need to think long and  
20 hard about ethical implications of allowing AI systems to  
21 make the decision to kill people. Thank you.

22 Chairman Wicker: We look forward to reading your  
23 paper.

24 Senator Kelly: I will send to the office.

25 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Senator



1 Cramer.

2 Senator Cramer: Thank you very much. Thank you all  
3 for being here and your willingness to step up again,  
4 especially to your families. It's great to see, and I'm  
5 never disturbed by the noise of children. It's really  
6 quite a blessing, so thank you.

7 Real quickly, Mr. Payne, thank you for our discussion  
8 in my office. You stated then, as you stated several  
9 times, the importance of CAPE's independence as an  
10 evaluator. Obviously, I mean, you really are. CAPE really  
11 is the truth teller, if you will, on cost and performance.  
12 However, I have been concerned in recent years that the  
13 independent assessment sometimes gets diluted by advocacy  
14 of a particular platform or program, and sometimes, it's my  
15 sense, that advocacy is masked by scenarios, chosen  
16 scenarios of evaluation. Does that happen at CAPE, either  
17 inadvertently or by some bias or even orders from  
18 leadership?

19 Mr. Payne: Senator, thank you for the time that you  
20 gave me in your office and our conversation. At times in  
21 the past, yes, I have seen CAPE take on an advocacy role  
22 that I think is inappropriate for an independent analytic  
23 organization. And if confirmed, you have my commitment  
24 that my priority would be focusing CAPE on its true  
25 mission, which is being an advisory, not a policymaking or



1 decision-making, organization.

2       Senator Cramer: That's encouraging. Thank you for  
3 that. Mr. Velez-Green, this summer, the HMS Prince of  
4 Wales was sailing, as you probably know, to the Pacific.  
5 It's been reported by some sources I actually do trust, Mr.  
6 Chairman -- I appreciate his admonition upfront about  
7 untrustworthy sources -- but Under Secretary Colby had made  
8 a statement reportedly to the British in a meeting along  
9 the lines of is it too late to call it back, we don't want  
10 you there. First of all, do you have knowledge of that  
11 discussion, and did he, in fact, say that to British  
12 leaders?

13       Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, it would not be appropriate  
14 for me to comment on private discussions between two  
15 different governments in this setting. But what I can say  
16 if you'll allow me --

17       Senator Cramer: Sure.

18       Mr. Velez-Green: -- is that the Secretary has said  
19 publicly that it is most important for our European allies  
20 to focus on their home theater as they work to build out  
21 their capacity, especially as we work through the  
22 simultaneity problems that Senator Rounds has spoken about.  
23 So, that is the guidance that the Secretary is offering in  
24 a public setting, and my personal view is I think that does  
25 make a lot of sense because we believe in a NATO that is as



1 strong as possible. That is as sincerely held view. My  
2 personal belief is we have an interest in NATO being as  
3 strong as possible on an enduring basis with the United  
4 States deeply engaged, but for that to happen, especially  
5 as we face the rise of China, our allies simply have to  
6 step up and focus those resources where they're needed  
7 most.

8 Chairman Wicker: Mr. Velez-Green, are you quoting the  
9 Secretary there or the Deputy Secretary?

10 Mr. Velez-Green: My recollection serves me, and I'm  
11 confident, that the Secretary, Secretary Hegseth, has said  
12 publicly that it is important for European allies to focus  
13 on Europe first.

14 Senator Cramer: Well, thank you for that. I'll go  
15 the original question and the point that I understand you  
16 think it would be inappropriate to speak to. There are  
17 other agencies for whom international relationships are the  
18 higher priority, not at least of which, of course, is the  
19 State Department. And so, so I'd be interested to know if  
20 this position was reconciled with the State Department or  
21 if this was just, again, a private conversation, to your  
22 point, or, for that matter, if other allies were consulted,  
23 allies that welcomed the British having a ship in the  
24 Pacific because this gets well beyond what's going on just  
25 at the Pentagon, it would seem to me, not to mention the



1 White House.

2 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, the Under Secretary has  
3 been ruthless and specific about ensuring that we focus on  
4 military matters and, in this case, thinking about the  
5 allocation of defense resources across theaters. We also  
6 interact on an extremely regular basis with our colleagues  
7 across the interagency, including the NSC, including State  
8 Department, on a wide range of issues, the IC as well, to  
9 ensure that we are having those conversations given the  
10 crosscutting equities.

11 Senator Cramer: In my remaining seconds, Mr.  
12 Chairman, on Tuesday, your colleague, Mr. Dahmer, as I'm  
13 sure you watched, repeatedly said that he wasn't aware of  
14 any "pause of aid to Ukraine." Can you clarify whether  
15 there was or there wasn't, and how could he not have been  
16 aware if there was because, I mean, I have a DOD news  
17 release that states there was.

18 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, I can say categorically the  
19 policy leadership neither ordered nor even recommended a  
20 pause to any weapons shipments to Ukraine, as it was  
21 reported, full stop, no caveats. That reporting was  
22 completely inaccurate, in substantial part because we do  
23 not have the authority to order any adjustment to weapons  
24 deliveries one way or the other. I am aware of brief  
25 disruptions to certain deliveries as a result of the



1 capabilities review that Mr. Parnell referenced in the July  
2 transcript that I believe was referenced on Tuesday, but  
3 I'm not aware of a pause ordered by the Secretary to any of  
4 the weapons shipments at the time.

5 Senator Cramer: Well, we may dispute terms and  
6 titles, but, I mean, it's a DOD news release. I don't know  
7 what else to say. Mr. Chairman, thank you. My time's up.

8 Chairman Wicker: Senator Scott.

9 Senator Scott: So, can I just follow up with what the  
10 senator just asked about? This is from the Department of  
11 War. It says, "This capability review is being conducted  
12 to ensure U.S. military aid aligns with our defense  
13 priorities."

14 Chairman Wicker: I'm having trouble hearing, Senator  
15 Scott.

16 Senator Scott: Okay. It says what we have done here  
17 at the Department, and it talks about how there's been a  
18 pause. It says, "Now, some assistance provided to Ukraine  
19 as well as assistance to other nations is on pause. As the  
20 Defense Department reviews its own capabilities to ensure  
21 what it opts to provide to other nations, it never  
22 shortchanges itself in the process," said Pentagon  
23 spokesperson Sean Parnell during a briefing today at the  
24 Pentagon. That sure sounds like a pause.

25 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, if I may offer, I believe



1 what Mr. Parnell said in response to a question was that he  
2 couldn't go into detail about what weapons were paused and  
3 when and what. With respect to the use of the term "pause"  
4 in this context, I can't speak to the word choice that Mr.  
5 Parnell used in that particular context. Again, what I am  
6 aware of is that there were brief disruptions to the  
7 delivery of weapons associated with the implementation of  
8 the capabilities review that Mr. Parnell was discussing at  
9 that time. And candidly, Senator, if I may, with respect  
10 to the chairman's comment earlier, I do believe this is a  
11 case where more proactive engagement from us would've been  
12 helpful at least to share our side of what we understood to  
13 have happened, and that's something I do take on board and,  
14 if confirmed, I'm committed to addressing in a forthright  
15 manner.

16 Senator Scott: So, why did the President have to come  
17 out and disagree with the Department of War just a few days  
18 later?

19 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, I would not presume to  
20 speak for the President in any fraction or manner. I would  
21 simply say that, again, I understand the reports about  
22 Policy's role in this. I've offered my categorical  
23 statement on what is factual, and that's something I'm  
24 prepared to stake my credibility on in this setting.

25 Senator Scott: So, you don't know why the President





1 had to disagree with what was said.

2 Mr. Velez-Green: It is my understanding that there  
3 were discussions publicly in reactions to the disruption,  
4 which was characterized by the media as a pause, but,  
5 again, I'm not sure where they sort of asserted that basis  
6 based on my understanding of what transpired.

7 Senator Scott: Okay. So, I've had the opportunity to  
8 meet with lots of our allies. They want to buy American  
9 products, but they're being blindsided when they're told  
10 they can't buy American defense products. They're told  
11 they can't buy our products. Our allies are told at the  
12 last minute that a brigade is leaving, and some of these  
13 are weapons that they've already purchased. What's  
14 frustrating, number one, is they want to invest in our  
15 country. We want them to, you know, jobs in our country,  
16 we want them to build up their defense, and then they can't  
17 buy. It doesn't make any sense, and it seems like it's  
18 completely inconsistent with where President Trump is and  
19 Secretary Hegseth is. So, it seems to me that there ought  
20 to be a priority that our military should make it that we  
21 get our friends and allies to buy American manufacturing,  
22 and we also don't put ourselves in a position that they  
23 don't know what, you know, our priorities are. And it  
24 seems like whether it's, you know, the pause with Ukraine  
25 or moving the troops out of Romania, it doesn't seem like



1 what's coming out is consistent with what the President  
2 wants to do. So, can you address that? I mean, who do you  
3 think you work for? Do you think you work for the  
4 President, or is there somebody else making decisions?

5 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, there's no question in my  
6 mind, or certainly not in the Under Secretary's mind, and I  
7 feel comfortable speaking to that, we work for the  
8 President of the United States. That is our job, and if  
9 confirmed, it'll continue to be my job. That is something  
10 that we take extremely seriously and we have, including in  
11 every instance that was referenced on Tuesday, which I can  
12 speak to in more detail as appropriate. In practical  
13 terms, we do that in a variety of ways. Secretary Hegseth  
14 himself is ruthless about ensuring that we are always very  
15 tightly aligned with the President. He's in constant  
16 contact with the President and his senior leadership team  
17 there, and the President has expressed his confidence in  
18 the Secretary publicly. We engage very tightly with the  
19 Secretary and the Deputy Secretary to ensure we are always  
20 in lockstep with them because we do, in fact, work for the  
21 President.

22 Senator Scott: So, earlier this week, one of your  
23 colleagues said that we were briefed 4 times on a brigade  
24 reduction in Romania. I was informed. I'm on the  
25 committee, been on the committee for almost 7 years. So,



1 do you have a list of the dates and locations of these  
2 briefings?

3 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, I believe the correct term  
4 would've been "notifications." We did notify Congress on  
5 multiple occasions prior to the public notification, which  
6 I can speak to in perhaps a little bit more detail in this  
7 setting and in more detail in another just out of respect  
8 for the individuals involved, but I can say that with  
9 confidence.

10 Senator Scott: Can you tell me the dates of the  
11 notifications?

12 Mr. Velez-Green: Yes, sir. The pre-notification was  
13 first provided to congressional leadership staff on the  
14 23rd and the 24th. It was provided again on the 27th, and  
15 then a CAPNET was set on the 28th, and the public  
16 announcement was on the 29th.

17 Senator Scott: And Romania and our NATO allies, were  
18 they notified and briefed ahead of time?

19 Mr. Velez-Green: Yes, Senator.

20 Senator Scott: Do you know when?

21 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, the Romanians were briefed  
22 at a very senior level on the 27th, and --

23 Senator Scott: When was it announced?

24 Mr. Velez-Green: The announcement was on the 29th.

25 Senator Scott: Do you think that's enough time?



1           Mr. Velez-Green:   Senator, the Romanians themselves  
2   said the decision was expected, and that's, in part,  
3   because we've socialized and been candid with them about  
4   how the Secretary has directed us to think about, again,  
5   consistent with the President's intent, U.S. force posture  
6   in NATO as we work to ensure that alliance is as strong as  
7   possible, even as we deal with the threat from China and  
8   strengthen our homeland defenses.

9           Senator Scott:   Well, I think the perception is, is  
10   that there's some disagreement between what is being put  
11   out and what the President wants, and I think it's going to  
12   be pretty important that you guys figure out how to stop  
13   that.

14          Mr. Velez-Green:   Thank you, Senator.

15          Chairman Wicker:   Thank you, Senator Scott.   Mr.  
16   Velez-Green, I would just say the Congress was not  
17   consulted about this.   I think I can say with certainty  
18   about that.   Senator Kaine, you are recognized.

19          Senator Kaine:   Thank you, Mr. Chair, and  
20   congratulations to the witnesses for your nominations.

21          Mr. Velez-Green, I'm going to ask some questions that  
22   I asked of a witness earlier in the week, just trying to  
23   find out about where decisions are being made.   I'm not  
24   going to ask you about the content of discussions, but  
25   rather your involvement in your current capacity in such



1 discussions. Have you been involved in discussions about  
2 military strikes on boats in the Caribbean and Pacific?

3 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, if I recall the line of  
4 question on Tuesday, I think where it evolved was to use my  
5 involvement in these one way or the other to identify  
6 what's being planned or not. What I can say is I'm  
7 involved in a wide range of discussions related to a wide  
8 range of contingency planning. To be more specific I think  
9 would be inappropriate in this setting.

10 Senator Kaine: And why is it inappropriate for you to  
11 tell me whether you were involved in such discussions? I'm  
12 not asking you about --

13 Mr. Velez-Green: Understood.

14 Senator Kaine: -- about the content of the  
15 discussions.

16 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, for the simple reason that  
17 some planning is sensitive, and I want to preserve the  
18 Secretary and the President's decision space on that.

19 Senator Kaine: Have you been involved in discussions  
20 about the legal rationale for the strikes I referenced?

21 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, I would defer to the Office  
22 of General Counsel. I know they are working that very  
23 hard, and I do believe I've at least heard in recent  
24 conversations this week with members that there's been  
25 additional information provided, but on specifics of that,



1 I would have to defer to OGC.

2 Senator Kaine: Have you been involved in the  
3 composition of the list of designated terrorist  
4 organizations that the President is using to direct the  
5 strikes?

6 Mr. Velez-Green: No, Senator.

7 Senator Kaine: Have you been involved in the  
8 discussion about particular strikes and whether there is  
9 evidence to justify a particular strike in a particular  
10 instance?

11 Mr. Velez-Green: Again, Senator, speaking to my  
12 personal involvement in operations one way or the other at  
13 that level of detail, especially given the sensitivities, I  
14 think would be inappropriate in this setting.

15 Senator Kaine: Have you been involved in discussions  
16 on a policy basis, not in a particular strike instance, but  
17 on a policy basis about when we should interdict versus  
18 when we should strike?

19 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, what I will say is that  
20 from a policy standpoint, we strongly support the  
21 President's intent, and just as a general staffing matter,  
22 both in my current capacity and certainly if confirmed,  
23 these are the kinds of questions that I would commit to  
24 working through in very close coordination with the Office  
25 of General Counsel, with sensitivity to ensuring that they



1 are lawful, they're also executable, and that they account  
2 for readiness considerations across theater as others have  
3 raised.

4 Senator Kaine: The reason I ask about that one, we've  
5 been given no information, and I have read the legal  
6 opinion. We've been given no information about policy  
7 decisions, about when to strike versus when to interdict,  
8 and so that's really what I'm asking. Have you been  
9 involved in discussions about that topic? I'm not asking  
10 you the content of the discussions.

11 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, I understand. The phrase,  
12 "policy decisions," I want to clarify. Policy is not a  
13 decision-making organization. We advise. Those decisions  
14 are held up at the Secretary or above level.

15 Senator Kaine: Okay.

16 Mr. Velez-Green: It's our job simply to inform.

17 Senator Kaine: Let's just call it a topic then. Have  
18 you been involved in discussions on the topic of whether we  
19 should strike or whether we should interdict?

20 Mr. Velez-Green: Again, Senator, with sensitivity to  
21 this particular issue at this particular time, I don't  
22 think this would be an appropriate setting for me to  
23 discuss my involvement --

24 Senator Kaine: Have you been involved in any  
25 discussion about a potential land invasion of Venezuela?



1           Mr. Velez-Green:   Senator, again, it would not be  
2   appropriate for me to comment on my involvement in any  
3   particular contingency plan.

4           Senator Kaine:   Have you been involved in any  
5   discussion about the use of U.S. military within or against  
6   Nigeria?

7           Mr. Velez-Green:   Senator, again, I'm sorry.   It would  
8   not be appropriate for me to comment on my particular  
9   involvement.

10          Senator Kaine:   Okay.   Well, let me just point out  
11   that I asked you about eight questions, and the answer to  
12   one of the questions was, no, I've not been involved.   You  
13   said you had not been involved in a discussion about the  
14   composition of the list of designated terrorist  
15   organizations, and on all of the other ones you did not say  
16   no.   You instead said it wouldn't be an appropriate topic  
17   to get into in this hearing.   And so, I'm taking that as a  
18   "yes" on all the others since you were willing to say no in  
19   the instance where you hadn't been involved in discussions.  
20   The fact that you could not give me a "no" on the other  
21   questions suggests that the answer to those questions is  
22   yes, and that is very, very troubling.   It's troubling to  
23   me that discussions are going on and decisions are being  
24   made about war without reading Congress into it.

25          Just yesterday in the Supreme Court, Justice Gorsuch





1 asked the Solicitor General of the United States about  
2 whether the Congress could delegate war powers to the  
3 President, and the President's own attorney, his Solicitor  
4 General, said, no, that would be an abdication, not a  
5 delegation. These are powers for Congress, and the  
6 unwillingness or, to this day, inability of the Pentagon to  
7 answer basic questions. Mr. Chair, I'll just say I had a  
8 chance to review the legal rationale the other day and it's  
9 classified, so I'm not going to go into it. But a  
10 Republican member was looking at it right before me and had  
11 a full panoply of DOD and DOJ officials in the room to  
12 answer that member's questions. They had all exited the  
13 room when I was there, so there were people there to watch  
14 me read the document, but they said they could not answer  
15 any questions that I had about the document.

16 So, I remain very, very concerned, and it's kind of a  
17 timely question. We're going to have a vote on a War  
18 Powers Resolution about no war in Venezuela without a vote  
19 of Congress later today, and the answers of this witness  
20 suggest it's a very timely and important matter that we'd  
21 be taking up now. So, thank you, Mr. Chair. I yield back.

22 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Senator  
23 Schmitt, you are recognized, sir.

24 Senator Schmitt: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  
25 Let me just say from the outset, I do think that I've



1 watched the evolution of some of the criticism of this  
2 administration and particular actors, and I think much of  
3 the criticism, which is cloaked in terms of transparency  
4 and communication, really is just an effort to undermine a  
5 shift in our foreign policy orientation, which I support,  
6 which is to realism, as opposed to some of the failed  
7 points of view that have dominated and permeated Washington  
8 over the last 30 years. That's how I see it now. Now,  
9 people can disagree. That's how I see it.

10 So, the point of my questions, Mr. Velez-Green, I want  
11 to ask you, in recent months there has been speculation and  
12 criticism aimed at Under Secretary of War Colby and his  
13 team, much of it anonymous and misleading and divorced from  
14 reality. Some have suggested that the Policy Office is  
15 freelancing or undermining the President's agenda. Nothing  
16 could be further from the truth. These attacks don't  
17 reflect a policy dispute as much as a resistance from those  
18 invested in maintaining a foreign policy status quo that  
19 has repeatedly failed the American people. I think it's  
20 important to set the record straight. The job of the  
21 Policy arm of the Pentagon is to provide informed  
22 recommendations to the decision-makers in the chain of  
23 command, President Trump and Secretary Hegseth. In no way  
24 are they undermining the President, the Secretary, or the  
25 administration's defense policy objective objectives. On



1 the contrary, these are professionals who translate the  
2 President's directives into cohesive strategies and  
3 generate the forces to achieve them.

4 Now, you've been in this business for a while. I want  
5 to give you an opportunity to speak for yourself, but  
6 there's been much about the tired tropes about  
7 isolationism, which is a joke, and I think what this is, is  
8 a refocusing on the homeland and the Indo-Pacific, but  
9 let's just talk about that for a second. I want you to  
10 speak for yourself. Do you think we should abandon NATO?  
11 What about the rest of Europe? Do you think we should  
12 abandon Europe?

13 Mr. Velez-Green: No, Senator, in the strongest  
14 possible terms.

15 Senator Schmitt: Okay. I think part of the  
16 discussion is, instead of just flowery rhetorical verses  
17 that have been spun for a while, Europe does need to step  
18 up more for their own defense. This conversation about  
19 burden sharing, and people laughed at President Trump about  
20 this the first time, but it's actually happening now, this  
21 is good for us, it's good for Europe, but I think some  
22 people revel in the dependency, that we have, essentially,  
23 subsidized their socially liberal policy and their  
24 governments for far too long. Now, I think that they are  
25 stepping up, I think, in a much more meaningful way. That



1 is a positive development, again, for everybody.

2 Mr. Velez-Green, I want to ask you, you and Under  
3 Secretary Colby are working tirelessly to get this right.  
4 You're not making grand foreign policy pronouncements.  
5 You're certainly not disrupting the President's agenda. On  
6 the contrary, you're working hard to ask the tough  
7 questions that are necessary to lead this strategy moving  
8 forward. And, of course, the media is constantly coming  
9 after President Trump for this policy shift and his team,  
10 so it's no surprise they're coming after you and your boss  
11 on aid to Ukraine, or the relationship with Japan, or the  
12 AUKUS review. They've even claimed that you oppose sending  
13 a carrier to the Middle East for Operation Midnight Hammer.  
14 Would you like to say anything about these particular  
15 accusations?

16 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, I would just offer that the  
17 reporting on each of those episodes was inaccurate, and I  
18 believe, in at least a couple of them, the complete  
19 opposite. For instance, the article with respect to the  
20 Under Secretary's alleged position about forces to support  
21 Operation Midnight Hammer, the opposite of reality. I  
22 categorically a few moments ago stated that reporting that  
23 Policy ordered or even recommended a pause in shipments of  
24 weapons to Ukraine was inaccurate without any caveats.  
25 That remains my position, and the others as well. With the



1 2+2, we were in touch with Tokyo at the time. They  
2 disputed the report contemporaneously. There were other  
3 reasons. I won't cite them in the setting out of respect  
4 for the Japanese. And then on AUKUS, this is something  
5 that, from the very beginning, was always oriented on  
6 strengthening the agreement, consistent with the  
7 President's intent, as stated publicly, and it was always  
8 done very collaboratively. And just the last point I would  
9 offer here is this is not just me saying it. There's paper  
10 trails for most of this. This is not conjecture.

11 Senator Schmitt: And the last question in the time  
12 that I have remaining, I've heard consternation from  
13 someone on the other side of the dais that focusing on the  
14 homeland is sort of a taboo topic and unimaginable somehow,  
15 or focus on the homeland precludes us from focusing on the  
16 Indo-Pacific. Would you like to address this sort of false  
17 claim?

18 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, we've been directed to do  
19 both, and that is exactly what we are doing from a force  
20 management perspective as we think about developing forces  
21 to support the strategy handed down by the Secretary, in  
22 line with the President's intent. I would also just offer  
23 that, and I think very sensitive to a question earlier,  
24 there is not a belief that to do these things we have to  
25 abandon the rest of the world. And I think actually doing



1 that would be counterproductive because we do have  
2 interests in the rest of the world and the simultaneity  
3 problem, as Senator Rounds and others have spoken about,  
4 that is real. So, we do need to stay engaged, I think, in  
5 very, very important and critical ways in Europe and in the  
6 Middle East, alongside allies and partners that are  
7 stepping up. That is, I believe, how we can achieve  
8 enduring peace through strength.

9 Senator Schmitt: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Schmitt. Senator  
11 Duckworth.

12 Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Dr.  
13 Todd, I want to thank you for the extensive conversation we  
14 had prior to this hearing, and you demonstrated to me a  
15 deep command of the issues that you will lead, if  
16 confirmed, and from how we gather and manage data to how we  
17 analyze mishaps and use those lessons to improve safety and  
18 readiness. As a former aviator like yourself, and from my  
19 perch on this committee and my role as Ranking Member on  
20 the Commerce, Science, and Technology Committee's  
21 Subcommittee on Aviation, Space, and Innovation, I am  
22 especially committed to aviation safety. Will you, Dr.  
23 Todd, commit to working with me on improving aviation  
24 safety across the services, to include supporting  
25 improvements in aviation maintenance and training and



1 coordinating with the FAA?

2 Dr. Todd: Yes, Senator Duckworth, and thank you again  
3 for meeting. I think we had a very fruitful discussion.  
4 As a former Army aviator, I believe in the highest  
5 standards of aviation safety, training, and readiness, and  
6 I would confirm that I will work very closely with you and  
7 your staff.

8 Senator Duckworth: Thank you so much. Mr. Velez-  
9 Green, you are nominated to be Deputy Under Secretary of  
10 Defense for Policy, leading one of the most complex and  
11 consequential offices within the Department. In this role,  
12 you would be expected to manage a sprawling enterprise that  
13 determines our defense strategy and policy across all  
14 commands, alliances, theaters, and domains. Is that  
15 correct?

16 Mr. Velez-Green: Yes, Senator Duckworth. I would be  
17 responsible helping the Under Secretary as he implements  
18 his statutory responsibility.

19 Senator Duckworth: Thank you. So, however, after our  
20 meeting, I do have serious concerns about your  
21 qualifications to provide strategic, rigorously expert and  
22 independent advice, and also your ability to actually lead  
23 a large organization to success. Mr. Velez-Green, what is  
24 the largest organization you have led, including the number  
25 of direct reports that fell under your personal



1 supervision?

2 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, I had the great privilege  
3 of leading the Policy organization at the beginning of this  
4 administration, which was roughly 1,000 individuals,  
5 uniformed, career, and contractor, and then as far as  
6 direct reports, I believe I had less than 20, more than 10.  
7 I'd have to count the assistant secretaries as well as the  
8 front office staff and perhaps a few others.

9 Senator Duckworth: Right, but that 1,000 indirectly  
10 that you're claiming was just in your acting USDP role from  
11 January to April of this year. So, I think it's pretty  
12 disingenuous of you to claim you have the necessary vast  
13 management experience just because the administration  
14 thrusts you into this acting role on January 20 for just 3  
15 months. So, you have 3 months' experiences as an acting,  
16 given that, before then, you managed a maximum of one to  
17 two direct reports, at most. Predecessors in this role  
18 have been in charge of talent and resource management for  
19 the complex pool of approximately 800 military civilians,  
20 contractors, and detailees within OSD Policy. OSD Policy  
21 also provides strategic guidance across 11 combatant  
22 commands, composed of hundreds of thousands of personnel  
23 operating all over the world. In my opinion, your meager  
24 management experience pales in comparison to the scale of  
25 the management challenge that you'll be in charge of in





1 this role.

2 Now, let's set the management piece aside. Beyond  
3 management, this role also requires a steadfast leader  
4 prepared to provide independent, strategic advice on our  
5 critical defense partnerships, and preparing our Joint  
6 Force to deter enemies and defend American interests, and  
7 you have tried to convince me that you can provide that  
8 service to the United States. You had previously said that  
9 prioritizing assistance to Ukraine to fight Vladimir Putin  
10 over preparing our Taiwan and Taiwan's forces in the  
11 Pacific would cause Beijing to doubt America's commitment  
12 to Taiwan's defense. So, let me say again, you said that  
13 by prioritizing assistance to Ukraine, in your opinion, we  
14 would cause -- this is direct quote from you -- "cause  
15 Beijing to doubt commitment to Taiwan's defense." The  
16 United States military's footprints in SOUTHCOM AOR is now  
17 reaching more than 10 percent of the Navy's total assets,  
18 even before the arrival of the USS Gerald Ford Carrier  
19 Strike Group and its accompanying 10,000 additional  
20 personnel. Do you agree with Vice President Vance that  
21 this is the highest and best use of our military?

22 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, President Trump has been  
23 unequivocal that we should prioritize defending our  
24 homeland. I come from a community that has been affected  
25 by the narcotics of the type that the President has set his



1 sights on here, and so I do believe in strongly support  
2 prioritizing in defense of our home. And I would offer,  
3 however, that that is not mutually exclusive with also  
4 prioritizing and doing what is required to ensure a robust  
5 military deterrent in the Western Pacific against China,  
6 nor is it mutually exclusive to our ability to remain  
7 deeply engaged in Europe and the Middle East in a manner  
8 consistent with the President's intent --

9 Senator Duckworth: So, you're saying you disagree  
10 with the Vice President when he said that the highest and  
11 best use of our military in describing the arrival of the  
12 USS Gerald Ford Carrier Strike Group and its accompanying  
13 10,000 personnel to the Indo-Pacific.

14 Mr. Velez-Green: I apologize. I think that was a  
15 long way of saying I do agree with the Vice President.

16 Senator Duckworth: So, do you agree with the Vice  
17 President. I think your logic seems inconsistent. You  
18 reject U.S. opposing Putin because you think it distracts  
19 from the Pacific, but you're not brave enough to sound the  
20 same alarm as Trump significantly redirects our naval and  
21 maritime resources to South America, taking away from the  
22 Indo-Pacific Region, our most maritime area of operation.  
23 I'm not quite sure why you would not object to burning the  
24 readiness of our already stressed fleet to do a  
25 fundamentally law enforcement mission in the Western



1 Hemisphere, nor why you, a vehement defender of deterring  
2 the PRC over all else, would not be concerned about the  
3 signal these deployments are sending to the PRC about our  
4 capability to respond to any aggression in Indo-Pacific.  
5 Clearly, your analysis shifts based on the winds around you  
6 and who you are trying to please, and I worry that you're  
7 unable to apply any consistent and objective rigor to your  
8 advising and are unable to speak truth to power, and that  
9 our national security will suffer as a result of that.

10 Chairman Wicker: Well, perhaps you can answer on the  
11 record, Mr. Velez-Green.

12 [The information referred to follows:]

13 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25



1 Chairman Wicker: Senator Budd.

2 Senator Budd: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, thank  
3 you all for being here today and your willingness to serve.

4 Mr. Velez-Green, I appreciated the conversation a few  
5 weeks ago in the office. You know, there's been lots of  
6 complaints prior to Tuesday and today from my fellow  
7 Republicans about a series of issues. I think they all  
8 really boil down to communication. I need a firm  
9 commitment from you that if my staff or I reach out to you,  
10 that I'll hear not just from Office of Legislative Affairs,  
11 but I'll hear from you personally and your personal office  
12 if we inquire.

13 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, I am prepared to give you  
14 that commitment as well as to other members of this  
15 committee.

16 Senator Budd: That is a yes.

17 Mr. Velez-Green: Yes.

18 Senator Budd: Thank you. Talk about the Fourth  
19 Presidential Drawdown Authority in regards to Taiwan. Is  
20 that on hold?

21 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, candidly, I'm not sure of  
22 the current status. I would say I have been a very  
23 prominent and strong advocate for arming Taiwan and making  
24 sure they have what's required to defend themselves. I  
25 think that's vitally important, not just as a matter of



1 fairness, but also, frankly, from an operational  
2 perspective. And if confirmed, you have my strong  
3 commitment to continue to advocate to that effect,  
4 including by providing options up to higher leadership for  
5 their consideration, PDA being one of them.

6 Senator Budd: Thank you.

7 Chairman Wicker: But is it on hold?

8 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, can --

9 Chairman Wicker: Was that the question?

10 Senator Budd: Yes. Is the fourth Presidential  
11 Drawdown Authority package for Taiwan on hold?

12 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, I'm not sure of the current  
13 status, and I'd be happy to share as much as possible  
14 while, again, respecting my chain of command.

15 Senator Budd: Thank you. Much has been said about  
16 the PRC's objectives in Latin America. What's your  
17 assessment of the national security implications of China's  
18 reach into the Western Hemisphere, and, specifically, as  
19 you think about the defense policy of countering cartels,  
20 how could DOD simultaneously address the PRC's inroads in  
21 Latin America? So two birds, one stone.

22 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, thank you for the question.  
23 I would offer two responses, if I may. One is a question  
24 of deconfliction and making sure that, as we are resourcing  
25 the requirements to execute the Department strategy in line



1 with the President's instructions in the Western  
2 Hemisphere, we are also resourcing the requirements to  
3 maintain deterrence in the Western Pacific, including soft  
4 elements, for instance, that I know are important for North  
5 Carolina. With respect to the Western Hemisphere, my view  
6 is that this is a multipronged effort. I think part of  
7 this is with the United States more decisively engaging in  
8 the hemisphere, the Department of War especially. I think  
9 that's a very clear signal to partners across the region  
10 that this is a priority, that we are leaning forward in  
11 ways the past administration did not, and that, as an  
12 extension, we are paying more attention. We are prepared  
13 to work more closely and in different ways than may have  
14 been in the past and so they have opportunities to step up  
15 with us in that regard, including by not doing certain  
16 things that could be detrimental to our national security,  
17 such as engaging with China in certain ways in this  
18 hemisphere. I think the Panama Canal instance is a very  
19 clear example of the President's intent and how the  
20 Department of War and other agencies worked to that effect.

21 Senator Budd: I hope to see that increased  
22 engagement, so thank you for your answer. Dr. Todd, if  
23 confirmed, how will you judge our strategic readiness to  
24 prevail in a conflict with China?

25 Dr. Todd: Senator, I think our strategic readiness is



1 critical to understanding how we can deter China and meet  
2 our strategic objectives in the INDOPACOM AOR. I think we  
3 would, basically, continue to gather the readiness data  
4 available to us based on the training, education,  
5 equipping, and manning of the services. We would look at  
6 their preparation for meeting the contingency plans from  
7 the Joint Staff and the geographic combatant commanders.  
8 We would assess their success from their deployments to  
9 meet those mission requirements, and then have a feedback  
10 loop to then determine in the future will those  
11 capabilities be available to China, based on their past  
12 performance and what we need to do to better prepare them  
13 for the future.

14 Senator Budd: And what metrics would you use to  
15 evaluate the readiness of the Joint Force?

16 Dr. Todd: Well, Senator, there are a number of  
17 metrics. I'm not familiar with the specific ones now, but  
18 I would take a close look at the contingency planning that  
19 we have for the INDOPACOM AOR, what we see as our key  
20 objectives and our key threats and challenges. And then as  
21 we would run both service-specific and joint exercises, we  
22 would then be able to gather the right kind of data, look  
23 at assessing that data, and then ensuring that we are  
24 taking the right lessons learned to reapply to the  
25 preparation of our forces so they can better execute their



1 missions against China.

2 Senator Budd: Thank you very much. Chairman?

3 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Senator  
4 Sullivan, are you prepared?

5 Senator Sullivan: Yes, sir, Mr. Chairman.

6 Chairman Wicker: You're recognized for 5 minutes.

7 Senator Sullivan: Thank you. Thank you, Mr.  
8 Chairman. So, I need to get a commitment from all the  
9 nominees. First, congratulations on your nomination, and  
10 thanks to you and your families for your desire to serve  
11 your country again. Most of you have done it already in  
12 many capacities, so thank you on that.

13 Can I get a commitment from all of you to come up to  
14 Alaska with me and see what General Billy Mitchell called  
15 the most strategic place in the world? There's a lot going  
16 on in Alaska right now. We got the Russians and Chinese,  
17 and ADAs and our EEZ, who are the front lines, a great  
18 power competition: every day, six Russian incursions since  
19 August. Doesn't make a lot of news down here, but it's  
20 important and it's serious. So, can I get a commitment  
21 from each of you to join me up in my great State? Why  
22 don't we just go through the list here. Any of you been  
23 before?

24 Mr. Dill: Senator, absolutely, if confirmed, I'd look  
25 forward to making that visit. I have not had the chance





1 yet, and I'd love to do that.

2 Senator Sullivan: Great.

3 Mr. Payne: Senator, I have not been to Alaska yet,  
4 but I would absolutely, if confirmed, commit to visiting.

5 Senator Sullivan: Great.

6 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, I've had the opportunity to  
7 visit Alaska multiple times, including JBER, and if  
8 confirmed, I'd welcome the opportunity to join you in the  
9 State.

10 Senator Sullivan: Great. Thanks. Mr. --

11 Dr. Todd: Senator Sullivan, I have not visited Alaska  
12 yet, but I look forward to doing so.

13 Senator Sullivan: Good. Well, thank you, and, you  
14 know, we had a hearing the other day. I was a little bit  
15 hot under the collar on kind of responsiveness. Can I get  
16 a commitment from all of you, if confirmed, that you'll  
17 work with the committee, the chairman, the ranking member,  
18 all of us? There's a lot of knowledge here over the years,  
19 decades, centuries on military matters. We're not always  
20 right, but, you know, we want to work with you guys to make  
21 you successful. This is a really bipartisan committee.  
22 The national defense of our Nation is pretty much a  
23 bipartisan issue, so can I get a commitment that, if  
24 confirmed, that you will work with us, be responsive, you  
25 know, get your cell number, things like that? I certainly



1 don't abuse that, but it's important to have a good  
2 relationship. Can I get each of your commitment on that?

3 Mr. Dill: Absolutely, Senator.

4 Mr. Payne: Yes, Senator.

5 Senator Sullivan: Great.

6 Mr. Velez-Green: Yes, Senator.

7 Senator Sullivan: Okay.

8 Dr. Todd: Yes, Senator

9 Senator Sullivan: Mr. Payne, I want to start with  
10 you. You know, CAPE has an up-and-down reputation. I've  
11 seen it throughout my military career where they do things  
12 where you're like, oh, that makes a lot of sense. They do  
13 other stuff where you're like, what in the hell are they  
14 doing? I need you to commit to me to take a look at this  
15 issue of amphibs in the Marine Corps. There's a huge  
16 dispute right now between what the Navy has in terms of its  
17 capabilities to build amphibs. They're typically not  
18 interested in purchasing or building amphibs, or, I would  
19 just say, it's low on their priority. For the Marine  
20 Corps, it's kind of number one, right, and for combatant  
21 commanders, it's very high up there as well. There's a  
22 split right now. I wish the Secretary of the Navy would  
23 kind of help us get there because the Marines think we need  
24 a lot more amphibs. The Navy has said, eh, I don't think  
25 so. So, can you work with me, maybe come in and see me on



1 this? I feel very strongly about the Marine Corps having  
2 a, what we call a 3.0 MEU capability. Are you aware what  
3 that phrase means?

4 Mr. Payne: Yes, Senator.

5 Senator Sullivan: Do you agree with that phrase? Do  
6 you agree with that as a part of our strategy as it deals  
7 with amphib and Marine Corps capability, deploy, kick in  
8 doors anywhere in the world?

9 Mr. Payne: Senator, yes. My understanding is that  
10 that capability is essential to the Marine Corps Joint  
11 Force, to their force design and to our strategy.

12 Senator Sullivan: A lot of our combatant commanders  
13 think it's a critical capability, so that's another thing.  
14 So, can I get your commitment to work with me on that?

15 Mr. Payne: Yes, Senator.

16 Senator Sullivan: Mr. Velez-Green, you've written a  
17 lot on the homeland. I think that's an important focus.  
18 It's kind of the start, really, of national security, I  
19 think. I had a good meeting with Under Secretary Colby  
20 yesterday where he walked me through a lot of the pillars  
21 of the NDS that the Pentagon's working on right now, which  
22 I appreciated a lot. Give me your sense on homeland  
23 security and, in particular, the Arctic. As I mentioned,  
24 there's so much going on. You know, when I first got here,  
25 I'll never forget the Obama administration had its Arctic



1 strategy I held up in a hearing with the Secretary of  
2 Defense and said this is a joke. It's a joke. It was all  
3 about climate change. Had nothing to do with real wars.  
4 Mentioned climate change a bunch of times. Mentioned  
5 Russia once in a footnote. It was a joke. The Arctic  
6 North Pacific is not a joke. Like I said, it's the front  
7 line of great power competition. Can you briefly just  
8 touch on your views on homeland security as it relates to  
9 the Arctic?

10 Mr. Velez-Green: Yes, Senator. I would say, first  
11 and foremost and cognizant of time, Alaska is the homeland.  
12 We have a responsibility to defend Alaska just as a  
13 starting point. I think in terms of defending the lower 48  
14 as well, Alaska's long played a vital role from a missile  
15 defense perspective and otherwise. I expect that will  
16 continue to be the case for no other reason other than  
17 physics and geography. As the FIC becomes harder -- the  
18 First Island Chain -- to operate in, Alaska is already  
19 critical. I expect it'll become only more critical with  
20 that.

21 Senator Sullivan: Yeah. In the One Big Beautiful  
22 Bill, we got \$115 million to reopen the Adak Navy Base,  
23 which we want you guys to implement, not fight, but that's  
24 an example of what you're talking about.

25 Mr. Velez-Green: Yes, Senator, and maybe as just a



1 brief last point, one of the things I took from my visit to  
2 Alaska when I was in NSA to a member on this committee was  
3 the value of the Arctic training capabilities in Alaska,  
4 that it's just not possible elsewhere and does have  
5 application across a variety of AORs. And so, that's just  
6 another example of Alaska and the Arctic's vital role in  
7 our Nation's defense.

8 Senator Sullivan: Great. Good. Thank you. Thank  
9 you, Mr. Chairman.

10 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Sullivan, and I  
11 do suggest to each of you that you wear layers when you  
12 pack for Alaska.

13 Senator Sullivan: We loved having the chairman of the  
14 committee up in Alaska a couple years ago.

15 Chairman Wicker: Absolutely.

16 Senator Sullivan: It was great.

17 Chairman Wicker: It was a wonderful trip, and I'm --

18 Senator Reed: Summertime.

19 Chairman Wicker: -- glad it was in the summertime.

20 Senator Sullivan: I need to get the Ranking Member up  
21 there.

22 Chairman Wicker: But let me just ask one more line of  
23 questioning to Mr. Velez-Green. We acknowledge that  
24 notification is different from consultation, but would you  
25 concede that there really hasn't been any consultation with



1 the Congress on the National Defense Strategy?

2 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, I'm not aware that there  
3 has been formal consultations with Congress on the National  
4 Defense Strategy. I know we interact on a regular basis on  
5 a variety of issues related to the strategy --

6 Chairman Wicker: Okay.

7 Mr. Velez-Green: -- and policy that inform the  
8 internal discussions and development process.

9 Chairman Wicker: Nor the Global Force Posture Review  
10 consultation.

11 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, I would offer the same  
12 response, yes.

13 Chairman Wicker: That's really not the way it's  
14 supposed to work, and on the AUKUS review, I didn't receive  
15 any consultation about engaging in a lengthy review, which  
16 upset our friends in Australia and cast doubt on whether we  
17 were committed to this agreement. Would you agree that  
18 there should have been consultation before we embarked on a  
19 lengthy review?

20 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, in all cases, I will always  
21 be required to, and I think it appropriate, to protect my  
22 Secretary's and President's decision space. With that  
23 said, if confirmed and as a general matter, you do have my  
24 commitment to lean as far forward as possible to  
25 practically engage this committee, including you, Mr.



1 Chairman, and your staff on matters related to all the  
2 issues you described, particularly including in the form of  
3 consultations.

4 Chairman Wicker: Well, this is going to require of  
5 change in a mindset. For example, there was no  
6 consultation with Congress but, rather, a surprise on the  
7 Department cutting security assistance to the Baltics.  
8 Would you concede that there was no consultation, that we  
9 were surprised when we were informed through the media  
10 about that?

11 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, I know the reporting and  
12 the issue that you're referencing. I'm sensitive to the  
13 public environment we are in currently. With respect to  
14 this, as with the other matters you've referenced, you do  
15 have my commitment to engage in a forthright matter, if  
16 confirmed, including consulting, on matters such as these.

17 Senator Sullivan: I would very much have urged the  
18 Department not to make that decision. At any rate, I  
19 think, certainly, we've had an airing of some differences  
20 of opinion this week, and so I appreciate your response and  
21 the tone of your assurances today. Senator Jack Reed?

22 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr.  
23 Velez-Green, the President of the United States has created  
24 a list of designated terrorist organizations, which he has  
25 ordered the Department of Defense to conduct lethal



1 operations against. In fact, the operations are inherently  
2 lethal. Part of the logic of how they can do it is that  
3 they're destroying ships from a distance, not even coming  
4 close into contact. What's the statutory authority for the  
5 designated terrorist organization?

6 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator, with respect to the legal  
7 basis or other legal considerations related to ongoing  
8 operations, I would have to defer to the lawyers and the  
9 Office of General Counsel, who I know are leading on this  
10 issue and working it aggressively.

11 Senator Reed: So, you are prepared to encourage or  
12 allow fatal attacks, lethal attacks against individuals  
13 with no real concern or review of the legal basis for it?

14 Mr. Velez-Green: Mr. Ranking Member, that's certainly  
15 not my position. My position is very clearly that on  
16 matters like this and other matters that would come before  
17 the Policy organization, if I am confirmed and including in  
18 my current capacity, I am extremely diligent and focused on  
19 ensuring that the Office of General Counsel is  
20 appropriately engaged in all of these matters to ensure  
21 that any options that are elevated are lawful, in addition  
22 to other considerations.

23 Senator Reed: So, what has the Office of General  
24 Counsel told you is the statutory basis for these  
25 operations?





1           Mr. Velez-Green:   Senator, again, just with respect to  
2   the legal basis, I'm going to defer to them in order to  
3   provide an accurate and appropriate response.

4           Senator Reed:   So, you cannot provide a statutory  
5   legal basis for this action.

6           Mr. Velez-Green:   Senator, I simply don't want to  
7   speak for the Office of General Counsel on this very  
8   important matter.

9           Senator Reed:   You are in the Policy Department of the  
10   Department of Defense, and policy embraces not just moving  
11   troops on the map, but also what's legal, what's not legal,  
12   what we can do.   Don't you think you have an obligation, if  
13   you believe there is a failure to follow the laws, to at  
14   least examine that and be prepared to respond to questions  
15   like this?

16          Mr. Velez-Green:   Mr. Ranking Member, I have no reason  
17   to believe that the President or the Secretary is directing  
18   us to do anything unlawful.   With that said, in the context  
19   that you're describing or any other, part of Policy's role  
20   is, candidly, sir, we serve to ensure that the relevant  
21   stakeholders are part of the process in the way they need  
22   to be to bring their respective expertises to bear, whether  
23   we're talking about military matters, the Joint Staff, or  
24   combatant commands, acquisition issues, ANS, in this case,  
25   legal issues in the Office of General Counsel, who is,



1 ultimately, the office best position to provide the answers  
2 that you and, I believe, others seek.

3 Senator Reed: Have you raised this question --

4 Chairman Wicker: Mr. Ranking Member.

5 Senator Reed: Yeah.

6 Chairman Wicker: Maybe Mr. Velez-Green could reflect  
7 on your question and see, on the record, if he could  
8 respond or --

9 Senator Reed: Mr. Chairman, that's excellent advice.

10 Chairman Wicker: Yeah. Senator Sullivan.

11 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just  
12 had one more question for Mr. Velez-Green. It's relating  
13 to Taiwan. You've written about Taiwan a lot. It's a  
14 really important area for our national security. It's been  
15 an island democracy for decades and also a critical element  
16 of the free world's economy, and the United States, our  
17 support, our military has pretty much kept it free for  
18 decades. That's a fact. You've written that, "Unlike in  
19 Ukraine" -- this is your words -- "Taiwan's defense will  
20 require more than military aid from the United States.  
21 Taiwan's defense will require U.S. intervention." Can you  
22 talk about what constitutes a credible deterrent with  
23 regard to Taiwan because I think that's the key, and the  
24 importance of allies and partners, not just us as it  
25 relates to Taiwan, and then finally, how we can speed the



1 delivery of arm sales with regard to Taiwan. It's hard to  
2 demand that they spend more on their defense, which they  
3 should, and I know the administration's been doing that,  
4 and I'm fine with that, to encourage them to spend more,  
5 but if we can't then deliver the weapons that they need,  
6 that's a little bit of a quandary for them. So, if you can  
7 kind of package those three different questions I just  
8 asked on Taiwan in an answer.

9 Mr. Velez-Green: Thank you, Senator. Above all, you  
10 know, I certainly want to be very, in an absolute sense,  
11 deferential to the President's intent and the Secretary's  
12 guidance.

13 Senator Sullivan: Of course. We understand.

14 Mr. Velez-Green: With respect to Taiwan and the First  
15 Island Chain, this is a critical terrain. When we think  
16 about operating from a position of military strength in the  
17 Indo-Pacific, having forceful deterrence along that  
18 geography is vital to ensuring a balance of power that  
19 allows us to achieve our ends.

20 Senator Sullivan: And we've said that here, correct?  
21 The Taiwan Relations Act, the Congress of the United  
22 States, in a very exceptional piece of legislation that  
23 still rules our relationship with Taiwan today, said that,  
24 "Military force taking over Taiwan would be of grave  
25 concern to the United States." That's about as high a



1 level of national security strategic interest from our  
2 country as you get, correct? That's still the case, isn't  
3 it?

4 Mr. Velez-Green: Yes, Senator, to my knowledge.

5 Senator Sullivan: Oh, it is. It's in the law.

6 Mr. Velez-Green: Yes.

7 Senator Sullivan: But do you agree with that? The  
8 answer is yes.

9 Mr. Velez-Green: Senator --

10 Senator Sullivan: You agree with the law?

11 Mr. Velez-Green: Oh, I certainly agree with the law,  
12 yes. Yes.

13 Senator Sullivan: Yeah, good.

14 Mr. Velez-Green: With respect just to the other  
15 elements of your question, in terms of how to maintain a  
16 robust return in the First Island Chain, Taiwan included,  
17 we sort of focus on the question, the denial of defense --

18 Senator Sullivan: Yeah.

19 Mr. Velez-Green: -- what is required to convince Xi  
20 Jinping, in particular, that any attempted aggression will  
21 not only be costly, but that it will ultimately fail --

22 Senator Sullivan: Good.

23 Mr. Velez-Green: -- and, therefore, is not worth  
24 attempting in the first place. This is, to your point,  
25 Senator, and a substantial part of question, what the Joint



1 Force, what options we can provide to the President if and  
2 when required. It is also vitally a question about what  
3 our allies and partners are able to do in that critical  
4 geography. This is something that is a central focus. I  
5 have had the opportunity to work very closely on matters  
6 related to these countries in this particular area over the  
7 course of my tenure and prior, and helping them,  
8 incentivizing them, and then enabling them to step up. I  
9 believe Admiral Paparo said that that has a  
10 disproportionate effect on our ability to achieve denial  
11 just by virtue of terrain and positional advantage.

12 But then I think, Senator, to your very right  
13 observation, it is, you know, all good and well to  
14 incentivize folks to step up, but if we cannot get them the  
15 weapons they need to do so, that is a problem. That is  
16 why, I believe you spoke to the Under Secretary about it  
17 yesterday, the DIB is such a central and explicit part of  
18 what we are doing. We want to get to a place where there's  
19 no question about our ability, not just to deliver, but to  
20 sustain the ability of those partners to do their part  
21 alongside U.S. forces to ensure Alaskan deterrent in the  
22 Indo-Pacific, also in other regions, Europe and the Middle  
23 East especially. That is, I think, a critical element of  
24 peace through strength on an enduring basis.

25 Senator Sullivan: Good. Thank you. Thank you, Mr.



1 Chairman.

2 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Sullivan. This  
3 concludes today's hearing. I want to thank our witnesses  
4 for their participation and their testimony.

5 For the information of members of the committee,  
6 questions for the record will be due to the committee  
7 within 2 business days of the conclusion of this hearing.

8 [The information referred to follows:]

9 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25



1 Chairman Wicker: And we are now adjourned. Thank  
2 you.

3 [Whereupon, at 11:33 a.m., the committee was  
4 adjourned.]

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

