

**OPENING STATEMENT OF U.S. SENATOR JIM INHOFE  
RANKING MEMBER, SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD**

**ROOM SD-G50  
DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING**

**Tuesday, March 22, 2022**

*To conduct a confirmation hearing on the nominations of  
Honorable William LaPlante to be Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and  
Sustainment; Mr. Erik Raven to be Under Secretary of the Navy; Ms. Tia Johnson to be a  
Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces; Dr. Marvin Adams to  
be Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs, National Nuclear Security  
Administration  
(As prepared for delivery)*

Thank you, Chairman Reed, and thanks to our witnesses for being with us and for their willingness to serve the nation.

As former Secretary of Defense and CIA Director Bob Gates said recently, “We have to think about how we are going to deal with a hostile Russia...as long as Vladimir Putin is around. We face a much longer-term kind of problem and challenge from the Chinese.”

I think these remarks put Russia and China into the right context. The 2018 National Defense Strategy identified China as the pacing threat and provided a roadmap for dealing with this challenge — one that must continue to be our priority.

We continue to fall behind the Chinese, even as other threats worsen. We haven’t been resourcing the strategy adequately, and that was before we had all this inflation.

We need a sense of urgency to make bold, smart decisions at the Department of Defense, and that starts with senior civilian leadership. We’ve got to take some risk. Congress is an eager and willing partner in this. Ask us for help.

Dr. LaPlante, you’ve been nominated for DOD’s top acquisition job. It’s a shame it took a year, because you’ve got plenty to do. Congress and the Pentagon, working together, have made huge strides in acquisition. But the Chinese are still moving faster than us.

We’re still not very good at supporting rapid innovation, and we even struggle with traditional acquisitions. Case in point: the Ford-class carrier.

We are unable to develop a plan and resource it. We’ve seen half a dozen official

positions on what the future naval fleet should look like — all larger than what we have today. Mr. Raven, I hope you'll help the Pentagon stop its endless bickering, support the Navy's stated requirements, and start building ships at scale. It's long overdue.

Nuclear modernization is another overdue bill for the military. Dr. Adams, I hope you'll tell us how you'll work to take care of those bills, as we also consider how our nuclear posture must change in response to Chinese and Russian nuclear advances.

Lastly, Congress has made a lot of major changes to the Uniform Code of Military Justice in recent years. The executive branch is also trying to implement a vaccine mandate and root out extremism in our armed forces. Ms. Johnson, I'd like to hear how you will turn to the Constitution first whenever considering the application of any of these efforts.

We look forward to hearing each of your views on these and other important issues. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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