

Stenographic Transcript  
Before the

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

**UNITED STATES SENATE**

Nominations

Thursday, November 2, 2017

Washington, D.C.

ALDERSON COURT REPORTING  
1155 CONNECTICUT AVENUE, N.W.  
SUITE 200  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036  
(202) 289-2260  
[www.aldersonreporting.com](http://www.aldersonreporting.com)

## NOMINATIONS

Thursday, November 2, 2017

U.S. Senate

Committee on Armed Services

Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:02 a.m. in Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John McCain, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Committee Members Present: Senators McCain [presiding], Inhofe, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Perdue, Sasse, Reed, Nelson, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Donnelly, Kaine, King, Heinrich, Warren, and Peters.

1           OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN McCAIN, U.S. SENATOR  
2 FROM ARIZONA

3           Chairman McCain: Good morning. The Senate Armed  
4 Services Committee meets today to consider the nominations  
5 of Mark T. Esper to be Secretary of the Army; Robert L.  
6 Wilkie to be Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and  
7 Readiness; Joseph D. Kernan to be Under Secretary of Defense  
8 for Intelligence; and Guy B. Roberts to be Assistant  
9 Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical and Biological  
10 Defense Programs.

11           I would like to say that I have been pleased with the  
12 reaction of the Secretary of Defense and the administration  
13 in being cooperative in responding to our questions and to  
14 our ability to carry out our responsibilities on the defense  
15 authorization bill. I think that most members were happy  
16 with the briefing that we received concerning the accidents  
17 on the USS McCain and others. And so we are glad to begin  
18 this hearing.

19           We thank you all for joining us this morning. We  
20 welcome your family and friends here with us today. As is  
21 our tradition, at the beginning of your testimony, we invite  
22 you to introduce those who are joining you.

23           It is the standard for this committee to ask certain  
24 questions in order to exercise its legislative and oversight  
25 responsibilities. It is important that this committee and

1 other appropriate committees of the Congress be able to  
2 receive testimony, briefings, and other communications of  
3 information. I would ask that you each provide responses to  
4 the following questions.

5 For the years that I have been a member of this  
6 committee, it has not been an important issue. It is now an  
7 important issue because we are not receiving the information  
8 and communication that is the constitutional responsibility  
9 of this committee.

10 So I urge you to consider your answers very carefully  
11 when I ask these questions.

12 Have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations  
13 governing conflicts of interest?

14 [Chorus of ayes.]

15 Chairman McCain: Will you ensure that your staff  
16 complies with deadlines established for requested  
17 communications, including questions for the record in  
18 hearings?

19 [Chorus of ayes.]

20 Chairman McCain: Will you cooperate in providing  
21 witnesses and briefers in response to congressional  
22 requests?

23 [Chorus of ayes.]

24 Chairman McCain: Will those witnesses be protected  
25 from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

1 [Chorus of ayes.]

2 Chairman McCain: Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear  
3 and testify upon request before this committee?

4 [Chorus of ayes.]

5 Chairman McCain: Do you agree to provide documents,  
6 including copies of electronic forms of communication, in a  
7 timely manner when requested by a duly constituted committee  
8 or to consult with the committee regarding the basis for any  
9 good-faith delay or denial in providing such documents?

10 [Chorus of ayes.]

11 Chairman McCain: Have you assumed any duties or  
12 undertaken any actions which would appear to presume the  
13 outcome of the confirmation process?

14 [Chorus of nays.]

15 Chairman McCain: Thank you.

16 Mr. Wilkie, over half of the annual defense budget is  
17 spent on personnel costs, to include training, health care,  
18 and compensation. Our force is facing a readiness crisis.  
19 Our personnel are facing the strain of 16 years of  
20 continuous conflict.

21 I wish you could have heard our Navy testimony  
22 yesterday concerning the accidents that have taken place.  
23 And we all know that this Congress bears significant  
24 responsibility for the lack of funding, the lack of  
25 readiness, and the lack of capability of our military, which

1 then makes for 100-hour workweeks, which then leads to  
2 accidents. I am sure you are aware of the testimony of the  
3 Chief of Naval Operations.

4 Our force is facing, as I said, a readiness crisis.  
5 Personnel are experiencing the strain of 16 years of  
6 continuous conflict.

7 The next Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and  
8 Readiness will be the senior official responsible for issues  
9 that have been a priority for this committee in the last 3  
10 years. The sweeping personnel reforms Congress has passed  
11 in recent defense authorization bills reflect the importance  
12 we place on these issues.

13 If confirmed, we expect that you will work to  
14 faithfully implement these reforms and be a forward-thinking  
15 partner to this committee as we look to ensure that serving  
16 in defense of our Nation remains a compelling calling for  
17 our best and brightest Americans.

18 Admiral Kernan, if confirmed as the Under Secretary of  
19 Defense for Intelligence, you will serve as the principal  
20 intelligence adviser to the Secretary of Defense and will be  
21 dual-hatted as the director of defense intelligence in the  
22 Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

23 It has been nearly 15 years since this position was  
24 created, and the security environment has changed  
25 dramatically during that time. The scope and complexity of

1 global threats is unlike anything the Nation has faced  
2 during the last 7 decades. That is why it is more important  
3 than ever that this committee and the department make  
4 certain that the defense intelligence enterprise is  
5 appropriately structured to integrate and prioritize  
6 intelligence resources and capabilities throughout the  
7 department.

8 I look to our nominee to explain how he intends to  
9 reassess this structure and ensure that the military has  
10 timely and accurate intelligence to defend the Nation  
11 against a rapidly evolving series of security challenges.

12 Mr. Roberts, if confirmed, you will be the principal  
13 adviser to the Secretary of Defense on nuclear weapons and  
14 chemical and biological defense, as well as the executive  
15 director of the Nuclear Weapons Council. As such, you will  
16 have a key role in shepherding the modernization programs of  
17 the nuclear triad, including the bomber, the submarine, the  
18 ICBM, the Long-Range Stand-Off Weapon, and nuclear command  
19 and control.

20 If confirmed, we will expect you to advocate for the  
21 timely and responsible execution of these programs, which  
22 remain a cornerstone of our national defense, especially in  
23 the current strategic environment.

24 We also expect you will work with the National Nuclear  
25 Security Administration and the Department of Energy to

1 support the recapitalization of the critical infrastructure  
2 that supports the nuclear weapons stockpile. Many of those  
3 facilities are in a disgraceful state of disrepair, and  
4 strong leadership from both the DOD and DOE will be required  
5 to keep all of these programs on time and at cost.

6 Dr. Esper, there is no clearer illustration that our  
7 Army remains at war than the combat loss of four of our  
8 noncommissioned officers in Niger last month. After 16  
9 years of war, the Army, perhaps more than any other service,  
10 has been tested. Repeatedly, our soldiers have met that  
11 test and proved their commitment, courage, skill, and  
12 determination.

13 Today, however, our Army is facing a crisis. The  
14 burden imposed on our soldiers only grows as threats to our  
15 Nation increase and sequestration remains the law of the  
16 land. Given current operational demands, restoring  
17 readiness must be the Army's first priority. We have made  
18 some progress this year toward improving the number of ready  
19 brigades that are available for deployment. But too many of  
20 our soldiers remain in brigades that are currently  
21 nondeployable, and the Army still does not plan to return to  
22 full spectrum readiness until 2021 at the earliest.

23 Meanwhile, the Army is woefully behind on  
24 modernization, and our soldiers are increasingly unprepared  
25 to confront the harsh realities of 21st century warfare.



1 With glaring capability gaps in mobility, lethality, and  
2 survivability, these problems will only get worse as our  
3 adversaries continue to modernize their forces. Put simply,  
4 our Army lacks both the adequate capacity and the key  
5 capabilities to win decisively.

6 If confirmed, we will expect you to implement the six  
7 key priorities for force modernization that the Army  
8 announced last month. You must work to turn these program  
9 goals into real weapons and equipment, and put them into the  
10 hands of soldiers as soon as possible. Our soldiers cannot  
11 afford the false choice between readiness and modernization.  
12 Building a ready, modern Army will require visionary  
13 leadership and a clear strategy.

14 If confirmed, we will expect you to lead the Army to  
15 those ends. You will have to learn the lessons of the past,  
16 make tough decisions, take and manage real risks, and hold  
17 yourself and those working for you accountable for results.  
18 When you do so, you will always have an ally in this  
19 chairman and this committee.

20 Finally, Dr. Esper, I would be remiss if I did not  
21 reiterate my concerns about the number of nominees from  
22 defense industry filling out the leadership ranks at the  
23 Department of Defense. I want to be clear that my  
24 reservations grew out of early consultations I had with the  
25 administration about potential nominations, including yours

1 and a handful of others that were yet to be nominated. It  
2 was then that I decided that I couldn't support further  
3 nominees with that background, beyond those we had already  
4 discussed.

5 I appreciate your commitment not only to recuse  
6 yourself from matters related to the Raytheon Company but  
7 further not to seek or accept waivers to your recusal  
8 obligation. And I would like to submit your letter stating  
9 that commitment into the record, without objection.

10 [The information referred to follows:]

11 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1 Chairman McCain: Again, let me thank our witnesses for  
2 their willingness to serve our Nation at this challenging  
3 time.

4 The length of my opening statement was directly related  
5 to the importance of the tasks that you will be asked to  
6 undertake.

7 Senator Reed?

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

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

3           Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

4           Let me join you in welcoming our nominees, and to thank  
5 them and their families for their willingness to serve in  
6 positions with great responsibility in the Department of  
7 Defense.

8           I also would like to, as you will as you introduce your  
9 families, acknowledge the critical role they play in  
10 supporting your efforts and supporting the men and women in  
11 uniform.

12          Dr. Esper, you have been nominated to lead one of our  
13 greatest institutions, the United States Army. If  
14 confirmed, you will serve during a time in which the  
15 organization is facing many challenges, including how to  
16 improve full spectrum readiness while we continue to deploy  
17 soldiers around the world. The Army also continues to  
18 grapple with modernization, to include how best to make  
19 targeted investment in programs and canceling those efforts  
20 that are underperforming or cost-prohibitive.

21          Dr. Esper, you have a wealth of experience, including  
22 your service in the Army, as well as your extensive  
23 experience in both the public and private sector. If  
24 confirmed as the next Secretary of the Army, your unique  
25 perspective will allow you to tackle these challenges head-

1 on, and I look forward to hearing your views on these  
2 issues.

3 Mr. Wilkie, if confirmed as the Under Secretary of  
4 Defense for Personnel and Readiness, you will face many  
5 challenges in ensuring, first and foremost, that our  
6 military has adequate numbers of ready and trained  
7 servicemembers of sufficiently high character and talent to  
8 meet national defense objectives.

9 This overarching imperative implies many organizational  
10 challenges. Military personnel costs have continued to rise  
11 at rates exceeding the increase to the overall defense  
12 budget, even as the overall number of Active Duty soldiers,  
13 sailors, airmen, and marines has dropped from over 2 million  
14 in 1980 to 1.3 million today, despite an increase to the  
15 defense budget over that time frame.

16 Mr. Wilkie, your vast experience within the department  
17 and Congress should serve you well, if you are confirmed. I  
18 look forward to working with you. You will be tackling  
19 difficult issues, and I know you will do them well.

20 Admiral Kernan, you have been nominated to serve as the  
21 Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence at a very  
22 critical time. Intelligence and operations are more  
23 integrated than ever before. But at the same time, the  
24 demand for accurate and timely intelligence continues to  
25 outstrip supply.

1           This challenge is exacerbated by the inefficient  
2 allocation process of available airborne intelligence,  
3 surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities among the  
4 geographic combatant commands. As tactical intelligence-  
5 gathering capabilities continue to advance at an exceptional  
6 pace, we are also experiencing a shortfall in the personnel  
7 and analytical tools necessary to make effective use of the  
8 overwhelming amount of raw intelligence that is being  
9 generated.

10           Given your more than 3 decades of service in the Navy,  
11 you bring important experience to the position of the USDI,  
12 which you should serve with great distinction, as you have  
13 in the past.

14           Mr. Roberts, if confirmed, you will serve in a position  
15 that dates back to the 1946 Atomic Energy Act. Since its  
16 creation, this office has assumed other important missions,  
17 including threat reduction, nonproliferation, and treaty  
18 verification. However, its core mission has not changed,  
19 which is to serve as the interface between the Department of  
20 Defense for its stockpile requirements to support its  
21 nuclear deterrence mission and the Department of Energy's  
22 National Nuclear Security Administration, or NNSA.

23           In no uncertain terms, I expect you, as your  
24 predecessors have done, to hold the NNSA accountable in  
25 meeting the department's stockpile needs and, in particular,

1 restoring our ability to produce plutonium pits as we  
2 recapitalize our triad over the next 20 years.

3 Since 2011, following the ratification of the New START  
4 Treaty, this committee has extended considerable time and  
5 effort holding the NNSA accountable to this mission, and we  
6 expect you to continue it.

7 Again, thank you for your willingness, gentlemen, to  
8 serve the Nation.

9 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10 Chairman McCain: Thank you.

11 I note the presence of our respected friend, Senator  
12 Tillis, who would like to, I believe, introduce one of the  
13 witnesses.

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1           STATEMENT OF HON. THOM TILLIS, U.S. SENATOR FROM NORTH  
2 CAROLINA

3           Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, ranking  
4 member, and distinguished colleagues on Senate Armed  
5 Services.

6           I have the privilege of making a few comments about  
7 Robert Wilkie, or Colonel Robert Wilkie. He has an  
8 extensive resume that I am sure is in the record, but I  
9 think it bears repeating some of the more important things  
10 that I believe make him uniquely qualified for this role.

11           Many of you probably met Robert when he was working for  
12 the nomination of Secretary Mattis. We seconded Robert over  
13 to the Office of Personnel Transition to help with the  
14 transition.

15           He has several years of private sector experience,  
16 including working on projects that were to reform and  
17 reorganize the United Kingdom Ministry of Defense supply  
18 chain and logistics system. He also served in the Bush  
19 administration for both Gates and Rumsfeld as Assistant  
20 Secretary of Defense. Before that, he served under  
21 Condoleezza Rice. I could go through the full resume, but I  
22 will not.

23           I have to tell you that being a junior Senator coming  
24 in and having someone of Robert's caliber willing to serve  
25 with me was a real honor. He started under Jesse Helms, and



1 he has worked on Capitol Hill for many years, up to and  
2 including serving in the Leader's office.

3 He has a grasp of history that is unparalleled. We  
4 play a game in my office called Stump Robert. We have not  
5 figured out how to do it yet. He also has a very broad base  
6 of educational experience of all the lines of service.

7 But, Mr. Chair, in your comments about taking readiness  
8 seriously, there is probably not a day that goes by that we  
9 are not talking about that. And it is one of the reasons,  
10 when we were looking at subcommittees that I may serve on,  
11 that he was the one to say it would be great for you to get  
12 the Personnel Subcommittee, because that is an area where we  
13 can do a lot of work. And we focused on it, and we have  
14 made progress with the great staff. And I am pretty sure  
15 most of the Senate Armed Services staff have a high opinion  
16 of Robert.

17 I will tell you we also call him Forrest Gump because  
18 there is not a single story he cannot put in context of some  
19 experience he had during his working career or dating back  
20 to the Roman times.

21 [Laughter.]

22 Senator Tillis: He is going to be a great addition to  
23 the Department of Defense, and I am personally -- it is  
24 bittersweet to lose him, but in my capacity on the Personnel  
25 Subcommittee on Senate Armed Services, I get the opportunity

1 to continue to work with him and do great work, so I  
2 wholeheartedly support his nomination and appreciate the  
3 opportunity to introduce them.

4 Chairman McCain: Thank you, Senator Tillis. And thank  
5 you for your very good words. And your opinion is shared on  
6 this dais as well. So I thank you very much.

7 Maybe we will just begin with you, Mr. Wilkie, if you  
8 would like to proceed?

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

1 STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT L. WILKIE, TO BE UNDER  
2 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS

3 Mr. Wilkie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator Reed, and  
4 distinguished members of the Committee on Armed Services.  
5 This is the second time I have appeared in this chair.

6 Chairman McCain: I hope it is better than the last  
7 time.

8 Mr. Wilkie: As in 2006, I was blessed to have my wife  
9 Julie with me. We grew up together outside of Fort Bragg,  
10 and she is the foundation of our family in both our civilian  
11 and military lives. Unlike 2006, my daughter Megan is now  
12 old enough to sit here. She is escaping from her junior  
13 high school classes at Washington and Lee, and is also  
14 representing her brother Adam, who is a first semester  
15 mechanical engineering student at Clemson University. I am  
16 also proud to have my sister-in-law Carla Council here. We,  
17 too, went to high school in Fayetteville.

18 Chairman McCain: We welcome them to the committee.  
19 Thank you.

20 Mr. Wilkie: Mr. Chairman, in 2006, I was honored to be  
21 introduced by a former member of this committee and a truly  
22 great Senate leader, Trent Lott. I am equally humbled today  
23 not only by the confidence placed in me by the President and  
24 Secretary Mattis but to be introduced by Senator Tillis.

25 Senator Helms said that for any Senator to truly

1 represent North Carolina, that Senator must understand North  
2 Carolina Highway 24. That is the road that the next 45  
3 percent of the entire United States Marine Corps in the  
4 eastern part of our State to the place Senator Reed calls  
5 the hub of the universe, Fort Bragg. Senator Tillis has met  
6 Senator Helms' charge and exemplifies what all of us who  
7 have been part of the military life strive to be, and that  
8 is a servant leader.

9 Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I will be charged with  
10 making life easier for the men, women, and families,  
11 military and civilian, who carry our future on their  
12 shoulders. I have been privileged to see this military life  
13 from many angles, as a dependent, as the son of a gravely  
14 wounded combat soldier, as an officer with a family in the  
15 military health care system, and as a senior leader in the  
16 White House and the Pentagon.

17 My earliest memories are of the massed jumps of the  
18 82nd Airborne Division on the Normandy and Sicily drop zones  
19 at Fort Bragg, and of the artillery half section rolling  
20 across the old post quadrangle at Fort Sill.

21 I have witnessed firsthand the transition from the  
22 conscript military to the all-volunteer total force of  
23 Guard, Active, and Reserve envisioned by the late Army Chief  
24 of Staff Creighton Abrams.

25 Mr. Chairman, since Desert Storm, readiness has meant

1 the ability to mobilize, fight, and win two wars. Without  
2 prejudging Secretary Mattis' strategic review, that notion  
3 of readiness is a good place for P&R to start when assessing  
4 the quality of the total force.

5 In my opinion, as the chairman mentioned, the  
6 department has too often been caught up in chasing the shiny  
7 object, the new carrier or the new fighter. There have been  
8 few champions for readiness to work with this committee.

9 Simply put, we need to get people back on the range and  
10 in the motor pools, and prepare for the full spectrum of  
11 conflict, a spectrum that now includes cyber and space.

12 The threshold question is whether each decision made by  
13 the department enhances America's ability to deter and, if  
14 need be, defeat any enemy while keeping our soldiers,  
15 sailors, airmen, and marines alive, and getting them back  
16 home quickly.

17 When they return, we owe them and their families the  
18 same level of care and attention.

19 This is not the military that Senator McCain or my  
20 father joined at the dawn of the Kennedy administration.  
21 Yet we are hamstrung by policies and procedures in place  
22 then to run that force of multiple millions, refreshed each  
23 year by thousands of draftees and ROTC graduates.

24 Today, our military is vastly different, comprised  
25 entirely of high-quality volunteers. Seventeen percent of

1 the force is female, many of whom are serving on the  
2 frontlines in numbers and missions unmanageable in the days  
3 of the WACs.

4 But our headquarters are bloated. We rely on a 20-year  
5 up-or-out model for service men and women who are forced to  
6 leave the military in their prime. Promotion models often  
7 see the bottom performer advance at the same pace as the  
8 frontrunner.

9 Success in the Information Age will increasingly rely  
10 on the technical ability of our troops, yet our assignment  
11 system values breadth over depth of experience. Recruiting  
12 can be stovepiped and not reach a wide audience online.  
13 Servicemembers cannot move freely amongst Active, Guard, and  
14 Reserve components to meet changing circumstances in their  
15 lives.

16 In my father's day, few soldiers had families. Today,  
17 over 60 percent do. For our families, the center of their  
18 lives can be their military health care system. But that  
19 system has been slow to keep up with modern medical advances  
20 for conditions like autism and other behavioral disorders,  
21 as Senators Gillibrand and Tillis have made clear. We still  
22 have military families making their medical appointments on  
23 paper.

24 Constant rotation, again, based on a 19th century Army  
25 model, prevents spouses from putting down roots and

1 garnering meaningful employment. Child care is, at best,  
2 uneven.

3 The bottom line, as the chairman said in his remarks to  
4 Secretary Mattis, is that if the families are not happy, the  
5 soldier walks.

6 The all-volunteer force has performed miracles, but  
7 dwell times for frontline Marine and Army infantry units are  
8 now down to 1:1.14 years. And on any given day, 15 percent  
9 of the Army is medically unable to deploy.

10 Mr. Chairman, we must address those hard facts or the  
11 force will break.

12 This committee has kept pace and faith with the finest  
13 military in the world, and the solutions for many of the  
14 issues I mentioned have already begun to be put in place.  
15 If confirmed, I pledge to build on your work and also work  
16 with the great patriots, part of their family, the patriots  
17 who man OSD P&R, and help you keep that faith.

18 Mr. Chairman, I thank you, and I look forward to your  
19 questions.

20 [The prepared statement of Mr. Wilkie follows:]

21

22

23

24

25

1 Chairman McCain: Thank you for an excellent statement.

2 Dr. Esper?

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 MARK T. ESPER, PH.D., TO BE SECRETARY OF  
2 THE ARMY

3           Dr. Esper: Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed,  
4 members of the Armed Services Committee, it is an honor and  
5 a privilege to appear before you this morning as the  
6 President's nominee for Secretary of the Army.

7           I want to thank the President and Secretary Mattis for  
8 this opportunity and their confidence in me.

9           I would like to begin by recognizing my wife, Leah, and  
10 our children, Luke, John, and Kate, who are with me today.  
11 Like many military families, they made sacrifices in support  
12 of my service in the Army.

13          Chairman McCain: They are welcome here.

14          Dr. Esper: Less than a year after we married, my wife  
15 experienced anxious days and nights during my 7-month  
16 deployment with the 101st Airborne Division to the Gulf War.  
17 Later, she gave birth to our first son at an Army hospital  
18 in a foreign country while I was commanding an airborne  
19 rifle company that trained throughout Europe as part of a  
20 NATO rapid reaction force. We moved four times in 5 years,  
21 but she always made a home for our growing family wherever  
22 the Army sent us.

23          After I transitioned from Active Duty on the Army staff  
24 to the Virginia Guard, she shouldered additional parenting  
25 duties during those long drill weekends, annual training,

1 and everything in between. This would continue for several  
2 more years, during my various jobs in the Senate, the House,  
3 and as a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, until my  
4 retirement from the Army Reserve in 2007.

5 I tell this story because of the big thanks I owe my  
6 wife for all of the support she gave me during those years,  
7 and the terrific job she did raising our children when I was  
8 gone. Her support is something I know I will lean on again,  
9 should I be confirmed as the next Secretary of the Army.

10 I also share this story to give you a sense of my  
11 experiences in the Army.

12 From my first day as a cadet at West Point until my  
13 retirement, I wore an Army uniform for over 25 years. I was  
14 privileged to serve in some of the best Active and Guard  
15 infantry units, attend the Army's top training and  
16 leadership schools, and serve on three separate continents  
17 in defense of our country. I understand well the challenges  
18 of military service, the importance of readiness, the rigors  
19 of wartime deployment, and how it all impacts our soldiers  
20 and their families.

21 Throughout my military career, I was fortunate to serve  
22 with America's best, the soldiers, NCOs, officers, and  
23 civilian employees of the United States Army whose  
24 selflessness and vigilance keep our great Nation safe. I  
25 have learned a good deal from all of them and would not be

1 here today were it not for many of them. Their welfare and  
2 readiness will always be my top priority.

3 Today's Army is the greatest ground combat force in  
4 history. Despite this fact, the service faces many  
5 challenges. This committee knows them well.

6 The Army is at a critical inflection point, pivoting to  
7 address the rise of aggressive near-peer adversaries while  
8 our soldiers fight terrorist groups abroad, and global  
9 demand for ready forces increases and fiscal pressures at  
10 home continue.

11 The next Secretary must lead the world's premier ground  
12 force to success in these difficult times, and ensure it is  
13 prepared for the future fights as well.

14 My vow, if confirmed, is to leverage my values, my  
15 experiences, and all my energies to make the hard choices  
16 and address these issues. If confirmed, my first priority  
17 will be readiness, ensuring the total Army is prepared to  
18 fight across the full spectrum of conflict.

19 With the Army engaged in over 140 countries around the  
20 world, to include combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq,  
21 training rotations to Europe to deter Russia, and forward-  
22 deployed units in the Pacific defending against a bellicose  
23 North Korea, readiness must be our top priority. This means  
24 recruiting and retaining the best our Nation has to offer,  
25 ensuring these young men and women are well-trained and

1 well-led, and equipping them with the best weapons and  
2 technology available. Every unit must be prepared to deploy  
3 and accomplish its mission.

4 These are the fundamental Title 10 duties of the  
5 Secretary of the Army, and, if confirmed, I intend to do  
6 them well.

7 A second priority will be modernization, building  
8 capacity and capabilities in the longer term. This means  
9 growing the force while maintaining quality, reshaping it to  
10 be more robust and successful in all domains, and  
11 modernizing it with the best weapons and equipment available  
12 to guarantee clear overmatch in future conflicts.

13 For modernization to be successful, the Secretary must  
14 articulate a clear vision, reforms championed by this  
15 committee must be fully implemented, and the acquisition  
16 process must be greatly improved. This includes changing  
17 how requirements are set, modifying the personnel system to  
18 promote success and ensure accountability, prototyping and  
19 demonstrating systems early, and involving the private  
20 sector much more.

21 In short, we must provide our soldiers the tools they  
22 need to fight and win, when they need them.

23 Defense dollars are not where they need to be, and I  
24 know the Armed Services Committees are working hard to  
25 change that. But in the meantime, the Army must exercise

1 better stewardship of its resources.

2       So a third priority is efficiency. To achieve this, I  
3 intend to play a very active role in the Army's top  
4 acquisition programs, reduce bureaucracy, wring inefficiency  
5 out of Army organizations and processes, and promote an  
6 audit-ready culture that will facilitate much of this. We  
7 must free up time, money, and manpower to be utilized or  
8 invested in our top priorities.

9       Lastly, if confirmed, I will approach my duties with  
10 the values and behaviors proven to maximize the  
11 effectiveness of any team: act with integrity; collaborate  
12 broadly; treat others with respect; encourage innovation,  
13 critical thinking and straight talk; empower people; and  
14 hold leaders accountable. These principles must be lived,  
15 promoted, and upheld day-in and day-out by leaders at every  
16 level.

17       Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, members of this  
18 committee, thank you for your time and consideration today.  
19 Having served on Capitol Hill, I know well the critical  
20 Article I responsibilities of the Armed Services Committees,  
21 and when it comes to our Nation's security, what you expect.  
22 So I look forward to working closely and continuously with  
23 the committee to ensure the United States Army is ready to  
24 deploy, fight, and win on any battlefield, on any day, under  
25 any conditions, and that the total Army family, our

1 soldiers, civilians, and their loved ones at home, are well  
2 cared for.

3 I am grateful for your consideration of my nomination,  
4 and I look forward to your questions.

5 Thank you.

6 [The prepared statement of Dr. Esper follows:]

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1 Chairman McCain: Thank you.  
2 Mr. Kernan?  
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 JOSEPH D. KERNAN, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY  
2           OF DEFENSE FOR INTELLIGENCE

3           Mr. Kernan: Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, and  
4           distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the  
5           opportunity to appear before you today and for your  
6           consideration of my nomination to be the Under Secretary of  
7           Defense for Intelligence.

8           I am appreciative of the trust and confidence that  
9           President Trump and Secretary Mattis have placed in me. And  
10          if confirmed, I look forward to assuming the  
11          responsibilities of the USDI, a role that I view as  
12          extremely important to our Nation's security.

13          I would like to recognize my family, who are not here  
14          in person but in spirit, and fully supportive of this  
15          commitment, should I be confirmed. They have all influenced  
16          me greatly.

17          My father, who left Columbia Medical School in 1939 to  
18          fly B-17s in World War II; my father-in-law, who flew Navy  
19          Corsairs during World War II; my brother, Bob, a career Navy  
20          pilot; and two sisters, Martha and Mary, who, with their  
21          families, are active humanitarians on many fronts; and most  
22          importantly, my wife, Jan, always patriotic, always  
23          supportive, and always caring. She was alone for much of my  
24          military career, raising our two children, Sean and Shannon,  
25          and too often was called upon to support and console the



1 families of casualties from my command.

2           Lastly, the preeminent reason for me and my willingness  
3 to serve is for the men and women who stand in defense of  
4 our country. They deserve the best we can provide them.  
5 And should I be confirmed, they will have my unwavering  
6 commitment to that task.

7           The fidelity of intelligence, when combined with the  
8 skill and courage of those men and women, along with its  
9 impact on leader decision-making, is crucial to our Nation's  
10 security. During combat and contingency operations, I  
11 placed a high value on intelligence support because that  
12 intelligence allowed us to plan effectively, mitigate risk,  
13 prosecute high-value targets, and exploit intelligence on  
14 those target sites.

15           In my experience, my country's and our allies'  
16 intelligence and law enforcement enterprises were routinely  
17 vital contributors to our military operations. My  
18 commitment to the value of leveraging collective and  
19 collaborative intelligence capabilities, partnering, and  
20 collaborating remains firm. And if confirmed, that will  
21 continue.

22           If confirmed, my initial priorities would include:  
23 Providing intelligence support to warfighters and national  
24 security decision-makers; proactively collaborating across  
25 the Department of Defense, the intelligence enterprise, and

1 with our allies and emerging foreign partners; and finally,  
2 leveraging commercial technologies and innovations where  
3 they can support mission success and address other internal  
4 and external security threats and challenges.

5 In this complex security environment, we must collect,  
6 process, and analyze information from all domains -- human,  
7 sea, air, land, space, and cyber -- to counter the  
8 traditional and nontraditional adversaries that constantly  
9 maneuver and adapt. Our intelligence enterprise must be  
10 trained and equipped to do so as well.

11 If confirmed, I will relentlessly pursue the resources,  
12 technologies, and solutions that meet our military and our  
13 Nation's intelligence needs.

14 In closing, I am committed to working very closely with  
15 this committee and other committees of jurisdiction to  
16 provide the information needed to carry out oversight  
17 responsibilities.

18 Thank you for your consideration of my nomination. I  
19 look forward to your questions.

20 [The prepared statement of Mr. Kernan follows:]

21

22

23

24

25

1 Chairman McCain: Thank you.  
2 Mr. Roberts?  
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 GUY B. ROBERTS, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
2   OF DEFENSE FOR NUCLEAR, CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL DEFENSE  
3   PROGRAMS

4           Mr. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member  
5   Reed, and members of the committee for your consideration of  
6   my nomination to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for  
7   Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Defense Programs. It is,  
8   indeed, an honor and a privilege to be considered for this  
9   important position.

10          I wish to thank the President and Secretary Mattis for  
11   their confidence in me and their support for my nomination.

12          And, of course, I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to  
13   my family: my wife, Helene, and my two sons, Matthew and  
14   Alexander, who regrettably could not be here today. But  
15   their love, support, and sacrifice have been uplifting, and  
16   without it, I certainly wouldn't be here today.

17          I would also like to express my deep appreciation to  
18   the men and women who have served and who continue to serve  
19   our Nation in uniform today. Their sacrifices, and those of  
20   their families, are enormous. And as I can attest  
21   firsthand, and we cannot thank them enough. I feel no  
22   stronger sense of purpose and inspiration than, if  
23   confirmed, to dedicate myself to ensure that they as well as  
24   all Americans are fully protected from the threat of weapons  
25   of mass destruction, proliferation, and use.

1           Likewise, if confirmed, I look forward to working with  
2 the rest of the Department of Defense team to support  
3 Secretary Mattis in implementing the President's plan to  
4 rebuild our military and to ensure the safety and security  
5 of the American people, particularly regarding modernizing  
6 our nuclear enterprise and our antiproliferation initiatives  
7 and programs.

8           I believe my 35 years of experience participating in  
9 and negotiating multilateral and bilateral agreements on  
10 arms control and proliferation issues, and overseeing our  
11 NATO nuclear posture, make me uniquely qualified for this  
12 position. This includes serving as a military officer  
13 tasked with representing the Department of Defense in  
14 various conventional and strategic arms control  
15 negotiations; working in the private sector as a subject  
16 matter expert on nonproliferation training programs and as  
17 an academic teaching classes on nonproliferation, arms  
18 control, and deterrence strategy; and as a senior official  
19 in OSD policy, where I worked on issues that continue to  
20 bedevil us, including Russia, North Korea, our nuclear  
21 deterrence and missile defense policy, and a range of arms  
22 control and counterproliferation initiatives.

23           Additionally, as NATO's Deputy Assistant Secretary  
24 General for WMD Policy and the director for Nuclear Policy,  
25 I worked closely with our allies to help shape our policy

1 towards a revanchist Russia, developed and implemented  
2 NATO's comprehensive policy to prevent WMD proliferation,  
3 and oversaw NATO's nuclear deterrence posture.

4 While there, I developed a keen appreciation for the  
5 importance of regular consultations and working closely with  
6 our allies and partners, as well as other international  
7 actors and industry.

8 If confirmed, I anticipate continuing to work closely  
9 with our allies and partners, as well as my interagency  
10 counterparts, to help synchronize our efforts regarding U.S.  
11 foreign nonproliferation and counterproliferation policy  
12 objectives.

13 Most importantly, the President has prioritized nuclear  
14 modernization as the highest priority among national defense  
15 requirements. If confirmed, I will work to first ensure we  
16 have a robust nuclear enterprise with a full set of  
17 flexible, credible, ready, and survivable nuclear  
18 capabilities; second, work to develop a nuclear posture that  
19 is responsive to today's threats and challenges; and third,  
20 institute declaratory policies that, in any adversary's  
21 eyes, credibly convey the message that aggression of any  
22 kind is not a rational option.

23 I believe we must maintain a second-to-none robust  
24 deterrence posture to complement our efforts to stop and  
25 counter the threat of WMD possession and use.

1           Additionally, if confirmed, I will work closely with  
2 other DOD components as well as our inter-agency partners  
3 and allies to ensure that state and non-state actors never  
4 have the opportunity to acquire and use these weapons of  
5 mass destruction and disruption against our forces, our  
6 allies, and our homeland.

7           Finally, if confirmed, I look forward to working with  
8 this committee to support developing and modernizing the  
9 needed capabilities to deter our adversaries; reassure our  
10 allies; prevent the spread of, protect against, and  
11 effectively respond to the threat of WMD proliferation and  
12 use.

13           Thank you again, and I look forward to your questions.

14           [The prepared statement of Mr. Roberts follows:]

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1 Chairman McCain: Thank you very much, Mr. Roberts.

2 I would just like to make a comment here, and that is  
3 the reason why these nominations have not been acted on as  
4 rapidly as possible is because of failures of communication  
5 between this committee and the Pentagon, which is a shame  
6 since I have known them for many, many years.

7 We expect from you, as in the opening questions that I  
8 asked, not only communication but cooperation. And that is  
9 something that is our constitutional responsibility, and I  
10 hope that you appreciate it.

11 Dr. Esper, from time to time, there is frustration on  
12 this committee because of failures of major weapons systems.  
13 For example, over the last 10 years or so, we have wasted  
14 about \$40 billion on programs like the Future Combat  
15 Systems, the Comanche attack helicopter, the Crusader  
16 howitzer, the Joint Tactical Radio System, and the  
17 Distributed Common Ground System-Army. Most recently, the  
18 committee has learned of the failure of the Warfighter  
19 Information Network-Tactical, known as WIN-T. This program  
20 has cost the taxpayer over \$6 billion and has yet to meet  
21 the requirements of our warfighters.

22 Let me just tell you now, that is not acceptable. It  
23 is not acceptable to the taxpayers of America. It is not  
24 acceptable to the members of this committee.

25 Now, we have made several changes over the last couple



1 years in the defense authorization bill, but we do not want  
2 any more of these failures. You lose credibility with the  
3 American people when a program has to be canceled but it  
4 cost the taxpayers over \$6 billion.

5 So please keep that in mind, and we will be exercising  
6 careful scrutiny. We just cannot keep wasting billions of  
7 dollars like this. We just cannot. So I hope that is the  
8 message that you get from every member of the committee on  
9 both sides.

10 So could I ask, Dr. Esper, you have an end-strength of  
11 over 1 million soldiers. The Army remains the one service  
12 in the greatest demand by the combatant commanders. All the  
13 while, it works to build readiness.

14 Is the current budget adequate to support operations,  
15 maintain readiness, and modernize the Army for 21st century  
16 warfare?

17 Dr. Esper: Mr. Chairman, I do not think the current  
18 budget is adequate to maintain current readiness or prepare  
19 for future readiness.

20 Chairman McCain: Mr. Wilkie?

21 Mr. Wilkie: No, sir, it is not.

22 Chairman McCain: And, Mr. Kernan?

23 Mr. Kernan: No, Chairman. I do not believe it is  
24 sufficient.

25 Chairman McCain: May I just say, again, Dr. Esper, for

1 over 2 years, Army leaders have asserted readiness is  
2 priority number one. Do you believe that the Army is at a  
3 level of readiness to conduct combined arms maneuver warfare  
4 against a peer competitor?

5 Dr. Esper: Mr. Chairman, I think the Army faces many  
6 readiness challenges right now, not least of which, most  
7 importantly, is to engage a near-peer competitor in a high-  
8 end fight. I think with only one-third of the brigade  
9 combat teams and 25 percent of the combat aviation brigades  
10 ready, engaging in such a conflict would be conducted at  
11 significant risk.

12 Chairman McCain: Thank you.

13 Mr. Kernan, almost every day, we hear of another issue  
14 concerning cyber, either revelations of old attacks, an  
15 increase in the knowledge that we have concerning what  
16 Russians did to try to affect the outcome of our elections.  
17 And as far as we can tell, for the last 8 years, there has  
18 not been a strategy on cyber, which then would be translated  
19 to policy, which would then be translated to action.

20 Now, we have provisions in the defense authorization  
21 bill, and we have a cyber subcommittee.

22 How serious do you think this issue is?

23 Mr. Kernan: Sir, I think the cyber threat is probably  
24 one of the most concerning threats that face our Nation  
25 today, certainly in terms of what it can do to malicious

1 activity inside of our infrastructure for our Nation, but as  
2 well cyber activities that are occurring inside the  
3 Department of Defense.

4 We have to commit ourselves to protecting our networks,  
5 to mitigating the impacts of malicious activity. We also  
6 need to develop an offensive and a defensive capability.

7 Again, I think it is a very, very serious threat that  
8 we have to take seriously. It is a warfare domain in my  
9 mind. It is a borderless warfare domain. And there are  
10 actors out there that are taking advantage of that domain  
11 that is difficult to be tracked, to undermine our democracy,  
12 again, whether it be stealing our technology or whether it  
13 be trying to influence our elections.

14 Chairman McCain: I thank you, and we look forward to  
15 working with you, because, still to this day, we do not see  
16 a discernible strategy on confronting an issue that could  
17 have, under certain circumstances, undermined democracy and  
18 are our fundamentals of selecting our leaders.

19 Could I just add, finally, we intend to move your  
20 nominations through as quickly as possible. We need you to  
21 get to work.

22 Senator Reed?

23 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

24 Again, gentlemen, thank you for your testimony and for  
25 your service.

1           Dr. Esper, let me associate myself with the chairman's  
2 initial remarks about the unfortunate -- and that is a mild  
3 term -- failures on programs going all the way back to the  
4 Crusader, the fighting systems, the land systems, et cetera,  
5 with the Army.

6           Can you give us a sense of how you are going to  
7 approach this issue, how you are going to take it on?

8           Dr. Esper: Senator, first of all, I share your and the  
9 chairman's concerns, and the rest of the committee's, with  
10 regard to the Army's modernization record. It is certainly  
11 fraught with a number of mistakes in the past that not only  
12 cost the taxpayers billions of dollars but, maybe more  
13 importantly, have left the soldiers without the tools and  
14 equipment and weapons they need to be successful on the  
15 battlefield.

16           So my view is that the era of minor fixes is over. We  
17 need to fundamentally relook the whole acquisition process,  
18 beginning with the requirements piece of it and all the way  
19 through the testing part, and fielding.

20           To do that means you need to take a holistic approach,  
21 which looks at processes, programs, people, policies. And  
22 what you are trying to eventually get at is a fundamentally  
23 new system that, in the end, changes culture as well.

24           There have been a number of reports in the past to give  
25 us a nice roadmap as to how to do that, the Decker-Wagner

1 report of 2011. There was a very good report by the  
2 Homeland Security Governmental Affairs Committee, which I  
3 think Chairman McCain was part of in 2014, which outlined  
4 that. It begins, first of all, with requirements, getting  
5 all the right players to the table at the same time, putting  
6 a warfighter in charge of that, and making sure that your  
7 requirements process that incorporates all those folks is  
8 stable. Then from there on, as you move through the  
9 acquisition process, doing things such as lining up the  
10 assignments of program managers and PEOs with the milestone  
11 process so that there is clear accountability across-the-  
12 board.

13 I think with what the Army announced recently, I think  
14 those steps are all in the right direction with regard to  
15 what you need to do. But to me, the key is the delayering  
16 process; getting rid of bureaucratic habits; closer  
17 engagement with industry, both private and commercial  
18 sector; look more to the commercial sector for off-the-shelf  
19 or things that can be developed; prototyping, demonstrating,  
20 using other transactional authorities that the committee  
21 provided in legislation; and really, again, fundamentally  
22 overhauling the system as it is now.

23 Senator Reed: Thank you.

24 Mr. Wilkie, again, thank you for your service both here  
25 and in many other places.

1 Mr. Wilkie: Thank you, sir.

2 Senator Reed: One of the issues that this committee  
3 has struggled with, and the Department of Defense has  
4 struggled with, and in fact it is a societal issue, as we  
5 are seeing in the headlines every day, is sexual harassment.  
6 The department has not yet promulgated a comprehensive  
7 policy in that regard. Can you give us a commitment that  
8 you will work on that and get a policy out in a reasonable  
9 time?

10 Mr. Wilkie: Yes, sir. There are several items in that  
11 vein. The report or the policy that you refer to was set in  
12 place, or the requirement was set in place by the fiscal  
13 year 2015 NDAA. I think, given the current climate, it is  
14 now, more than ever, and it should not have been that long,  
15 but I will give you my commitment to make sure we move on  
16 it.

17 Senator Reed: Thank you very much.

18 Chairman McCain: You view it as a serious issue, Mr.  
19 Wilkie?

20 Mr. Wilkie: Yes, very serious issue, sir.

21 Senator Reed: Admiral Kernan, one of the issues I  
22 alluded to, and one of the issues that we see every day, is  
23 just the lack of overhead ISR. That was one of the factors,  
24 I don't know how dispositive, in the Niger situation. In  
25 fact, General Waldhauser has indicated he is only at 20

1 percent of what he needs.

2           You were in SOUTHCOM. You probably had zero percent of  
3 what you thought you needed.

4           How do we fix that quickly? Because we now have other  
5 demands, particularly the Korean Peninsula, that are going  
6 to put more pressure on the allocation of ISR.

7           Mr. Kernan: So ISR, overhead ISR in general, there is  
8 an insatiable demand for that, and, honestly, for the right  
9 reasons, because ISR provides you the higher opportunity for  
10 mission success, and it markedly protects your force. So  
11 those assets are absolutely critical.

12           The adjudication process that we go through, again, my  
13 top priority is providing more fighter support. So those  
14 ISR assets that are under my charge, they are going to be in  
15 support of the warfighter.

16           That is not to say there are opportunities where we can  
17 support other organizations. And I have not seen the  
18 investigation on Niger, but I do believe that, certainly,  
19 ISR assets probably could have benefited that. And they  
20 certainly could have benefited us in SOUTHCOM.

21           Senator Reed: Thank you.

22           Finally, Mr. Roberts, thank you for your service and  
23 what you propose to do.

24           Let me just stress again concern about the ability for  
25 the NNSA, principally, to support DOD through the plutonium

1 pit production process. We are looking at a  
2 recapitalization of our nuclear enterprise, which is roughly  
3 about \$1.5 trillion to \$1.9 trillion over the next decade or  
4 so. Part of that necessarily is getting the plutonium pits  
5 for the warheads.

6 Can you give us a sense of that?

7 Mr. Roberts: Senator, when I first started this  
8 process, I was actually very surprised to find out that we  
9 do not have the capability for pit production right now.  
10 This committee has looked at and raised this issue.

11 Certainly, if confirmed, one of the highest priorities  
12 that I will have is to work with NNSA to find out what the  
13 delays have been. Frankly, I find it very perplexing  
14 because the Nuclear Weapons Council earlier, back in I think  
15 it was 2014, had indicated that there was a solution to work  
16 forward on this. And then subsequently, there was a series  
17 of looking at other alternatives by NNSA.

18 I have seen the letter that this committee sent raising  
19 those concerns, and I believe those concerns are legitimate,  
20 and we need to work on them.

21 Senator Reed: Thank you.

22 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 Chairman McCain: Senator Inhofe?

24 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 I have to say, I want to blow a little smoke at you



1 guys, because in the 30 years I have been on either the  
2 House or the Senate Armed Services Committee, I have never  
3 seen a group of nominees come in more qualified than you  
4 four. I think we are going to turn this corner now, because  
5 we have the right people at the helm.

6 I want to ask one question, the same question of all  
7 four of you. Because one of our problems, when I was trying  
8 to explain to people over the last 8 years what is happening  
9 to our military, the threat that we are facing and different  
10 than any kind of threat that we have faced before, I didn't  
11 have the credibility to sell that. But when the uniforms  
12 start talking about it, then that makes a big difference.

13 And so we have had that happen. And I am very proud of  
14 them to tell the unvarnished truth about the problems we  
15 have.

16 General Allen testified before this committee that only  
17 a third of our brigade combat teams were working or ready, a  
18 fourth of our air brigades, and half of our divisions were  
19 ready. And then General Dunford said to this committee --  
20 this was pretty shocking -- he said, "If we don't address  
21 this dynamic with sustained, sufficient, and predictable  
22 funding over the course of several years, we will lose our  
23 qualitative and quantitative competitive advantage." That  
24 is a pretty shocking statement.

25 So I would like to ask two questions of each one of

1 you, just yes or no questions. One, do you agree with the  
2 statements by Generals Allen and Dunford?

3 Mr. Wilkie: Yes.

4 Dr. Esper: Yes.

5 Mr. Kernan: Yes.

6 Mr. Roberts: Yes.

7 Senator Inhofe: Secondly, the question I have had,  
8 would you be as just as straightforward and honest about  
9 very uncomfortable subjects, such as the threat that we are  
10 facing, as these uniforms?

11 Mr. Wilkie: Yes.

12 Dr. Esper: Yes.

13 Mr. Kernan: Yes.

14 Mr. Roberts: Yes.

15 Senator Inhofe: I believe you will, too. And it is  
16 not just -- the uniforms are important, but the secretaries  
17 are important. So I have very much of a concern about that.

18 Dr. Esper, General Milley wrote, talking about the goal  
19 of the sustained readiness, he said that the goal of the  
20 Army's sustained readiness model is to have 66 percent, and  
21 this is not to maintain because we are not there now, but to  
22 achieve 66 percent of the force in a combat ready status at  
23 any moment by the year 2023.

24 Now, would you say that, under this model, do you think  
25 that we are on track to reach that goal?

1           Dr. Esper: Senator, my understanding is that the Army  
2 is on track to reach that goal. My personal view is that is  
3 not fast enough. So, if confirmed, I would like to look at  
4 ways, working with the chief and senior Army leaders, to  
5 find if there are ways to accelerate that, particularly  
6 given the challenges we face right now in the international  
7 scene.

8           Senator Inhofe: Let me also compliment you, because  
9 the answers you gave to Senator Reed's questions, talking  
10 about what our acquisition problems are, and a definitive  
11 answer on how to address that, I thought was a very good  
12 answer.

13           Mr. Wilkie, I remember so well, and the guy that has  
14 always been a real hero to me was Jesse Helms. And I  
15 remember going to his funeral. You and I sat next to each  
16 other, and we talked about that.

17           And so I would say to my friend Senator Tillis, that is  
18 one of the main things that I look at when I look at you and  
19 your extensive service that you have had in the past.

20           I am grateful to know that you understand our readiness  
21 challenge. I chair the Readiness Subcommittee, and I have  
22 been very concerned about where we are today.

23           And in terms of your top priority going forward, how  
24 has our budget cuts and the BCA affected our military  
25 readiness capacity and capabilities?

1           It is important to answer this question now because of  
2 what we are in the midst of and the debate that is going on  
3 today.

4           Mr. Wilkie: Senator, if we start from the premise that  
5 we have never faced the breadth of the strategic challenges  
6 that we have now, that leads you to only one answer, that  
7 unless the Department of Defense has a steady and  
8 understandable stream of financing to plan for years ahead,  
9 as any other business would have, then it will not be  
10 capable of playing in a field where we continue to have an  
11 unfair advantage over our adversaries.

12           Senator Inhofe: It is a good answer, but it is  
13 unfortunate.

14           I am concerned, though, about a statement that was  
15 made, or a fact that is out there and we don't seem to talk  
16 about, and that is that only about a quarter of today's 17-  
17 to 24-year-olds are eligible for military service. Of that  
18 population, even a smaller number are interested in  
19 enlisting or commissioning.

20           Now, I was a product of the draft. So, I would like to  
21 see what are some of the innovative opportunities we have to  
22 expand that pool. What are some of the options we have out  
23 there?

24           Mr. Wilkie: Sir, as you say, it is a society-wide  
25 problem. What I don't believe the department has done, as

1 we have moved into the 21st century, is adopt the modes of  
2 information collection that America's young people have. We  
3 have not mastered social media. We have not mastered  
4 something that I consider to be fundamental, and that is  
5 online recruiting across the country.

6 We have also had situations in the last 15 to 20 years  
7 where the first experience that our youth at one time had  
8 with the military, if they were not from a community tied to  
9 an installation, was Junior ROTC. We are losing those units  
10 across the country.

11 Now, obviously, in a time of budget crunching, that is  
12 probably low on the list. But if you are looking at the  
13 long term, if you are looking at trying to change the  
14 perception of young Americans, those kinds of interactions  
15 and the ability of the government through the department to  
16 adapt to the way young people think is vital or we will  
17 never get caught up.

18 Senator Inhofe: My time has expired, but that is a  
19 great answer. I appreciate that very much.

20 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

21 Chairman McCain: Senator Shaheen?

22 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 Congratulations to all of you, and thank you for being  
24 willing to consider taking on these positions.

25 Dr. Esper, in your testimony, you said that your first

1 priority will be readiness and ensuring the total Army is  
2 prepared to fight. Can you elaborate on, specifically, how  
3 you would improve readiness and modernize the National  
4 Guard?

5 Dr. Esper: Yes, Senator. And as I noted in my opening  
6 statement, I had the privilege to serve on Active Duty and  
7 in the Guard and Reserve.

8 Senator Shaheen: Right.

9 Dr. Esper: So I know all three components fairly well.  
10 Clearly, in the last 16 years of fighting in

11 Afghanistan and Iraq, if we have learned anything, we have  
12 learned that the Guard and Reserve are not just a strategic  
13 reserve but a really critical operational component of that.

14 So with that context in mind, I think it is critical as  
15 we try to put readiness on a better footing, we look at, in  
16 my mind, four key areas: improving our munitions stockpiles;  
17 that our equipment is better maintained and ready to go;  
18 that training for the high-end is conducted, particularly  
19 through the combat training centers; and in terms of  
20 personnel, units are fully manned.

21 I think that applies to all three components as well.  
22 When it comes to pushing units through the combat training  
23 centers, like NTC, we need to make sure that National Guard  
24 brigade combat teams are there as well, and that they are  
25 working closely with the Active.

1 I think what most people do not appreciate is that the  
2 majority of the total Army is in the Guard and Reserve. So  
3 it is critical that, as we train, we train as a total Army  
4 in all those regards across the spectrum of conflict.

5 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. I appreciate that, and I  
6 look forward to having you come up to New Hampshire to see  
7 the challenges that we face with our Guard and Reserve in  
8 New Hampshire.

9 Mr. Wilkie, first of all, thank you very much for your  
10 work for Senator Tillis on the special immigrant visa  
11 program. That was very helpful. And as you know, that is  
12 very important as we support our men and women who are still  
13 on the battlefield.

14 I want to ask you about the health care system in the  
15 military. You mentioned that in your opening remarks.

16 KidsVax is a universal vaccine program that purchases  
17 vaccines at a discounted rate from the CDC to ensure that  
18 they go to children regardless of a family's income. Now  
19 the only health insurance plan that does not reimburse or  
20 pay the KidsVax or similar programs to States for vaccines  
21 is TRICARE.

22 Will you commit to this committee that you will focus  
23 on this issue and help get this matter resolved?

24 Mr. Wilkie: Yes, Senator. The KidsVax program impacts  
25 10 States, New Hampshire having the largest complaint

1 against the system. And I will pledge that I will look at  
2 that, as well as a number of other things with TRICARE. But  
3 getting our children vaccinated would be a top priority for  
4 any Under Secretary.

5 Senator Shaheen: Thank you very much.

6 Mr. Kernan, Senator McCain talked about the importance  
7 of cyber, and you agreed with that in your response.

8 Can you tell me who is in charge of a cyber strategy  
9 for the United States, not just within the Department of  
10 Defense but throughout the Federal Government?

11 Mr. Kernan: So I would just say that I am familiar,  
12 certainly, with the Department of Defense building a cyber  
13 strategy, and that we are fundamentally committed to that.

14 Senator Shaheen: And can you tell me who is in charge  
15 at the Department of Defense in doing that?

16 Mr. Kernan: So I think right now it is a collective  
17 responsibility. I certainly have responsibility for cyber  
18 in the intelligence realm. And I certainly believe I have a  
19 responsibility for developing the strategy that Chairman  
20 McCain discussed.

21 I think the issue, it is such a prolific and important  
22 issue to be addressed because it involves everybody in our  
23 country, not just civilian, not just military, our  
24 infrastructure, our networks, all those things have to be  
25 addressed. So I believe it is going to be a whole-of-



1 government approach to the cyber, and we have to  
2 collaboratively work together to leverage technology to  
3 address the problem.

4 Senator Shaheen: I certainly agree with that.

5 Chairman McCain: Could I just add, somebody has to be  
6 in charge, Mr. Kernan.

7 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. That was my point  
8 exactly, Senator McCain.

9 Chairman McCain: Right now, no one is.

10 Senator Shaheen: Right now, we do not have somebody  
11 who can be held accountable and who everyone knows is the  
12 person in charge, if something goes wrong.

13 Mr. Roberts, in your testimony, you talk about working  
14 to develop a nuclear posture that is responsive to today's  
15 threats and challenges, and instituting declaratory policies  
16 that credibly convey that aggression of any kind is not a  
17 rational option.

18 What do you mean by that? What kind of policies do we  
19 need to have in place?

20 Mr. Roberts: So the concern there is not only having  
21 the capabilities to indicate to our adversaries that  
22 aggression is not a rational option but also the political  
23 will to make it clear that, indeed, if you attack us, you  
24 will pay a terrible price.

25 Having that posture -- which right now I feel is

1 difficult to convey because of the fact that we have for so  
2 long undercapitalized our nuclear deterrent. And now we are  
3 approaching a time where we have to replace all of those  
4 things at a very high cost, and that is going to be a  
5 challenge.

6 Senator Shaheen: Are you suggesting that we should be  
7 prepared to engage in nuclear war against our enemies?

8 Mr. Roberts: Senator, I believe we should be prepared  
9 to engage so we never have to engage. I have often said  
10 that nuclear weapons -- we use nuclear weapons every single  
11 day, because it is a political tool more than a military  
12 one.

13 Senator Shaheen: Well, I certainly think that  
14 deterrent made sense against the Soviets and was very  
15 effective. I am not sure it makes as much sense against  
16 North Korea.

17 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 Chairman McCain: Senator Rounds?

19 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 Let me also add my surprise to that of Senator Shaheen  
21 and Chairman McCain with regard, Mr. Kernan, to the concern  
22 expressed and your response, or rather, I would say perhaps  
23 a nonresponse with regard to who would actually be  
24 responsible for the cyber challenges that our Nation faces.

25 I think it points out -- and I would not suggest that

1 you were wrong in your response. We actually requested  
2 members of the White House to actually participate in one of  
3 our hearings here to discuss this specific issue, and they  
4 declined to even attend. That type of an attitude is the  
5 wrong attitude with regard to finding the appropriate way to  
6 respond to attacks and the defense of our country in the  
7 cyber realm.

8 So, Mr. Kernan, what I would ask you is this, a  
9 commitment with regard to your responsibilities to  
10 participate and to be able to respond the next time that we  
11 ask you to come back in terms of laying out a plan to at  
12 least identify a person to be responsible for cyber defenses  
13 within the whole-of-government within the United States  
14 Government system.

15 Would you commit to that, sir?

16 Mr. Kernan: I am absolutely committed to that, and I  
17 would second, coming from the military, there needs to be  
18 somebody in charge to make it work. And I am absolutely  
19 committed to doing that and bringing the Department of  
20 Defense, cyber concerns, cyber perspectives into helping the  
21 whole-of-government effort.

22 Senator Rounds: And, once again, would you agree with  
23 us or would you concur with us that, right now, it is  
24 difficult to determine who is actually responsible for that  
25 area or that responsibility today?

1           Mr. Kernan: I would concur that it is difficult to  
2 address who that is. I would say there are lots of  
3 activities going on, but it is not focused under one person  
4 that I am aware of.

5           Senator Rounds: Thank you.

6           I am just curious, and this is for Mr. Roberts and Dr.  
7 Esper, North Korea's nuclear weapons have gotten a lot of  
8 attention lately, but I think we should also be mindful of  
9 their chemical weapons stockpile. Open source documents  
10 estimate that North Korea has 5,000 tons of chemical weapons  
11 and is likely to use them if a conflict breaks out.

12           In 2009, the Army published a report on counter-weapons  
13 of mass destruction, which stated that the Army lacks the  
14 full range of capabilities required to support the joint  
15 force commander in a tactical and operational chemical  
16 weapons of mass destruction mission expected in the future.

17           Additionally, in 2015, a RAND report identified a  
18 serious gap between the magnitude of the weapons of mass  
19 destruction threat and DOD's resource priorities for  
20 counter-WMD missions.

21           Can either of you speak to the Army's or DOD's  
22 readiness to mitigate the impact of potential North Korean  
23 use of chemical weapons?

24           Dr. Esper?

25           Dr. Esper: Senator, I will take a first stab at that.

1           That is an area of concern to the Army. As I  
2 understand it, much like the rest of the Army, the forces  
3 are not fully prepared. Of the 130 or so CBR&E teams, a  
4 quarter are ready to go, are deemed ready. And so work  
5 needs to continue in that area because, much like the Army  
6 is preparing to engage a near-peer adversary at a high-end  
7 threat, this is one of the threats you face.

8           That is something I experienced when we went to the  
9 Gulf War in 1990, the clear threat of chemical weapons use  
10 by Saddam Hussein. We were in a different training posture  
11 at that time, and, clearly, the Army needs to get back to a  
12 similar posture as we look at adversaries, potentially, in  
13 Asia and Europe.

14           Mr. Roberts: If I can add, Senator, that is an area of  
15 concern that I am certainly very concerned about. We looked  
16 at the threat, and the focus has been on the nuclear side.  
17 But clearly, the North Koreans have, as you pointed out, a  
18 large chemical capability.

19           Frankly, I am very much worried about the biological  
20 capability they have as well. We know, again, from  
21 unclassified reporting that they have a program, from  
22 defectors who have told us that. And frankly, this is one  
23 area we really are not well-prepared for, to deal with.

24           That is one of the things that, if confirmed, I plan on  
25 addressing very strongly.

1           Senator Rounds:  Would both of you commit that perhaps  
2 time is of the essence with regard to that particular issue?

3           Dr. Esper:  Yes, sir.

4           Mr. Roberts:  Yes, sir.

5           Senator Rounds:  Thank you.

6           Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7           Chairman McCain:  Senator Blumenthal?

8           Senator Blumenthal:  Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9           I want to join the previous comments of my colleagues,  
10 most particularly the chairman calling attention to the  
11 importance of our personnel.  For all of the extraordinary  
12 equipment and advanced technology that we bring to bear to  
13 the battlefield, it is, at the end of the day, our people  
14 who are our greatest resource.

15           And I would second, Senator, the remarks made  
16 previously about the excellent qualifications of these  
17 nominees.

18           And I want to thank and congratulate each of you.

19           Before I ask any questions, I want to just raise for  
20 the committee's consideration news about the ruling in a  
21 case now pending in Guantanamo, in fact, Camp Justice, as it  
22 is perhaps incorrectly called there, a ruling by Air Force  
23 Colonel Vance Spath, who is presiding over the al-Nashiri  
24 case, holding in contempt of court Brigadier General John  
25 Baker, a 28-year Marine Corps veteran, the second highest

1 ranking Marine Corps lawyer, sentencing him to 21 days of  
2 confinement and a \$1,000 fine, simply for raising the issue  
3 about a potential conflict of interest or ethical problem  
4 with the three lawyers who are assigned to that death  
5 penalty case at Guantanamo.

6 I am deeply troubled by this decision. I find it very,  
7 very questionable; indeed, potentially contrary to our  
8 justice system. And I hope that our committee will bring  
9 oversight to this matter in this case and to the conduct of  
10 military justice at Guantanamo.

11 The chairman led this committee in requiring of the  
12 last administration a comprehensive plan to end the use of  
13 the Guantanamo detention facility. Unfortunately, the last  
14 administration failed to follow through on the chairman's  
15 direction. This job now belongs to the present  
16 administration. And this committee has expressed very  
17 constructive interest in making sure that the justice system  
18 works there, in accordance with our due process  
19 requirements.

20 Obviously, I am not asking the witnesses to respond,  
21 but I hope that the Department of Defense will turn its  
22 attention and give us a briefing on what is happening there.  
23 I also recognize its possibilities for intervention may be  
24 limited.

25 I know all of our thoughts and prayers go out to the

1 victims of the recent terrorist attack in New York City.

2 And I am troubled by the President eliminating funding to a  
3 lab in New York City whose sole purpose is to train and  
4 support first responders who defend our Nation's great city,  
5 the National Urban Security and Technologies Laboratory,  
6 known as NUSTL, has worked for over 65 years to keep our  
7 communities safe from nuclear, biological, and radiological  
8 attacks.

9 If enacted, these cuts -- in my view, they are careless  
10 and contradictory -- would weaken our defenses against  
11 terrorist attacks. And I sent a letter to the  
12 Appropriations Committee urging \$3.4 million for NUSTL in  
13 fiscal year 2018.

14 I would like to know whether you will support the  
15 funding for this laboratory, which is essential to our  
16 national defense.

17 Mr. Kernan: Senator, I am not familiar with the lab or  
18 the issue, but I will certainly look into it and am more  
19 than willing to work with you on this issue.

20 I believe that we need to continue making investments.  
21 Research and development is critical to the Army's future  
22 readiness. And on this particular issue, I would like to  
23 follow up with you on it, if confirmed.

24 Senator Blumenthal: I appreciate that.

25 Mr. Roberts, I think you will have, in particular,



1 jurisdiction over this issue.

2 Mr. Roberts: Senator, I believe that lab is under the  
3 Department of Homeland Security. But saying that, of  
4 course, dealing with a potential attack to our homeland, the  
5 Department of Defense will work closely with the Department  
6 of Homeland Security and identify particular gaps that,  
7 frankly, if this closure would result in a gap, it is  
8 something we need to address. So I certainly will commit to  
9 looking into this, if I am confirmed.

10 Senator Blumenthal: I appreciate your saying that you  
11 will look into it. I would like you, if you would, after  
12 you look into it, to respond in writing and tell me what  
13 your position will be.

14 Mr. Roberts: If I am confirmed.

15 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you.

16 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 Chairman McCain: Senator Ernst?

18 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

19 Gentlemen, thank you very much for your willingness to  
20 continue your service to our great United States. I  
21 appreciate it very much.

22 Dr. Esper, before I began, I would like to ask you just  
23 some simple yes or no questions.

24 Question number one, do you commit to cutting wasteful  
25 spending and making it a priority?

1 Dr. Esper: Yes, Senator.

2 Senator Ernst: Do you commit to working with me to  
3 combat and prevent military sexual assault and retaliation  
4 in the Army?

5 Dr. Esper: Yes, Senator.

6 Senator Ernst: Will you provide me with advanced  
7 notice should changes to the gender integration policies be  
8 considered?

9 Dr. Esper: Yes, Senator.

10 Senator Ernst: Do you commit to upholding an unbiased  
11 and transparent approach throughout the acquisition process?

12 Dr. Esper: Yes, Senator.

13 Senator Ernst: I appreciate those answers very much.

14 Now on to a more open discussion. In your advance  
15 policy questions, you state, "I also believe small arms  
16 modernization is an area very suitable for outreach to the  
17 commercial sector for an off-the-shelf or easily adaptable  
18 solution for a new weapon."

19 And I do agree with that wholeheartedly. However, I  
20 also feel that full and open competition is paramount to  
21 making sure that our soldiers get the very best weapons into  
22 their hands.

23 So can you speak to the importance of full and open  
24 competitions? And can I get your commitment that you will  
25 make this a priority?

1           Dr. Esper: Yes, ma'am. First of all, let me give you  
2 the commitment up front that, if confirmed, my aim would be  
3 to pursue full and open competition on everything we can,  
4 because, answering your first question, my experience both  
5 on this side, on the government side, from my time on the  
6 Hill, and more recently, of course, my time in industry, I  
7 have witnessed firsthand that competition does two things.  
8 It drives quality, and it drives lower price.

9           So in my mind, the more we can open up the aperture to  
10 include the widest number of participants, whether it is  
11 traditional defense industry, commercial, commercial off-  
12 the-shelf, or off-the-shelf that is easily adaptable, we  
13 should pursue it.

14           In my mind, the key thing is getting the soldiers the  
15 tools, equipment, and weapons they need as soon as you can  
16 at the best price, best value being the key criteria.

17           Senator Ernst: I appreciate that. At a time when our  
18 near-peer competitors are outpacing us in small arms, we  
19 have to figure out the best way to get those weapons into  
20 our soldiers' hands. So thank you very much.

21           And, Dr. Esper, I am sure you know that the military  
22 has made progress in reducing the number of sexual assaults  
23 from 26,000 down to just slightly less than 15,000 over the  
24 past 4 years, while keeping adjudication of sexual assault  
25 cases within the chain of command. Yet we need continued

1 improvement. There is no doubt about that.

2 And given your many years of leadership in the Army, I  
3 am confident that you understand the responsibility and  
4 accountability commanders assume on a daily basis.

5 What I would like you to do is talk a little bit to  
6 that. And do you think further reductions in sexual assault  
7 like we have seen over the past 4 years will be possible  
8 without the ability to hold our military commanders  
9 accountable? And can you outline how the commanders' role  
10 in the process has placed them in a position to be held  
11 accountable?

12 Dr. Esper: Yes, ma'am.

13 First, let me say up front that there is no room  
14 whatsoever in the Army for sexual harassment, sexual  
15 assault, or retaliation against anybody in that regard. It  
16 is a terrible thing. It cannot be tolerated. All it does  
17 is undermine readiness of individuals, of units. It breaks  
18 down cohesion and esprit. And so there must be zero  
19 tolerance for sexual harassment whatsoever.

20 As I did note in my APQs, and you mentioned, I was a  
21 commander. I understand well a commander's duty is to  
22 maintain good order and discipline. In my view, having that  
23 full toolkit of authorities available to him or her is  
24 critical to maintaining good order and discipline.

25 And it is also critical that the commander understands

1 that it is his or her responsibility to maintain the right  
2 culture in a unit to make sure that the soldiers under their  
3 command understand that sexual harassment, assault,  
4 retaliation of any type will not be tolerated.

5 My concern is, if we consider pulling some of those  
6 tools out of the toolkit, that the commander will be less  
7 able to deal with it and may feel like it is less of their  
8 responsibility, which my concern would be it would set us  
9 back rather than set us forward.

10 I think the Army has put a number of programs in place.  
11 Senior leadership is working this issue hard. We see, in  
12 some cases, the numbers moving in the right direction with  
13 regard to reductions and increasing in reporting. In other  
14 cases, we do not.

15 So I think it is something that I will take very  
16 seriously, if confirmed. And certainly, my aim is to  
17 continue to drive that number down.

18 Senator Ernst: Thank you. While we have seen a  
19 decrease in those numbers, they are not yet good enough.

20 Dr. Esper: Yes, ma'am.

21 Senator Ernst: So we have to continue. I hope that  
22 you will be willing to continue working on this issue with  
23 me. We do need our commanders to set that level and culture  
24 of dignity and respect in our Army units.

25 So thank you very much for your commitment.

1 Thank you, gentlemen.

2 Chairman McCain: I would like to thank the Senator for  
3 all her hard work on this very important issue. Thank you.

4 Senator Heinrich?

5 Senator Heinrich: Thank you, Chairman.

6 Welcome, gentlemen.

7 I want to start with you, Mr. Roberts. As you know,  
8 Los Alamos National laboratory is the Nation's Center of  
9 Excellence for Plutonium research and is currently the only  
10 facility in the country capable of meeting the Pentagon's  
11 pit production cost and schedule requirements.

12 I have a copy of a July 2014 letter from the Nuclear  
13 Weapons Council where, in response to Section 3114 of the  
14 NDAA, they tell Congress that the National Nuclear Security  
15 Administration will begin the process of designing and  
16 building modular buildings for pit production at Los Alamos  
17 because it meets those requirements.

18 I know my staff has shared that letter with you, and I  
19 understand that Senator Reed may have actually raised it  
20 earlier in the hearing as well while I was at Energy and  
21 Natural Resources.

22 So I want to ask you, do you support the continuation  
23 of the plutonium pit mission at Los Alamos, as endorsed by  
24 the Nuclear Weapons Council, for which you will be the  
25 executive director?

1           Mr. Roberts: Thank you, Senator. And thank you for  
2 the letter. I had not seen that before. It is clear what  
3 the Nuclear Weapons Council had decided.

4           Frankly, once I looked into it and saw the letter that  
5 this committee sent in response in September, I was a little  
6 surprised that nothing had happened. In fact, I agree with  
7 your statement, or the committee's statement in the letter,  
8 that the analysis of alternatives by NNSA is a rehashing of  
9 the decisions that have already been made.

10           So, if confirmed, this is, again, a high-priority issue  
11 I think we need to look at, because it has a major impact on  
12 our ability to produce plutonium pits. And I think we are  
13 falling behind the mandate of being able to do that, produce  
14 up to 80 by 2027. So I will look into that.

15           Senator Heinrich: That is exactly my concern. And I  
16 would ask you that, if there is any deviation or delay from  
17 what the Nuclear Weapons Council endorsed back in July 2014,  
18 that I have your commitment to simply instruct the  
19 Pentagon's independent CAPE office to look at the  
20 independent analysis to make sure that the assumptions and  
21 conclusions of any proposed alternative actually stack up.

22           Mr. Roberts: Yes, Senator. While I am not quite  
23 familiar, to the extent that I can tell them what to do, I  
24 will do it. Thank you.

25           Senator Heinrich: Thank you.

1           Dr. Esper, this committee has authorized significant  
2 funding to train and advise foreign security forces so that  
3 they can take a greater responsibility for their own  
4 security. I certainly welcome the Army's decision earlier  
5 this year to set up five additional brigades that will  
6 specialize in this growing mission area.

7           As you know, currently, there are \$170 million worth of  
8 new, modern facilities currently sitting vacant at White  
9 Sands Missile Range.

10           So given the budget constraints that we are under, I  
11 would just simply ask you that, as you look as to where to  
12 station Security Force Assistance Brigades, or SFABs, that  
13 you will take into account the ability to use existing  
14 facilities rather than build brand-new facilities, if they  
15 meet the requirements for those locations.

16           Dr. Esper: Yes, Senator, I will.

17           Senator Heinrich: I want to thank you for that.

18           And White Sands Missile Range also has exceptional  
19 training areas. It has a close proximity, obviously, to  
20 existing personnel and infrastructure at Fort Bliss, Texas,  
21 as well. And I want to thank you for your work on this.

22           I also just want to take a moment and thank the Army  
23 broadly for its assistance on legislation that we have been  
24 working on for the last several years regarding some  
25 boundary adjustments between White Sands Missile Range and



1 White Sands National Monument, to support the missions of  
2 both of those units and deconflict some issues they have had  
3 over the years. The Army staff at the Pentagon and at White  
4 Sands has been very, very helpful during the process of  
5 putting that legislation together.

6 I want to shift gears really quickly in my last seconds  
7 to Mr. Kernan. One area of technology that we are seeing a  
8 lot of increase in activity in is commercial space activity.  
9 I just want to ask you, how should the department and the  
10 intelligence community broadly leverage commercial space as  
11 part of our overall portfolio addressing space issues?

12 Mr. Kernan: I think it is critically important that we  
13 leverage commercial technology in a multitude of forms, to  
14 include cyber and to include space. I think space is a  
15 unique domain now that we ought to treat just like we treat  
16 the land domain, the sea domain, because we need to be able  
17 to operate freely in space. Space provides incredibly  
18 important ISR support to military operations and to a  
19 multitude of other things that we do.

20 So I am an advocate of the mission and what  
21 requirements that we are trying to fill. And we should  
22 pursue those requirements from wherever. And I will  
23 certainly do that, if I am confirmed.

24 Senator Heinrich: Thank you very much.

25 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

1 Chairman McCain: Senator Wicker?

2 Senator Wicker: Thank you.

3 Dr. Esper, I appreciate you being here, and I  
4 appreciate your testimony and your willingness to serve both  
5 in the past and in the future. I wish you well.

6 I have to ask today about two items involving my home  
7 State of Mississippi where we manufacture helicopters and  
8 also uniforms. And I mention this because it involves the  
9 industrial base, but also, it involves items that our troops  
10 need.

11 The first one is the Lakota training helicopter, which  
12 Airbus makes in Columbus, Mississippi. Now, in 2015, there  
13 was an award of Lakota helicopters. A contract dispute  
14 ensued, and those helicopters are being held up pending the  
15 court case.

16 In 2017, the Appropriations Committee appropriated for  
17 28 Lakotas, a separate matter entirely. And they gave clear  
18 directive language and instructed the Army to purchase the  
19 28 Lakotas.

20 I brought this up in a previous hearing with Acting  
21 Secretary of the Army Robert Speers as to why this clear  
22 language by the Appropriations Committee and passed by the  
23 Congress had not been followed. And he said something to  
24 the effect, it is all involved in a court case.

25 Well, that is not true. There are 16 Lakotas from 2015

1 involved in a court case. Subsequent to that, this Congress  
2 ordered the Army to purchase 28 Lakotas, and that is not  
3 being held up in a court case. It sounds like an excuse to  
4 me.

5 I want you to be aware of the detrimental impacts this  
6 situation is having on the industrial base but also on Army  
7 pilot training.

8 And I want to ask you, do you believe that the Army  
9 Secretary is required to follow career and directive  
10 language expressed in legislation?

11 Dr. Esper: Yes, Senator, I do.

12 Senator Wicker: Okay. Are you familiar with this  
13 case?

14 Dr. Esper: I am a little familiar with the case, yes,  
15 sir.

16 Senator Wicker: Okay. Have I got it wrong at all?

17 Dr. Esper: Senator, I trust you have your facts  
18 accurately.

19 Senator Wicker: Okay. Well, if confirmed, will you do  
20 all in your power to expedite the contracting actions  
21 required and to issue a production contract as outlined in  
22 the congressionally enacted and signed into law fiscal year  
23 defense appropriations act?

24 Dr. Esper: Yes, Senator. If confirmed, I will  
25 certainly look into this issue, work it. I want to work

1 closely with your office to resolve it as quickly as  
2 possible.

3 Senator Wicker: Okay. We really do need to resolve  
4 it.

5 Now the other thing involves uniforms and treating the  
6 uniforms with insecticides. We have been doing this in  
7 Mississippi for years. They manufacture the uniform, and  
8 then they put the insecticide on.

9 Now someone in their wisdom in the Department of the  
10 Army decided that we should treat the fabric first and then  
11 cut it and sew it into a uniform.

12 I can tell you, the people working at the plants do not  
13 like this, because, obviously, you have a chemically treated  
14 piece of fabric. You are cutting it, and it gets out into  
15 the air that they breathe and becomes a problem.

16 I cannot fathom why the Army would want to change an  
17 efficient and proven process that leaves no environmental  
18 waste, and that is to make the uniform and then treat it.

19 If confirmed, will you get somebody to look into this  
20 issue and get back to us and try to make some sense out of  
21 that?

22 Dr. Esper: Yes, sir. For sure.

23 Senator Wicker: All right. Good.

24 I will yield back the remaining 15 seconds of my time.  
25 And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 Chairman McCain: Senator Peters?

2 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 And thank you to each of our nominees here today for  
4 your willingness to serve in what are certainly very  
5 important positions.

6 Dr. Esper, I would like to ask about ground vehicle  
7 modernization, particularly the Abrams platform. I believe  
8 modernization of the Army's ground combat vehicles is  
9 probably one of the most pressing national security issues  
10 that we currently face as a Nation.

11 Earlier this year, at an Airland Subcommittee hearing  
12 on Army modernization, Lieutenant General Murray testified  
13 that the Abrams tank now remains only towards the top of its  
14 class with parity and not overmatch, compared to our allies  
15 and competitors.

16 This is very concerning I think to all of us. I know  
17 it is concerning to you as well, because we want to make  
18 sure that our soldiers always have the advantage, never a  
19 fair fight. And this information is of great concern.

20 Last year, General McMaster testified before the  
21 Airland Subcommittee that, at the current funding levels,  
22 the Bradley Fighting Vehicle and Abrams tank, this is a  
23 quote, "will soon be obsolete, but they will remain in the  
24 Army inventory for the next 50 to 70 years."

25 Our allies and near-peer competitors alike are

1 investing significant resources into rapid modernization,  
2 but current projections estimate it is going to take us 20  
3 years to upgrade the existing armor fleet unless we fast-  
4 track ground combat vehicle modernization strategy.

5 As was discussed earlier, there are a number of options  
6 to modernize the fleet at a much faster pace, which could  
7 save billions of dollars over the lifecycle of the  
8 modernization program. Multiyear procurement and block buy  
9 contracting are options that offer potential savings.

10 So my question to you, Dr. Esper, is how do you believe  
11 the Army should increase the armored force structure and  
12 upgrade the Abrams fleet to address known vulnerabilities  
13 and emerging threats?

14 Dr. Esper: Senator, first of all, I share your  
15 concerns about the age of our current ground combat  
16 vehicles. They have been in service as long as I have been,  
17 going back to the early 1980s. Of course, the Army has made  
18 a number of upgrades through the years to keep them as  
19 effective on the battlefield as possible.

20 But nonetheless, with the projections that you cited  
21 from General McMaster, I am deeply concerned about at what  
22 point we are no longer able to upgrade them and to ensure  
23 that they have overmatch on the battlefield.

24 So one of the things, if confirmed, I hope to look at  
25 are those timelines and look at ways to accelerate that, so

1 that we can field a new ground combat vehicle and tank  
2 sooner rather than later. I know this committee has put  
3 important language into the fiscal year 2018 NDAA on this  
4 matter, which I think is helpful, which calls for  
5 prototyping and demonstrating vehicles. I think, in this  
6 regard, we should look at what other militaries, our  
7 partners, are developing to see if there are designs we  
8 could adopt or build from.

9 In the meantime, I think it is critical that we  
10 continue with the upgrades that are happening to both the  
11 Bradley and to the Abrams.

12 With the Abrams, it is obviously the v3 upgrades that  
13 are enhancing its power, its survivability, its optics, its  
14 lethality. I think those are all critical to ensuring  
15 overmatch.

16 And so all of those need to continue in the meantime.  
17 But we cannot wait another 10, 15, 20 years to design, build  
18 a new vehicle either.

19 Senator Peters: Well, I am encouraged about that  
20 answer, as well as your mention of prototyping. So you see  
21 prototyping as something that we can use to accelerate this  
22 process?

23 Dr. Esper: Absolutely, Senator. I think we should  
24 prototype on almost any program we can. I think it is  
25 critical. We could prototype earlier in the process, which

1 means, if we had those prototypes, we can test them and  
2 evaluate them using soldiers either in training scenarios or  
3 real-world deployments, where we might be able to use them.

4 So I think prototyping is the way we need to continue  
5 to go.

6 Senator Peters: Dr. Esper, when we had the opportunity  
7 to meet in my office, we also had a pretty detailed  
8 discussion about autonomy, robotics, some of the advanced  
9 capabilities that come out of artificial intelligence and  
10 other types of technological advances. As I spoke with you  
11 in our office and talked about the work we are doing in  
12 Michigan with TARDAC and the Army's research and development  
13 arm in Michigan, which is engaged in some pretty cutting-  
14 edge technology, we also talked about how we need to  
15 capitalize on innovation that we are seeing in the private  
16 sector.

17 So for example, in TARDAC, working closely with General  
18 Motors. TARDAC has a wonderful prototype in hydrogen fuel  
19 cell technology for special forces operations. But there is  
20 a host of other types of areas that we need to explore as  
21 well.

22 How do you believe the Army can best capitalize on the  
23 leaps in technology by working with the private sector? And  
24 how would you do that, if confirmed?

25 Dr. Esper: Senator, I think we absolutely need to do



1 that. The Army needs to engage the private sector research  
2 facilities, companies and entities that are actually looking  
3 at robotics in autonomy. I think one of the things we  
4 discussed, which a vision for me would be looking at ground  
5 convoys, you can envision a future whereby rather than  
6 scores of trucks moving between destinations, much as we had  
7 during the Iraq war between Kuwait and Baghdad hauling  
8 supplies and whatnot, you can now do that autonomously, no  
9 longer putting at-risk soldiers to do such tasks, and yet  
10 completing them probably more efficiently. What that does  
11 is also free up manpower to fill out your ranks in other  
12 areas.

13 So that is just one example of a future I can envision,  
14 which would buy us greater effectiveness and efficiency.  
15 And I think we need to look across-the-board. And the Army  
16 is doing this in a number of areas, not just autonomy but  
17 robotics to help the soldier. The drones, of course, are  
18 critical in terms of providing tactical ISR capabilities.

19 So all of these things are critical. In many ways, the  
20 commercial, the private sector, is outpacing what the  
21 military can do on its own. So there needs to be greater  
22 outreach, greater partnership between the private sector and  
23 DOD on these matters, if we are really going to obtain the  
24 overmatch we need on future battlefields.

25 Senator Peters: Thank you very much.

1 Chairman McCain: Senator King?

2 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 Dr. Esper, I serve as ranking member with Chairman Tom  
4 Cotton on the Airland Subcommittee, and we have had a number  
5 of hearings about issues such as readiness and  
6 modernization.

7 I agree with Senator McCain and Senator Reed that,  
8 after current readiness, modernization is your number one  
9 priority. In fact, I would venture to say it may be your  
10 legacy.

11 We have had a series of failures over the past dozen or  
12 20 years. It just cannot continue. Modernization is the  
13 future of readiness. And if we do not have that, we are not  
14 going to get there. I just want to have your earnest  
15 commitment to this significant challenge.

16 Dr. Esper: Absolutely, Senator. Modernization is  
17 critical to future readiness. I am convinced, however, we  
18 will not be able to modernize the force unless we completely  
19 overhaul the current acquisition system.

20 Senator King: You anticipated my next question.

21 Dr. Esper: So my commitment is to working with the  
22 Army senior leadership to do just that. I think they have  
23 gotten off to a good start with the ideas that have been  
24 discussed and that they are putting into play, and I think  
25 that will help us get the current system into a position

1 where we could do a much better job in terms of delivering  
2 to the soldier the tools, equipment, systems, weapons they  
3 need when they need it, the best value at a good cost.

4 Senator King: Over the past 4 or 5 years, I have  
5 probably been to a dozen hearings or more, maybe 20, that  
6 have touched on procurement in one way or, and I keep  
7 hearing certain themes.

8 One is build off a stable design, get a design before  
9 you build.

10 And the second is likened to it. Do not do R&D while  
11 you are in the middle of building. And, quite often, that  
12 is an issue, where you are trying to do R&D in the middle of  
13 constructing large objects like aircraft carriers.

14 Third, use off-the-shelf technology as often as  
15 possible. Senator McCain has made a very strong point in  
16 the past about the 200-page spec for a new handgun. Let's  
17 talk about off-the-shelf. That should be the first option  
18 rather than the last option.

19 Number four, design platforms with an open architecture  
20 that are modular. When you are doing a large platform like  
21 a new tank or a land combat vehicle, the danger is the  
22 technology in that vehicle will be obsolete by the time it  
23 is built. Therefore, it should be designed in such a way as  
24 to be able to pull out technological parts and replace them.

25 Finally, and this is one I have heard repeatedly, you

1 really have to take some care as to who is in charge of this  
2 procurement process and provide continuity. See if you can  
3 keep people in with the program for some period of time, so  
4 it does not stop and start.

5 Do you concur with those suggestions? That is just  
6 based on what I have been hearing.

7 Dr. Esper: Senator, absolutely. I think you have hit  
8 many of the key elements that I outlined in my APQs with  
9 regard to the approach.

10 I think your last one is probably the most important.  
11 It is accountability, making sure you know who is in charge.  
12 And that requires, again, changing, I think, the personnel  
13 system so that, from the top down, particularly when you get  
14 to program managers, there is clear alignment and  
15 responsibility and hand-off of milestone to milestone or  
16 from phase to phase in the process.

17 Senator King: Part of that is also making the  
18 procurement process reasonably timely so people do not reach  
19 retirement age while they are still waiting for a system to  
20 move through.

21 Dr. Esper: Yes, Senator. The challenge in the past is  
22 that the reach exceeds the grasp, in terms of requirements.  
23 So rather than striving for the perfect, I think we need to  
24 get away from -- we cannot let the perfect be the enemy of  
25 the better.

1           Senator King: Exactly.

2           Dr. Esper: So pursuing the 80 percent solution now,  
3 and then building in modularity so we can upgrade in later  
4 iterations is critical.

5           I think the success of the big five systems, Apache,  
6 Abrams, Bradley, et cetera, going back to the 1980s, was so  
7 because Secretary Marsh protected them in terms of funding  
8 and protected them in terms of good ideas that came up later  
9 in the process. And without that, and there is a classic  
10 story about the Apache and Apache Longbow, those systems  
11 would not have been filled in time for Desert Shield, Desert  
12 Storm.

13           So I think the many things that you outlined, we need  
14 to pursue. I have outlined them in my APQs. There have  
15 been more than enough studies on this. It is time to get to  
16 work and get the system right.

17           Senator King: When my people talk to me about how long  
18 things are going to take, I always find it salutary to  
19 remind them that Eisenhower retook Europe in 11 months.  
20 That is a good time frame.

21           Final question, Mr. Kernan, not really a question, but  
22 you are taking on a very important position, and my main  
23 concern as a member of this committee and the Intelligence  
24 Committee is redundancy and overlap in terms of military  
25 intelligence and civilian intelligence. We are talking

1 about \$70 billion a year between the two functions.

2 So I just hope that that can be a focus, and where  
3 there is an overlap or redundancy, that we can work to  
4 reduce that.

5 Mr. Kernan: Yes, if I am confirmed, I will be  
6 completely committed to that. We are in such a resource-  
7 constrained environment that we cannot afford to do that,  
8 that we should look across the intelligence community and  
9 leverage those capabilities. Collectively, we ought to have  
10 what we need, but we should not have duplicity.

11 Senator King: I appreciate that, and we will continue  
12 to keep in touch with you on that very subject. Thank you.

13 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 Chairman McCain: Senator Warren?

15 Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 Dr. Esper, I appreciate the chance we had to meet in my  
17 office. Like Chairman McCain, I am concerned about the  
18 number of defense appointees coming from the big five  
19 defense contractors. As you know from our meeting, avoiding  
20 conflicts of interest is very important to me.

21 So, first, I just want to clear something up. Your  
22 letter to the DOD General Counsel Ethics Office states that  
23 you will not participate in particular matters involving  
24 your former employer Raytheon for a period of 1 year. But  
25 your letter also states that you will comply with the White

1 House ethics pledge, which requires you to recuse yourself  
2 for 2 years.

3 Can you confirm for the record that you will recuse  
4 yourself for 2 years from all particular matters involving  
5 Raytheon?

6 Dr. Esper: Yes, Senator, 2 years for those matters as  
7 outlined in my ethics agreement.

8 Senator Warren: So for all matters involving --

9 Dr. Esper: Yes, ma'am.

10 Senator Warren: -- Raytheon? Good.

11 And also, I would like to ask you about the specifics  
12 of your job at Raytheon. When you served as vice president  
13 of government relations for the last 7 years, which  
14 particular Army programs did you lobby on behalf of during  
15 your time there?

16 Dr. Esper: Yes, ma'am. I engaged the Hill on a few  
17 Army issues. But let me first say, as vice president for  
18 government relations, I actually spent an overwhelming  
19 majority of my time on the business-end of the company, so  
20 doing everything from program deep dives, monthly --

21 Senator Warren: Fair enough, but I would like to know  
22 about the programs that you lobbied on behalf of.

23 Dr. Esper: Yes, ma'am. There were three Army programs  
24 that were of such importance to my CEO that I personally  
25 engaged the Hill on over the past 2 years, and they were,

1 first of all, the Patriot radar system in support of the  
2 Army's budget request for that, and also pushing the Army to  
3 accelerate its development of its next-generation radar  
4 because the company felt that we could provide a capability  
5 to the soldier sooner than what was on the current timeline.

6 The second was the JLENS program, which is elevated  
7 aerostat with surveillance and fire control radar designed  
8 to protect the National Capital Region. That program is now  
9 ended.

10 The third program I worked on in the past couple years  
11 was the DCGS-A, Distributed Common Ground System - Army,  
12 Increment 2. The Congress was pushing for a commercial-only  
13 solution, and Raytheon had asked that we open up that  
14 aperture, so that the competition be open not just to  
15 commercial but to traditional defense industry and others as  
16 well as a way to drive competition, to drive down price, and  
17 quality.

18 So those were the three programs.

19 Senator Warren: So those were the three. And you used  
20 the word "personally," so those were the three you  
21 personally lobbied on. Did you oversee lobbying in other  
22 areas?

23 Dr. Esper: Ma'am, the lobbyists that reported -- the  
24 team that reported to me, I oversaw all their activities  
25 across all services, NDA, nondefense activities.



1           Senator Warren:  So everything that Raytheon lobbied  
2 on, basically.

3           Dr. Esper:  Yes, ma'am.

4           Senator Warren:  All right.

5           Dr. Esper:  That was one of my responsibilities out of  
6 several.

7           Senator Warren:  So thank you.  The ethics law that you  
8 cited in your letter allows you to seek a waiver or a  
9 regulatory exemption from your recusal for matters involving  
10 your former employer.  I know you have had some  
11 conversations about this with the chairman, and you have  
12 pledged not to seek a waiver, and I appreciate that.  But I  
13 hope that you might go further than the 2-year recusal  
14 requirement.

15           Would you be willing to commit to recuse yourself from  
16 the particular matters that you identified for the duration  
17 of your time in office?

18           Dr. Esper:  Senator, I do not see that being a problem  
19 right now.

20           Senator Warren:  Is that a yes?

21           Dr. Esper:  No, it is not.  What I would like to do is-  
22 - what I would like to do is, if confirmed, is come back to  
23 you, maybe in a couple years, to see if there was an issue,  
24 and then revisit the issue with you at that time, if at all  
25 possible.

1           Senator Warren: Well, you know, I just want to say,  
2 Dr. Esper, I think it is important to take these ethics  
3 obligations seriously. The American people need to have  
4 confidence that the top officials at the Pentagon are  
5 working for them, and that starts with completely and fully  
6 stepping back from decisions that will have a financial  
7 impact on the former employers of those officials.

8           If I can, I would like to ask one other question really  
9 quickly.

10           I have received several complaints from the  
11 Massachusetts National Guard officers in recent months about  
12 the delays in Federal recognition of their promotions.  
13 According to a letter my office received from the National  
14 Guard Bureau, the current processing time is about 6 to 8  
15 months.

16           This is becoming a morale issue for the Massachusetts  
17 Guard. And I imagine it is a problem in other State guard  
18 units as well.

19           If confirmed, will you commit to looking into this  
20 issue promptly and then getting back and briefing me and my  
21 staff on why these delays are occurring?

22           Dr. Esper: Yes, ma'am, if confirmed, I will.

23           Senator Warren: All right. We have to find a way to  
24 speed this up before this morale problem spreads.

25           Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 Chairman McCain: I would like to say to my friend from  
2 Massachusetts, we will look into that, but it seems that --  
3 I am not that familiar with it, but it seems to me that it  
4 is a problem that is not directly connected to the Guard  
5 promotion but other aspects of it. Is that your  
6 understanding?

7 Senator Warren: Fair enough. I have heard about this  
8 more specifically from the Guard. They have brought it  
9 directly to my attention, so that is how I have seen it.  
10 But if it reflects a larger problem, then we need to deal  
11 with the larger.

12 Chairman McCain: I would be eager to engage with you  
13 on this issue. We cannot have these kinds of delays and  
14 keep people serving. So, honestly, this is the first I have  
15 heard of it. I would be glad to get to work on it with you.

16 Senator Warren: Good. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 Chairman McCain: Thank you.

18 I want to say to the nominees thank you for appearing.  
19 We will convene the committee probably tomorrow, if we have  
20 all the paperwork done, so that we can report out your  
21 nominations to the full Senate. And then it will be a  
22 matter, obviously, of scheduling, which there seems to be  
23 some problems with lately. But I hope, given the aspects of  
24 these responsibilities, that we could go ahead and move  
25 them, rather than 30 hours of non-debate debate, so I thank

1 you all.

2 Jack? Do you have --

3 Senator Reed: No, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much.

4 Chairman McCain: I thank the witnesses, and this  
5 hearing is adjourned.

6 [Whereupon, at 11:51 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25