

**OPENING STATEMENT OF U.S. SENATOR JACK REED  
CHAIRMAN, SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**ROOM SD-G50  
DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING  
Thursday, July 28, 2022**

*To conduct a confirmation hearing on the nominations of  
Dr. Radha Iyengar Plumb to be Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition  
and Sustainment;  
Milancy Danielle Harris to be Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence  
and Security;  
Dr. Laura Taylor-Kale to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base  
Policy; and  
Brendan Owens to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Energy, Installations and  
Environment  
(As prepared for delivery)*

**REED:** Good morning. The Committee meets today to consider the nominations of Dr. Radha Plumb to be Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, Mrs. Milancy Harris to be Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security, Dr. Laura Taylor-Kale to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy, and Mr. Brendan Owens to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Energy, Installations and Environment. On behalf of the Committee, I want to thank each of you for your willingness to serve in these important positions.

I would also like to welcome the guests and family members who are present today. Dr. Plumb, I would like to welcome your husband, John; father, Ravi; mother, Rama; aunt, Sheila, and cousin, Tara. Mrs. Harris, I would like to welcome your husband, Caleb; father, William; and mother, Robin. Dr. Taylor-Kale, I would like to welcome your family members Julian, Rana, Isaiah, Caleb, and Jaina. And Mr. Owens, I welcome your wife, Wendy; daughter, Harper; son, Eamon; father, Francis; and mother, Kathleen. We are grateful to each of you for your support.

Dr. Plumb, you are nominated to be Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment. You bring decades of technical expertise to this position, including your current role as Chief of Staff to the Deputy Secretary of

Defense and previous experiences as Director of Research and Insights for Trust & Safety at Google and as a Senior Economist at the RAND Corporation.

This position has a wide range of duties, including delivering timely, cost-effective capabilities for the armed forces; supervising all elements of defense acquisition and the defense industrial base; overseeing the modernization of our nuclear forces; and serving as a principal advisor to the Secretary on acquisition, sustainment, and core logistics.

If confirmed, an urgent priority must be working to speed up the acquisition process. We need to find a way to provide our warfighters with the equipment they need while also ensuring acquisitions remain on time and on budget. Although some progress and reforms have been made in recent years, the Defense Department's acquisition process still remains on the Government Accountability Office's "High Risk List."

Similarly, the Department must improve the operation and sustainment of weapons systems over their life cycles—a cost that is often overlooked in the acquisition process. Dr. Plumb, I would like to know how you would plan to address these challenges.

Mrs. Harris, you are nominated to be Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security. If confirmed, you will serve as a principal intelligence adviser to the Secretary of Defense and will oversee the defense intelligence enterprise. Your considerable experience in irregular warfare and counterterrorism policy across the Defense Department and intelligence community will serve you well in this role.

Among many challenges, you will need to ensure the security and integrity of all Defense Department business and government entities and personnel. Specifically, it is vital to protect our industrial base from cyber theft and adverse investments by competitor nations. The Defense Department's "innovation strategy" relies on trustworthy technology and intellectual property, and it is imperative for the Department to be able to access critical technology that is being developed by commercial and non-traditional defense companies.

Additionally, you will need to ensure the defense intelligence collection agencies—NRO, NSA, and NGA—devote resources and management attention to the support of agile joint all-domain military operations against peer competitors. These operations require split-second targeting support, and I would like to know how you would ensure their success.

Dr. Taylor-Kale, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy will serve as the principal advisor to the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment for all industrial base policies and related matters. This position has a wide scope of responsibilities, from ensuring supply chain security, guiding Department-wide acquisitions and investments, to coordinating small business programs. I would note your considerable experience in economic and business affairs in both the Commerce and State Departments, as well as your record of leadership at the Council on Foreign Relations.

If confirmed, you would be the first person to hold this office. As such, there are a number of important challenges you will need to address. Notably, the Department must build domestic production capacity to support key technology areas such as microelectronics, artificial intelligence, and hypersonics. These are game-changing technologies that will be key to maintaining our advantages over China, Russia, and other adversaries, and our defense industrial base needs an advocate in the Department to ensure it receives the support it requires to deliver them.

Further, as we have seen with greater clarity over the past several years, ensuring supply chain security and access to critical strategic materials such as rare earth elements is fundamentally important for the Department and the defense industrial base. I would like to know your thoughts on how you would address this challenge.

Finally, Mr. Owens, you are nominated to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Energy, Installations and Environment. If confirmed, you will oversee the Defense Department's physical footprint and provide management of military installations worldwide, as well as leadership on environmental, safety, and occupational health programs. Your strong engineering background—both in and out of government—as well as your experience as an energy manager at Fort Belvoir for seven years should serve you well.

Among the challenges for this position is the persistent threat posed by PFAS contamination at defense installations around the world. Cleanup and remediation efforts for these chemicals is very costly and technically challenging, and I would like to know what steps you would take to help implement a better strategy moving forward.

You will also need to ensure rigorous oversight of the privatized housing companies in the Defense Department's Military Housing Privatization Initiative. This is an issue that this committee has devoted considerable attention and effort to. Relatedly, the Department will need to take steps to protect and maintain

mission readiness by addressing the climate resilience of military installations. I would ask that you share how this process can be accelerated, particularly for installations most vulnerable to climate risks like wildfires, drought, and flooding.

Lastly, I welcome your thoughts on how the Department can increase its use of distributed energy on its installations using non-Defense funded contracting mechanisms, especially in the Air Force as it has lagged behind the other Services.

Thank you, again, to our nominees. I look forward to your testimonies.

A note to my colleagues, we are working to get these nominees voted out of committee before the recess, so there will be an expedited timeline for questions for the record.

Let me now turn to Ranking Member Inhofe.