HEARING TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATIONS OF:
DR. LISA J. PORTER TO BE DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY
OF DEFENSE FOR RESEARCH AND ENGINEERING;
JAMES N. STEWART TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
OF DEFENSE FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS;
DR. JAMES H. ANDERSON TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
OF DEFENSE FOR STRATEGY, PLANS, AND CAPABILITIES;
GREGORY J. SLAVONIC TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
OF THE NAVY FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS;
AND
DR. CHARLES P. VERDON TO BE DEPUTY
ADMINISTRATOR
FOR DEFENSE PROGRAMS, NATIONAL NUCLEAR
SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Thursday, May 10, 2018

Washington, D.C.

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Thursday, May 10, 2018

U.S. Senate
Committee on Armed Services
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:31 a.m. in Room SH-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Hon. James M. Inhofe, presiding.

Committee Members Present: Senators Inhofe [presiding], Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Sullivan, Sasse, Reed, Nelson, McCaskill, Shaheen,
OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES M. INHOFE, U.S. SENATOR FROM OKLAHOMA

Senator Inhofe: The committee will come to order.

Today we meet to consider the nominations of Dr. Lisa Porter to be Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering; Mr. James Stewart to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs; Dr. James Anderson to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities; Mr. Greg Slavonic to be Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs and also an old-time friend of mine; and Dr. Charles Verdon to be Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs, National Nuclear Security Administration.

Before starting -- first of all, we thank all of you for being here. We are looking forward to hearing from you, but I would like to introduce Senator James Lankford who would participate in an introduction of Mr. Slavonic.
STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES LANKFORD, U.S. SENATOR FROM OKLAHOMA

Senator Lankford: Senator Inhofe, thank you for that. Allow me to be able to just step in for just a moment. I will be brief.

But I wanted to be able to introduce to this committee as well Greg Slavonic. Greg is someone that I not only know but I know extremely well. He has been chief of staff for the last 3 years that I have been here in the Senate. When I transitioned from the House, serving 4 years in the House and then serving in the Senate, I was sort of looking for a chief of staff that could help us in this process. And I found Greg Slavonic basically out on the golf course without his time being well used.

Greg Slavonic started as a seaman recruit in 1971 and advanced after 30-plus years in the Navy all the way to a rear admiral. He has served both active duty and reserves. He has been a solid person to serve in multiple different theaters. And you have got his list of all his different medals and ribbons and such as well. But he has been a solid leader for us in our State and for the United States in the Navy for all these years.

When I reached out to him, he was unofficially retired. He was working multiple different media outlets and other places. But I reached out to him and asked him to be able
to step back up and serve his country again.

I cannot tell you how thrilled I am that his country is asking him to be able to serve in this role as well. He would be a solid leader for the Navy. He is someone who brings a wealth of experience both for active duty and reserves, and that is a great asset to be able to have somebody that has a good perspective in both those areas. And after decades of service to our nation, he is well suited for this task. So he is not only a friend, but I think he will be a solid leader for our country in the Pentagon as well.

So thank you for allowing to give a brief introduction of him and my overwhelming support for him.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you so much, Senator Lankford. And I agree wholeheartedly in your remarks.

As this is always the case, we have some required questions and answers that have to take place before we can proceed with our hearing. And what I would like to do is ask you the questions and ask you to respond audibly so that we do not have to go back and try to seek you out and pump you for another answer. All right?

First of all, have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest?

Mr. Slavonic: Yes.

Mr. Stewart: Yes.
Senator Inhofe: Will you ensure that your staff complies with deadlines established for requested communications, including questions for the record in hearings?

Mr. Slavonic: Yes.

Mr. Stewart: Yes.

Dr. Porter: Yes.

Dr. Anderson: Yes.

Dr. Verdon: Yes.

Senator Inhofe: Will you cooperate in providing witnesses and briefers in response to congressional requests?

Mr. Slavonic: Yes.

Mr. Stewart: Yes.

Dr. Porter: Yes.

Dr. Anderson: Yes.

Dr. Verdon: Yes.

Senator Inhofe: Will those witnesses be protected from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

Mr. Slavonic: Yes.

Mr. Stewart: Yes.

Dr. Porter: Yes.
Dr. Anderson: Yes.

Dr. Verdon: Yes.

Senator Inhofe: Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify upon request before this committee?

Mr. Slavonic: Yes.

Mr. Stewart: Yes.

Dr. Porter: Yes.

Dr. Anderson: Yes.

Dr. Verdon: Yes.

Senator Inhofe: And do you agree to provide documents, including copies of electronic forms of communication, in a timely manner when requested by a duly constituted committee or to consult with the committee regarding the basis for any good faith delay or denial in providing such documents?

Mr. Slavonic: Yes.

Mr. Stewart: Yes.

Dr. Porter: Yes.

Dr. Anderson: Yes.

Dr. Verdon: Yes.

Senator Inhofe: Lastly, have you assumed any duties or undertaken any actions which would appear to presume the outcome of the confirmation process?

Mr. Slavonic: No.

Mr. Stewart: No.

Dr. Porter: No.
Dr. Anderson: No.

Dr. Anderson: No.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you very much.

Dr. Porter, you have been nominated to serve in the Department’s acquisition enterprise at an important moment. As we have heard from our senior leaders, America’s military advantage is eroding. I go back and listen to the statement of our Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff when he said that we are losing our edge, and we have been losing our edge.

A better acquisition system will be critical in reversing this trend. If confirmed, you will be helping to carry out some of the most important reforms, the reorganization of the acquisition enterprise that will require real leadership and vision, and we hope that you will consider us as a partner in this work. And I would add that I can remember this all the way back to the service I had in the House Armed Services Committee. We have been working at this. So, Dr. Porter, you are the one who can get it done.

Mr. Stewart, during recent years of inadequate funding and budget uncertainty, we know personnel and readiness were often the hardest hit. Looking forward, ensuring the military’s ability to recruit and to retain high quality service members will be necessary to maintain an effective
all volunteer force. The committee is increasingly concerned that the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act is an outdated policy and mandates rigidity over flexibility and is simply unable to cope with the demands of the modern force. If confirmed, we will look to you to help us modernize the personnel system.

Dr. Anderson, if confirmed, you would play a central role in the implementation of the National Defense Strategy. Major decisions lie ahead about how we equip, posture, and employ the joint force. You rendered a distinguished service in the Marine Corps and have significant experience related to Middle East policy. Today we hope you will explain how you intend to apply your background and experience to exercise strong civilian control of the functional areas for which you would be responsible, including force planning, force development, contingency planning, joint requirements, and joint concept development.

Mr. Slavonic, if confirmed, you will be tasked with ensuring the Navy has the people needed to responsibly grow the fleet. As you know, we have got some pretty ambitious ideas on what is going to be happening to the Navy, and you are the guy, if confirmed, that would be overseeing that. Achieving the proper balance between end strength and equipment is no small task. If Navy manpower grows too quickly without the ships to accommodate the new sailors,
readiness will suffer. Conversely, if the fleet grows faster than the Navy’s ability to recruit new sailors, the service risks wearing out those who are already serving. The Navy has innovative plans as it looks to the future, and we look forward to you to continue those efforts, if you are confirmed.

And Dr. Verdon, your decades of work at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and other National Nuclear Security Administration facilities have, no doubt, prepared you to serve as the Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs. If confirmed, you will be charged with implementing the NNSA portion of the Nuclear Posture Review, including life extension programs and supplemental capabilities in a number of large infrastructure projects. We look forward to hearing your thoughts on how you would approach these difficult tasks.

Senator Reed?
Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Let me join you in welcoming our nominees and also thanking them for their willingness to serve and also to thank the family members who are here because none of these jobs are performed in isolation or alone. So thank you very much.

Dr. Porter, if confirmed, you will be responsible for helping Dr. Griffin, the new Under Secretary of Research and Engineering, stand up his office so that it can promote innovation in the Defense Department at a very complex time. You will be tasked to develop strategic guidance and provide leadership to all elements of the research and innovation community, ranging DARPA to the labs to newer offices like the Strategic Capabilities Office and DIUx, the Silicon Valley outreach activity. You will also be responsible for maintaining technological superiority over rising near-peer adversaries, especially in emerging technology areas like artificial intelligence and quantum computing. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on how to address these complex challenges.

Mr. Stewart, if confirmed as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, you will face many challenges. First and foremost, the Department and the
military services must have adequate numbers of ready and
trained service members of sufficiently high character and
talent to meet national defense objectives, an increasingly
difficult task given the declining propensity and
eligibility among the nation’s youth to serve in the
military. You will also be addressing the reform of the
officer management system and streamlining the operations of
the DOD Education Activity and the Defense Commissary
Agency.

Mr. Stewart, your past experience will serve you well
in your new position. I look forward to working with you.

Dr. Anderson, you have been nominated to serve as the
Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and
Capabilities. This is an important position that oversees
the National Defense Strategy, the development of global
defense posture, the review of campaign and contingency
plans, nuclear and missile defense policy, and security
cooperation activities. In other words, the position you
will assume, if confirmed, is critical to preparing the
Department for the future strategic environment.

The implementation of the recent National Defense
Strategy will likely be your primary challenge. While the
reemergence of long-term strategic competition with Russia
and China is the central challenge facing our nation, the
Department must address other equally urgent situations,
including tensions on the Korean Peninsula, Iran’s ongoing malign activities, and violent extremist organizations like ISIS. Therefore, I would welcome your thoughts on the priorities you will pursue, if confirmed as the Assistant Secretary, in the context of a dynamic defense environment.

Admiral Slavonic, if confirmed, you will serve as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs where you will face many of the same thorny policy issues as Mr. Stewart. Senator Lankford’s commendation can only be seconded. Thank you for your service to the Navy and to the nation. I look forward to working with you as you too confront the same problems of finding qualified, eligible, talented young Americans to serve in the United States Navy.

Dr. Verdon, you are highly qualified for the position of Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs within the National Nuclear Security Administration, or NNSA. You are now the director of the weapons program at Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, and before that, you were at the University of Rochester’s Laboratory for Laser Energetics, which serves as an important feeder of scientists to the NNSA laboratories.

If confirmed, you will confront a broad array of challenges in modernizing our stockpile, which right now encompasses programs extending the life of four or even
probably six weapon systems within the next 5 years. In particular, you will confront the daunting challenge of restarting plutonium pit production to meet the needs of the Department of Defense, while ensuring there is an adequate workforce and infrastructure at the laboratories and plants to accomplish the overall modernization mission. This plutonium mission is of particular concern to me, and I am interested in your thoughts on the major issues you expect to confront.

Once again, let me thank you all for being here today and for serving the nation.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed. What we are going to do is put your entire statement into the record, but you can have an abbreviated statement. Try to keep within 5 minutes. We will have a well attended bench up here, and we want to have time to ask you questions.

And we will start with you, Mr. Slavonic. You are recognized.
STATEMENT OF GREGORY J. SLAVONIC TO BE ASSISTANT
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS

Mr. Slavonic: Thank you, Senator Inhofe.

Senator Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished
members of the committee, it is an honor and privilege to
appear before you today as the President’s nominee to be the
Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve
Affairs. Words cannot adequately express how I feel.
Should I be confirmed to once serve in the Department of the
Navy and the people of the United States will be a great
honor.

Before I begin, I would like to again thank Senator
Lankford for taking time from his busy schedule to come and
make comments on my behalf. That was truly appreciated, and
I am humbled and honored.

Before I begin, let me say thank you to the President
of the United States, Secretary Mattis, Secretary Spencer
for their support and confidence in me to serve in this
position.

I would like to again thank Senator Lankford for the
opportunity to return to Washington, D.C. to serve with him
and the people of Oklahoma for the past 3 and a half years
as his chief of staff.

Most of all, I want to thank my wife Molly, who has
been my partner for 46 years of marriage and truly
understands what it means to be a Navy spouse. Molly; my
daughters, Kara, Maggie; my son Blake; and my brother Gary
were all unable to be here today, but I know they are here
in spirit.

As I look at this date, May 10th, it did not dawn on me
the significance of it until last night when I was preparing
for this hearing. 46 years ago today I was a young Navy
seaman aboard the USS Constellation in the Tonkin Gulf, and
we were launching aircraft into Hanoi and minding the
harbors of Haiphong. And it is truly ironic that some 46
years later I am now here, if confirmed, to be the Assistant
Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

I had the honor to wear the uniform of our nation for
34 years and serve with some of the best and brightest
civilians and military in the Department of Defense. If
confirmed, I intend to once again bring those experiences of
success to the position for which I have been nominated.

If confirmed, I promise to continue the excellence that
has been the hallmark of the United States military and
specifically the Navy and Marine Corps. I will dutifully
carry out the laws of this great nation and, most
importantly, ensure that U.S. Navy and Marine Corps
personnel are of the highest quality and are properly
trained and prepared for the missions that they have been
called to undertake.
I am fully aware of the challenges that face our military, especially the Navy, but I also know the military is full of very bright minds and determined individuals and I will not have to face these challenges alone. If confirmed, I will have dedicated military and civilian personnel alongside that I can count on as a team and we can work together to solve the problems and these future challenges.

Looking to the future, should you confirm my nomination, I have identified two objectives which I would like to address immediately.

First is to ensure the people within the Navy and Marine Corps team, uniform and civilian, are always our first priority. I learned 34 years ago during my naval career -- and it appears to continue today -- that we ask our military to do more with less. At some point, this cycle must be broken. People are our greatest and most powerful asset. We must ensure that they have the tools to accomplish the mission.

Second is to ensure we continue to have the best and brightest serving in the Navy and Marine Corps. There is a war for talent and we must win. As former Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Vern Clark once told a group of fellow flag officers, “We are not in the business of finishing second.” This statement is true today as it was 15 years
ago.

If confirmed, I commit to working with the committee and every Member of Congress to address any concerns that may arise and to be accessible and transparent. After all, I believe it is in the best interest of our military to work hand in hand with the legislative branch to address any and all issues that affect the Navy, Marine Corps, and the security of our nation.

I want to reiterate my appreciation to the chairman and ranking member and the committee staff for their courtesies and professionalism that I have been shown. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Slavonic follows:]
Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Slavonic.

Mr. Stewart?
STATEMENT OF JAMES N. STEWART TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS

Mr. Stewart: Senator Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished members of the Committee on Armed Services. I am deeply humbled and honored to be here with you today. Thank you for considering my nomination for the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

I am also grateful to the President and Secretary Mattis for their support and trust and confidence in my ability to fill this important position.

Finally, I would like to thank my immediate family members who are here with me today: my wife of 40 years Kristi, my daughter Aubrey, and my son Aaron.

Senator Inhofe: Hold their hands up here.

Mr. Stewart: Right behind me here.

Senator Inhofe: Good. Thank you.

Mr. Stewart: I would also like to thank my brothers and sisters, my mother, my father, who is no longer with us, for their untiring support over these many years as I served like my father and brother in the United States Air Force.

There are over 4.5 million active, reserve component, and retired military personnel and over 860,000 appropriated and non-appropriated civilian employees in the Department of Defense. If confirmed, it will be my responsibility to serve as the principal advisor to Secretary Mattis and Under
Secretary Wilkie on all personnel policy, plans, and program issues involving these outstanding Americans and, most importantly, their families as well. From rating systems and awards to child care, education, groceries, this is an enormous and humbling charge.

Given the diverse and extensive scope of the manpower and reserve affairs portfolio, it is crucial that each decision made by the Assistant Secretary enhances Secretary Mattis' vision to provide management systems and policies where leadership can harness opportunities and ensure effective stewardship of the taxpayer resources. This position has the awesome responsibility of ensuring our most important asset, our people and their families, are well served by providing them with the tools and the help they need to ensure our national defense in a budget constrained environment.

As the Department of Defense seeks to improve and sustain readiness, balance capability and capacity, and maximize our lethality, improvement must be pursued in the overall management of the total force of the active and reserve component, government civilians, and contracted service personnel. Reforms and efficiencies should be pursued in order to provide the maximum capability and lethality for the personnel dollars spent. If confirmed, I will work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel...
and Readiness, the Office of Personnel Management, the Department’s subject-matter experts, along with the Joint Staff, service chiefs, and reserve component leadership to pursue promising courses of action that best serve our mission needs while freeing up money for readiness demands. I will organize for innovation by adapting organizational structures to best support the force, to drive budget discipline, consolidate and streamline processes, and eliminate duplication of effort.

Sustainment of the all volunteer force is my ultimate priority, and this objective cannot be met unless you take care of the member’s family. Whether it is spouse education, career opportunities, dependent education, medical care, child care, relocation assistance, the exchange or commissary, deployment support, Yellow Ribbon reintegration, employer support of the Guard and Reserve -- yes, all of these fall underneath the purview of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs -- if you do not pay attention to the family’s needs, the member will leave. Trust me. There are numerous civilian companies looking for the skills our members possess.

If confirmed for the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs position, I will strive to be a consistent, transparent, and honest advocate for the needs
of all of our Department of Defense personnel and their families while maintaining open lines of communication between my office and the Congress. To this end, I will proactively communicate with Congress and ensure the congressional defense committees receive timely and informative updates on all major issues and initiatives in my portfolio, were I to be confirmed.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Stewart follows:]
Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Stewart.

Dr. Porter?
STATEMENT OF DR. LISA J. PORTER TO BE DEPUTY UNDER
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR RESEARCH AND ENGINEERING

Dr. Porter: Senator Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity and the privilege to appear before you today.

I would like to thank President Trump and Secretary Mattis for nominating me for the position of Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering and this committee for consideration of my nomination.

The dominance of our military depends critically on our ability to develop and deploy technologies that provide our warfighters with an overwhelming advantage over our adversaries. Both DOD leadership and this committee have emphasized that the increasingly global nature of technology advancement necessitates a shift in our strategy regarding our military's technology development. Furthermore, we face not only a diversity of threats but also a diversity of technological approaches being used against us, which range from innovative uses of existing technologies in ways we have not always anticipated to the employment of cutting-edge capabilities ranging from space systems to cyber attacks to machine learning to hypersonics to biotechnology. Delivering effective technological solutions at the speed of relevance against such a complex threat space demands significant depth and breadth of expertise coupled with a
sense of urgency and a laser focus on mission impact.

Fortunately, our nation possesses an incredible amount of talent that spans our universities, government, and nonprofit laboratories, and the private sector. My experience at DARPA, NASA, IARPA, and In-Q-Tel has exposed me to brilliant innovators across the country, and I have seen firsthand the great things that can be accomplished when those powerful minds are focused on a really hard problem and asked to solve it. Each of these communities has an important role to play, and I am confident that the DOD will be able to unleash the full power of the expertise resident throughout our nation’s research and engineering enterprise to develop solutions to our military’s most pressing problems. If confirmed, I will be fully committed to achieving this goal.

I greatly appreciate the focus of this committee and of current senior DOD leadership on the need to significantly expedite technology transition to operational use. The “valley of death” is a term that has been used extensively for decades. It is not a new problem, and importantly, it is not a problem unique to DOD or even to the government. It is a fundamental challenge of innovation.

My experience has taught me that one of the key ingredients of successful technology transition is a culture of experimentation and prototyping, with full and early
engagement from end users. Rapid and effective prototyping, where meaningful failures steer us quickly through an exploration of both the opportunities and the limitations of innovative ideas, can build a bridge over the valley of death. Such an approach must be accompanied by both the willingness to stop doing the things that do not work and the utilization of sound science and engineering principles that guide the experimental testing of new technologies and systems. If confirmed, I will work with the USDR&E to establish a culture of experimentation, technical integrity, and warfighter engagement to ensure that we design, develop, and transition technological solutions that enhance the lethality of our joint force.

I would like to thank this committee for its commitment to ensuring that the DOD maintain its ability to rapidly develop and deploy the breadth of technological capabilities that our warfighters need to remain the most impressive and dominant military force in the world. I am truly humbled to be here today, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Porter follows:]
Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Dr. Porter.

Dr. Anderson?
STATEMENT OF DR. JAMES H. ANDERSON TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR STRATEGY, PLANS, AND CAPABILITIES

Dr. Anderson: Senator Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to be here today.

I am thankful for the confidence that President Trump and Secretary Mattis have placed in me as the nominee to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and capabilities.

I would not be here today without the support of family, friends, and mentors who have helped me throughout my career. My parents, Barbara and Michael Anderson, instilled in me the value of hard work, honesty, and respect for others. My children, James and Olivia, inspire me every day. I wish to thank Emily Anderson, my much better half, who is present today. She knows well the sacrifices of Pentagon positions --

Senator Inhofe: Where are you? There you are.

Dr. Anderson: -- from my prior service in the building. Her love and support make everything worthwhile. My professional experience has helped prepare me for this opportunity.

I served in the Office of the Secretary of Defense from 2001 to 2009, initially working in legislative affairs. I then spent most of my appointment working policy issues in
international security affairs. I served as Country Director, Israel, and coordinated defense cooperation activities for a key United States ally. I also served as Director, Middle East, and gained a broader perspective on regional dynamics.

I have also taught national security topics at several civilian and military educational institutions, to include the George C. Marshall Center for European Security Studies in Germany. Living overseas and working at this splendid institution reinforced to me the importance of working with allies and partners.

I have authored or in some cases co-authored a wide range of strategy-related topics throughout my career. These topics include the threat of weapons of mass destruction, theater and national missile defense, security alliances, great power competition, and national defense strategy.

In my current job at Marine Corps University, I am the chief academic officer for educational programs that reach thousands of marines annually. In this capacity, I help officers and enlisted personnel develop the critical and creative thinking skills necessary to prevail on future battlefields.

I served 3 years on active duty as a Marine Corps officer in the late 1980s, an experience that indelibly
imprinted upon me the importance of teamwork and esprit de corps. Nothing is more inspiring than working alongside fellow professionals in defense of the country’s interests and values.

The Department of Defense issued its National Defense Strategy in January. This document clearly outlines priorities and concepts needed to ensure our nation’s competitive advantages amid the exacting demands of great power competition. If confirmed, I will do my level best to help implement this strategy in a cost effective and affordable manner. The men and women in uniform, as well as the citizens of our great nation deserve no less from their senior defense leaders.

I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Anderson follows:]
Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Dr. Anderson.

And Dr. Verdon?
STATEMENT OF DR. CHARLES P. VERDON TO BE DEPUTY
ADMINISTRATOR FOR DEFENSE PROGRAMS, NATIONAL NUCLEAR
SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Verdon: Senator Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed,
distinguished members of the committee, it is a privilege to
appear before you today. I am honored by this opportunity
serve my country and thank President Trump and Secretary
Perry for placing their trust and confidence in me, putting
forward my nomination as Deputy Administrator for Defense
Programs within the Department of Energy’s National Nuclear
Security Administration.

Unfortunately, my family is unable to be here today but
watching from California are my wife Joyce, my son Ryan, and
his wife Camille. I am grateful to them and the rest of my
family for their tireless support over the years and as I
prepared for today’s hearing.

The DOE and NNSA have the nation’s responsibility of
ensuring a safe, secure, and effective U.S. nuclear
stockpile. To do this, the NNSA must maintain confidence in
the state of the current stockpile, carry out life extension
programs as required, and ensure that the nation has the
capabilities, the underpinning science, technologies, and
engineering, the facilities and workforce necessary to
sustain the U.S. nuclear stockpile and hence the deterrent
for the long term.
In addition, NNSA pays a great deal of attention to the safety and security of the weapons and associated materials throughout their life cycle. Robust security protects weapons and weapons materials at each of the NNSA sites and through securely transporting materials and weapons between NNSA facilities and NNSA facilities and military locations.

My top priority, if confirmed, is the effective execution of the nuclear weapons activities within the NNSA. Success in carrying out this enduring mission requires working closely with NNSA Administrator Gordon-Hagerty and the close coordination and integration across the NNSA federal workforce, NNSA laboratories and production sites, and the Department of Defense. Of particular importance is the ongoing stockpile modernization effort. The successful execution of this effort requires the careful balancing, planning, and execution of NNSA’s production infrastructure modernization with the stockpile modernization. In addition, continued development of the science, technology, and engineering required to sustain confidence in our nuclear deterrent must also be maintained.

I look forward to executing the vision expressed by Administrator Gordon-Hagerty to ensure a partnership between NNSA, the laboratories and production sites and with the DOD. It will take all of us working together to continue to ensure maintaining a modern and appropriately tailored
nuclear deterrent in an ever-changing geopolitical environment.

I believe my work experience provides a unique skill set of more than 30 years of experience and vision to the position. During this time, I have gained experience ranging from an individual technical contributor to the leader of the nuclear weapons program at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. I have firsthand knowledge and experience working with some of NNSA’s most talented and dedicated scientists, engineers, technicians, and safety and security professionals and with very dedicated and professional individuals within the Department of Defense. I have devoted my career to the national security mission.

To lead the nuclear weapons activities within NNSA, if confirmed, would be the highest honor. I will work to ensure our nation’s stockpile remains safe, secure, and effective, modernization of the stockpile is well planned and being actively executed, and that the capabilities, facilities, and workforce continue to be developed and matured to ensure the long-term viability of our nuclear deterrent.

I thank you again for inviting me to appear before this committee today. I am prepared to answer any questions you have and, if confirmed, to address questions you may have in the future.
[The prepared statement of Dr. Verdon follows:]
Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Dr. Verdon.

Let me ask a question of Dr. Porter. I alluded to this. You know, when we are out talking to the American people, there is this assumption that the United States has the best of everything. In fact, we do not. And we have gone through a period of starvation where we really need to get out of this thing. And you are fully aware of this, Dr. Porter. In such areas as hypersonics, we are actually behind China and Russia at this time. In the areas of artillery -- and normally artillery is measured with rapid fire and range -- both China and Russia are ahead of us in that area. Our nuclear triad -- we had not done any modernization in a long period of time, while they have.

When you look at these things, how do you view these things in terms of what do you want to do to make sure that we get back in the position that the American people think we are in right now?

Dr. Porter: So, Senator, I think you have highlighted very succinctly the fundamental frustration that a lot of us share. It is why I appear before you today, hopefully to help to contribute to solutions to this.

I believe actually, as I said in my opening remarks, we do have a tremendous amount of talent throughout our enterprise. Our universities are world-class, as we all know. Our DOD laboratories and national laboratories more
broadly, including the DOE, are fantastic.

It is a question of how do you focus that energy and that talent and create a sense of urgency that I believe we have lost. Dr. Griffin has spoken publicly about we have been on a holiday, and you mentioned the starvation. I think we have gotten too comfortable being in first, and that is not a good strategy. So we have got to get back to the business of excellence and urgency and focus on mission, and that is hopefully what I will be able to do.

Senator Inhofe: You know, it is pretty obvious. We had a hearing not too long ago in a subcommittee hearing. We had all the vices in front of us, and they came to the conclusion we are kind of back to the old hollow force days and we are going to have to address that.

And a very similar thing, Mr. Slavonic. Right now we are talking about increasing the Navy 7,500. The problem that you are going to have is you have got to make this attractive and go after these people because we do not want to find ourselves in the position -- and those of us would all agree with this on this committee -- that in order to reach that number, you are going to have to lower standards or lower quality. Have you thought about this?

Mr. Slavonic: Yes, Senator. There is no way in my opinion that we should ever lower our standards. We have to somehow work through the process and figure out how we bring
in the best and brightest to the Navy and Marine Corps. We are in a war for talent. I think between the age group of 17 and 24, only 25 percent of that age group is qualified to join the military. So it becomes a very big challenge to the Navy and Marine Corps to find the best and brightest and bring them in to serve the Navy and Marine Corps.

Senator Inhofe: Yes. Would you assure this committee that in the event it looks like that is the only alternative, you come to us so that if it is resources or whatever would be necessary, just to make sure we do not drop that quality?

Mr. Slavonic: Yes, sir. You have my word.

Senator Inhofe: Good.

Dr. Anderson, just set aside Russia for a minute and look at China. Several of us, Senator Ernst, Senator Rounds, and I, were in the South China Sea and seeing what is happening right now with China. The perception that is out there -- the seven islands that we look at -- it is no secret that these islands are there with armaments. It is almost as if they are preparing for World War III. And when we talked to -- and we did -- we talked to our allies there. I am talking about the Philippines, Taiwan, and other areas. It is almost as if they are making a choice. If World War III comes, which side are we going to be on?

Are you really sensitive to the perception that is out
there of what China is doing, whether or not that is accurate?

Dr. Anderson: Senator, I think the Chinese militarization of the islands that you reference in the South China Sea is very concerning. Absolutely. They are, according to press reports, selling anti-ship missiles and anti-aircraft weapons on several of those islands.

I think this administration and previous administrations have made clear U.S. commitment to our security commitments in the Indo-Pacific region, our commitment with South Korea, with Japan, with the Philippines, with New Zealand, with Australia and that we intend to honor those commitments. Thanks to the work of Congress with the omnibus bill and the 2-year agreement, there is a sizeable and sufficient funding stream in place for the Department of Defense to increase some of its capabilities in the Pacific theater. And by doing this with respect to aircraft and some munitions and increasing our capabilities, the P-8 Poseidon for example, Virginia payload on an attack submarine, that will strengthen deterrence. That will send a message both to our potential foes and our allies as well that we are committed to their defense and to defend our interests in that region.

Senator Inhofe: That is a good answer.

I have questions for the other two, but with respect
for my other members here, I will do that for the record.

Senator Reed?

Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Again, because of the short time limit, I may not be able to reach all of you. So some people can relax.

But, Dr. Porter, let me follow up on the chairman’s comments, Senator Inhofe’s comments, about the need for meeting and exceeding particularly the Chinese when it comes to quantum computing and artificial intelligence. They are putting on a nationwide effort -- billions of dollars, concerted, coordinated. My sense is we do not have that same kind of coordinated activity today.

You will be in the Department of Defense. You will be leading our efforts, but we have got private research universities. We have a host of public companies that are actually spending more on this research than we are. We have to coordinate those together.

And then we have the issue of human capital. Many of the scientists that are coming in and helping are not only not Americans, but some of them are from countries like China and Russia and Europe, et cetera.

So this is sort of stepping back from your specific role, but how are we going to get this national Manhattan Project for cyber AI underway? Will you sort of try to move that from your position?
Dr. Porter: So, Senator, yes. That is quite an expansive challenge, as you just described very well.

Senator Reed: It is, I think, a challenge though.

Dr. Porter: It is certainly a challenge.

And as you know, the focus on things like machine learning, hypersonics, cyber, all of those elements -- the ingredients are here. We have got to focus them. As you said, we have got to identify problems that are big and clear and gravitate the talent towards solving those problems. We do have significant amount of talent. As you said, our private sector is frankly crushing it in many aspects of the machine learning domain. We have got to figure out how to get them to work on our problems rather than just the problems that they are solving. How do we harness that talent? That is the key challenge I think we have.

Senator Reed: And that might require you informing this committee -- and frankly, we would have to share or collaborate with probably other committees -- to convince, persuade, or even require that this cooperation take place. So we would look for your insights very much.

Dr. Porter: Absolutely, Senator.

Senator Reed: Thank you.

Mr. Stewart, one of the issues -- and Admiral Slavonic, both -- and my time is limited. We all know we have this
crisis. 25 percent of young people are qualified for the
service. It is tough. You are competing against big
companies. You are competing against lots of factors. I
know Admiral Slavonic indicated that he was not willing to
reduce standards. But if we look ahead now at some of the
jobs of the future in the military, when you were flying
C-141's back in the 1970s, I do not think you thought there
would be a whole bunch of folks sitting in trailers in
Nevada flying attack --

Mr. Stewart: Drones.

Senator Reed: Yes, attack aircraft. Maybe you did.

Mr. Stewart: Not at that time.

Senator Reed: Yes. So I think if we look ahead, we
just have to think about it. Are there some areas that do
not require the same kind of physical dexterity or something
else where, in fact, these individuals could be very
valuable components of the military?

Mr. Stewart: Senator, thanks for the question.

I think in many cases we can look at the type of
individuals that we bring in as well. Granted, some of the
individuals we are looking at are not necessarily going to
work in the military environment, but perhaps will work in
the civilian environment. And so as a total force, we have
to look at not only what is required for the military piece
but overall for the mission. And so, if confirmed, Senator,
I would look forward to going at and looking at the total picture, to include the military, the reserve component, and the civilian piece, along with the contractors.

So I think we have to be creative. I think we have been very, very proactive on doing that. But I think that there is more work to be done.

Senator Reed: Thank you.

And just a moment, Admiral Slavonic, please.

Mr. Slavonic: Yes, sir. Senator, when you wear the uniform, I feel -- I deal in the world of perception, and when the public sees individuals that are not up to the standards of others -- certainly in the Marine Corps -- then I just think that is a negative for us as we move forward.

But as Mr. Stewart said, if we look at other areas possibly where you will not wear the uniform, then I think, yes, there is a possibility to look at other options.

Senator Reed: I think we are going to have to deal with that issue. It is just a question of demographics and changing technologies. Both of those.

My time is expiring. And I will follow up with questions, Dr. Anderson, Dr. Verdon.

Again, thank you for your commitment. Thank you already for your service.

And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed.
Senator Ernst?

Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thanks to all of you for accepting this nomination, and we are excited about the opportunities that you have.

Mr. Stewart, I would like to start with you, please.

If confirmed as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, the DOD EA schools will fall within your portfolio. And as you know, there have been some pretty alarming recent news articles highlighting some issues about how there are juvenile-on-juvenile crimes and how they have been tracked and handled by both the schools and law enforcement. I understand that the DOD has been actively working on fixing things on their end particularly with regard to how misconduct is tracked and recorded. And I did recently sit down with some of those DOD officials, and they have assured me that this will be fixed.

If confirmed, can I have your assurance that you will continue to review and improve processes relating to how juvenile crimes are tracked and coordinated with law enforcement? This is a very important issue to me, to other members on this committee, and I do believe that our DOD families deserve better than what we have seen in the past. So can you give me that assurance and then maybe walk me through some of the ideas on how we might be able to fix this problem?
Mr. Stewart: Senator, I would be happy to.

We need to take care of our dependents, and it is very, very important that we do so. Thank you, ma’am.

Senator Ernst: Are you aware of the incidents that have occurred at DOD schools?

Mr. Stewart: I was informed. I have to get more information on it. That is an important issue that, as you said, they are already working on. And if confirmed, I will be read in on what they have done so far. But more needs to be done, and we need to take care of those dependents.

Senator Ernst: Absolutely. It is concerning. We want to make sure that we are taking care of those juveniles, especially when it is juvenile against juvenile crimes, not only that we are tracking it appropriately but it is being reported and dealt with as well. So I think we have lost some of those families through the cracks. We have lost some of those children through the cracks. And it should not be occurring. So we will make sure that we follow up with you.

Mr. Stewart: Yes, ma’am.

Senator Ernst: Assuming confirmation, we will be following up with you.

Dr. Porter, as chairman of the Emerging Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee, I have had the pleasure of visiting with Dr. Griffin several times over the course of
the last several months about our long-term strategic competition with China. And one of the discussion points that has been raised over and over again is the fact that when we are competing with China, they truly are a country that does not care about the formalities or the niceties of our acquisition process.

Just so we thoroughly understand the gravity of the situation, can you illustrate what China-U.S. military overmatch will look like if we do not find a way to maximize agility and efficiency within our own acquisitions process?

Dr. Porter: It is certainly a daunting prospect to consider. I believe we would have a real problem if we do not start getting in the business of pushing ourselves much faster. I think you have heard Dr. Griffin talk a lot about the speed, that we need to move much more quickly. They have got a head start on us in hypersonics. You have alluded to that. They have got a head start on us in some areas as well. But we have to recognize that we can catch up if we are deliberate and focused.

The spirit of experimentation that I have talked about in my opening statement is a real critical component of that, the ability to fail and failure not being something that is seen as the end of your career, but something that is seen that you learn and you keep going, and ultimately you succeed. Failure on the road to success is obviously
not failure. But I think in the DOD, particularly in the R&E environment, there has been a culture of extreme risk aversion, and that has been stifling to innovation. Those things do not go together. Risk aversion and innovation cannot coexist. So we need to get back to the spirit of experimentation that the DOD used to have, and I believe we can do that.

Senator Ernst: I appreciate that very much. And I do also believe that we should be taking prudent risk to move forward and move forward quickly.

Just very quickly, I am almost out of time, but maybe just the top priority, what we should be investing in right now.

Dr. Porter: So I would agree that hypersonics is at the top of the list.

Senator Ernst: Good. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Ernst.

Senator King?

Senator King: First, seeing you before us today in the positions you are in, I have to tell a story of when I was on a staff of a committee here in the Senate 40 years ago and I called the Office of Management and Budget for a witness for a hearing. And they said we are sending the Deputy Under Secretary of something or other, and I said I
do not really understand the titles. Who is this person?
And the fellow gave me an answer which, if I ever write a
book about Washington, this will be the title. He said he
is at the highest level where they still know anything.

[Laughter.]

Senator King: And that is you guys.

By the way, for the record, we are all above that level
now. So I really appreciate your being here because you are
doing such important work.

And, Mr. Slavonic, I just want to reassure you -- you
may have been uneasy about this -- that your association
with Senator Lankford will not prejudice my vote on your
nomination.

Mr. Slavonic: Thank you for that, sir.

Senator King: Yes, sir. I am going to overlook that.

Dr. Porter, you just said something that, taken out of
context, could -- you said the Pentagon must move quickly.
Most people would not think that was a phrase that they had
ever heard before that made much sense. How do we implement
that? That is a nice thing to talk about. You worked with
In-Q-Tel. One of the most disturbing hearings we had was
about a year ago we had some people from Silicon Valley.
They basically said we have given up dealing with the
Pentagon. It is too big. It is too slow. We do not even
make proposals anymore. How do we break through that?
Because that is where a lot of the innovation is going to come.

Dr. Porter: It is where a lot of the innovation comes from, and I think their frustrations are very understandable. We have talked a lot about this bureaucracy. The risk aversion I talked about is anathema to them. The startup community is all about taking risk, learning quickly, and then pivoting to make sure you are getting on the track to success.

Senator King: Well, are you going to implement a new strategy? I mean, just saying we are going to take more risks and we are going to be quicker, I need to see and understand a new doctrine of how you are going to deal with these issues.

Dr. Porter: Well, I think it starts with being clear that an aversion to failure is not acceptable. We have to reset the culture in the R&E community. We have to be very clear that that is how we will approach. Our problem solving will be faster paced. We will conduct experiments on a regular basis. We will not punish those who fail, but rather we will appreciate their efforts to push the boundaries. If we get to a point where we are not continuing to push ourselves and we are comfortable and we are in that status quo, then that is --

Senator King: I think you also have to deal with the
bureaucratic form. You know, pretend you are an applicant, and how long is the form? How long does it take to fill out? What is the information necessary? What are the security -- we have got a 900,000-person backlog in security clearances in this government. I want to put some urgency on this.

By the way, in my office I often find it salutary to remind people that Eisenhower retook Europe in 11 months. That should be about the maximum for getting things done.

Mr. Stewart, we have talked about this -- and I think, Mr. Slavonic, we have talked about the demographic challenge. This is not going to be business as usual. We are facing a negative demographic time bomb in terms of young people coming up, 75 percent of whom, at least by current standards, are not qualified for the military.

Again, I want to push you for more specifics.

I think Senator Reed had an interesting idea. It may be that if you are going to have somebody in Cyber Command whose job it is to work on a computer all day, maybe they do not need to meet the physical requirements. Maybe they can be disabled in some way, for example. I think we are going to have to really think differently about how we are recruiting because we are just not going to be able to maintain the force.

Mr. Stewart: Senator, I agree with you, and that is
why I mentioned the fact that there are other avenues to
look at, for instance, looking at the civilian side and
looking at the reserve components. When you put together a
force, you need to look at the overall personnel available
to you. And so there are ways in which you can go ahead and
structure the force such that you can adjust based on the
demographics that you have. But long-term, we have to go
ahead and look into how to go ahead and fix that problem.

Senator King: It is not going to be just a question of
more bonuses or more recruiters. It has got to be
qualitatively different.

Mr. Slavonic, I presume in the Navy one of the ways to
approach this is ships that require fewer sailors.

Mr. Slavonic: Yes, Senator, unmanned surface,
subsurface vehicles, and I believe aircraft as well. So I
think that is certainly an out-of-the-box type of thought
process. I know it has been talked about, but you do have
to have people that work that particular box to make those
things work.

Senator King: I know that there are cases where we
have ships where historically have taken a crew of 300-350
that now the newer versions can have 150, and I think that
is one of the directions we have to think about.

Mr. Stewart: I would agree with you, Senator. Yes,
sir.
Senator King: Thank you. I appreciate all of your willingness to take on this challenge. It is incredibly important. And what you are doing is very meaningful to the country and I congratulate you and thank you for your service.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator King.

Senator Rounds?

Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, thank you to all of you for offering your services to our country once again.

Dr. Porter, I think we have started down this line a couple times now, and I just want to pursue it a little bit from the point of trying to explain to an American public that sometimes we talk words but they do not really mean anything unless you are in it every day. Hypersonics is one of them, cases where something can simply move more than five times as fast as the speed of sound.

What does that mean in terms of the need? And what are the threats to our country if China and Russia have a degree of capabilities greater than ours just in hypersonics? What does that mean to the average American?

Dr. Porter: So what that means to the average American is that they can hold our forces at risk.

Senator Rounds: Why? What does it do?
Dr. Porter: Because by being able to move, as you said, at least five times faster than the speed of sound, which to put that in terms, that is a mile per second. That is fast.

Senator Rounds: So we are talking about weapon systems --

Dr. Porter: Weapon systems that can move so fast that you cannot get them essentially and you cannot see them.

Senator Rounds: We are not talking about a manned vehicle necessarily. Are we?

Dr. Porter: Oh, no, no. We are talking about unmanned weapon systems. We cannot see them until it is too late, and then we cannot get them because they can maneuver so quickly. That kind of weapon should be very scary to people.

Senator Rounds: Would it be fair to say that today we have peer adversaries who have more in-depth knowledge of hypersonics than we do?

Dr. Porter: I would say that is probably a fair assumption. I am not privy to all of the knowledge.

Senator Rounds: Would it be fair to say that they are farther along in the deployment of hypersonics than we are?

Dr. Porter: I would put it this way, sir. I am concerned that they might be based on what I know, what is publicly available, and what I have been aware of in
Senator Rounds: So what does that do in terms of the risk to our forces? Let us take an example in the Pacific. What does it mean to an aircraft carrier that is 1,500 miles away from the coast of China?

Dr. Porter: Right. If you cannot see it coming, which we would not be able to see it coming right now, if they were to launch hypersonic that far in advance, you have got a problem seeing it and then you got a problem of shooting it down before it gets to you.

Senator Rounds: So what you are saying is for our men and women that are out there right now, in the case of the deployment of a hypersonic weapon, it would not be a fair fight.

Dr. Porter: No. That is my concern, sir.

Senator Rounds: And what we really want is --

Dr. Porter: We want to be overmatched. We want to be over them.

Senator Rounds: So what we want is the case of where our men and women never enter into a fair fight.

Dr. Porter: That is correct.

Senator Rounds: But it is not with the other folks having the advantage.

Dr. Porter: That is correct.

Senator Rounds: And that is what this is all about.
Dr. Porter: That is what this is all about, and multiply that on some of the other technologies that people have raised as well.

Senator Rounds: It is not just hypersonics.

Dr. Porter: It is not just hypersonics.

Senator Rounds: It is space.

Dr. Porter: It is space.

Senator Rounds: What about space? What is so important about space right now to the American public?

Dr. Porter: So for decades, we have assumed that space is uncontested environment.

Senator Rounds: Are we at war in space today?

Dr. Porter: We have a challenge in that our assets are at risk, and they will be at risk if we do not -- and they will continue to be at risk if we do not address that.

Senator Rounds: Our assets in space today are at risk, and they are at risk because is space a contested environment?

Dr. Porter: I believe the Russians and the Chinese believe that they need to ensure that they hold our assets at risk, including those in space, and so they are taking action to ensure they can do that.

Senator Rounds: Would it be fair to say that we look at space different than what Russia and China do?

Dr. Porter: That I do not know because I do not know
enough about how they think about space, but I think we need
to be --

Senator Rounds: Would you say there is evidence that
they consider space to be a place where it is a domain in
which war will be fought?

Dr. Porter: I think they see it as a domain where they
need to take away our advantage in space that we currently
enjoy.

Senator Rounds: Thank you, Dr. Porter.

Dr. Anderson, a number of us on this committee truly
believe that we have an issue with regard to our doctrines
concerning cyber war and a policy gap with regard to the
employment of our considerable capabilities in the cyber
domain. This problem is compounded by the fact that there
is no federal entity that provides unity to the effort in
both defense of our cyber capabilities on both the DOD level
and also in the American public’s level. And we do not have
a single point of accountability for the deterrence against
those attacks, and should deterrence fail the detection of
an attack, the attribution of where it comes from and a
response in terms of being offensively capable.

What is your perspective in terms of how we should
synchronize cyber operations across the interagency?

Dr. Anderson: Senator, I think the lines of
responsibility for DOD at one level are pretty clear. DOD
has to protect its own networks from cyber intrusion, cyber attacks. And I know the Department has been working hard on this. They have a series, I think, of 130 out of 133 cyber teams that are now working to defend our own networks.

Beyond that, the Department of Defense also has a role to play in defending at least some of the infrastructure, the civilian infrastructure, and here the lines of responsibility also fall to the Department of Homeland Security with the Department of Defense in support. And this is a fairly new area for the Department of Defense, and I understand that some of those specific delineations are still being worked out.

Senator Rounds: Is it fair to say that we have work to do in that area?

Dr. Anderson: Yes, absolutely.

Senator Rounds: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Rounds.

Senator Kaine?

Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thank you to our witnesses. Congratulations on your service and on your nominations.

Mr. Slavonic and Mr. Stewart, I want to talk to you about an important aspect of overall manpower, which is our military families, especially military spouses.
When I was elected to the Senate and came in in 2013, we had a higher unemployment rate among veterans than the national average, especially Iraq and Afghan War veterans who were enlisted. This committee has done a lot of work on that issue and so have our employers, so has the Pentagon. And I am proud to say here 5 years later the unemployment rate for veterans from this era is now below the national average. We made progress by focusing on it.

And yet, the unemployment rate for our military spouses is two to three to four times higher than the national average. It is a little bit difficult to determine because we do not even care enough about it to measure it. The Bureau of Labor Statistics does measure veterans unemployment. They do not measure military spouse unemployment. So we have to do that through surveys to try determine what the unemployment rate is.

The reasons for military spouse unemployment are pretty easy to grasp: frequent moves, often at odd times of the year. Spouses might move to a State who have a profession or career with a credential -- it could be a cosmetologist, real estate agent, lawyer, teacher -- that the license may not immediately transfer or there may be a cost to transfer the license that can be prohibitive for some.

I have introduced two bills with bipartisan colleagues
on this committee -- one, the Military Spouse Employment Act; and the other, Jobs and Child Care for Military Families Act -- to try to tackle four or five of the key complaints I hear from military spouses and clear some obstacles out of the way. My hope is that colleagues and I might find an accord and enable some of these to be included in the NDAA.

But talk a little bit about how you would focus on this issue of military spouses, should you be confirmed in these manpower positions to which you are nominated.

Mr. Stewart: Would you like me to go first, Senator?

Senator Kaine: Please, yes. That would be great.

Mr. Stewart: So the spouses, of course, if they are not taken care of, then ultimately there is going to be a problem with retention because if the family is not happy and if the family readiness is not taken care of, then ultimately that will have a severe impact on the retention of these forces that we are trying to go ahead and keep and ultimately recruit as well. And so ultimately I would, if confirmed, love to see this legislation and work to go ahead and make sure that the spouses are taken care of.

Senator Kaine: Mr. Slavonic?

Mr. Slavonic: Yes, sir. Spouses are a key to the well-being of the service member. And we must make sure that when they are deployed, whether at sea, Iraq,
Afghanistan, wherever the conflict may be, that they have got peace and comfort to know, one, that their spouse and family are taken care of. And in this case that you address, if the spouse is able to be employed, that is very important, and we need to find a way, at least speaking for the Navy and Marine Corps, Department of the Navy, I need to learn more about how the Navy does things so that I have a better idea, if confirmed, to be able to maybe come back and have a conversation with you.

And I know Norfolk, Virginia has a very large Navy presence, and I am sure you have talked to a lot of those individuals there. So I have not been to Norfolk in a long time, so I need to get up to speed on a lot of areas, and if confirmed, I will certainly support whatever --

Senator Kaine: I would love to go there together. There is a lot to see. That would be great.

Mr. Slavonic: Yes, sir.

Senator Kaine: I have a boy in the Marine Corps who, when he got in, was single. When he did his first re-up after 4 years was single. But now he is married and he has a decision coming up in a year or 2. And it is a very different kind of a decision when you are making a decision and trying to grapple with spousal issues. I really see that in my own family.

Dr. Porter, I have a question for you. You know, we
talk strategy here a lot, and I have always been impressed
with this idea of an offset strategy where we use our own
unique technological capacities to give us strategic
advantages. Maybe if we are short in some area, we can use
unique technological capacities to gain an edge in others.

But that whole notion of the offset strategy to me
seems to be maybe a little bit passe since our near-peer
competitors are basically pursuing exactly the same
technologies as we are. And I am wondering if there is much
that is really an offset these days.

Is “offset” the proper term? Are we still doing things
different than others, or are we basically just in a linear
arms race across all the technological areas with our nation
state competitors?

Dr. Porter: So, Senator, I think you have hit on the
way to think about it, which is we have access to a lot of
the same technologies. Can we be clever in how we use them
in different ways? I have personally seen in my own
experience that really great innovation occurs when you
bring different disciplines together in novel ways. So we
have talked a lot about artificial intelligence. Sometimes
people stovepipe how they think about that versus, let us
say, cybersecurity or biotechnology. And it turns out from
research that I have actually seen recently in my own job
when you bring those together, you can get very powerful
solutions. So I think the creativity the American mind
brings to things or the natural tendency we have to be
holistic in how we look at problems can give us that
strategic advantage.

Senator Kaine: And you have been at DARPA and NASA and
IARPA, as well as in the private sector.

Dr. Porter: Yes, sir.

Senator Kaine: So all of those are institutions that
are about this sort of holistic reaching across the silos
problem solving. Well, I think you are very well qualified
for this position and look forward to supporting you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Dr. Porter: Thank you.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Kaine.

Senator Heinrich?

Senator Heinrich: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, as soon as this afternoon, the NNSA is
expected to announce its plan to halt the long-planned
modernization of our nuclear infrastructure for plutonium
pit production. This will set back our military’s life
extension program by years, stretch the workforce to its
limits, and waste billions of dollars on another plan that
will, in all likelihood, never come to fruition.

As we all know on this committee, the NNSA’s record of
construction projects has been abysmal over the years.
Twice before the NNSA started down a path to produce pits that later had to be terminated. I expect the NNSA will announce today a new plutonium strategy that is not justified by the data and will once again be a giant waste of taxpayer time and money.

DOE needs to disclose a legitimate per-pit lifecycle cost of each of the options on the table. I think if they do that, it will be clear that the only choice that actually meets our cost and schedule requirements is to move forward immediately with modernization at Los Alamos as originally endorsed by both Congress and the Nuclear Weapons Council.

Nuclear weapons are dangerous. They are serious. They are not political currency or checker pieces that can be picked up and moved around based on political expediency.

Dr. Verdon, you have been nominated to a position that will be responsible for this program, and you and the NNSA need to know that this ill-conceived plan defies logic on all accounts and I believe will be rejected. And I believe that DOE needs to go back to the drawing board and fix this.

Dr. Porter, I have a couple of questions for you. I agree with your advance statements that it is critical that lab directors have the ability to adapt to rapidly changing environments and particularly when it comes to actually shaping their workforce.

Do you agree that it makes sense for lab directors to
have direct hiring authority over the personnel that they
oversee rather than having to go all the way to headquarters
for approval on those personnel decisions?

Dr. Porter: So, Senator, I am not as deep into that
particular topic as I need to be, and if confirmed, I would
like to get into that much more deeply because I agree with
you that the flexibility is certainly necessary,
particularly in today’s environment where it is so
competitive to hire talent.

Senator Heinrich: We are constantly in a position of
competing for talent with Silicon Valley, with many other
entities that can offer a lot in terms of incentives.

This committee, to its credit, has provided direct
hiring authorities, but implementation, I have to say, has
been painfully slow. So, if confirmed, I would just urge
you to look at those policies.

We had an Emerging Threats and Capabilities
Subcommittee hearing a few weeks ago, and Dr. Griffin laid
out an ambitious plan for developing and fielding a number
of directed energy weapons in the next decade. Those speak
directly to the issues of a new offset, a third offset,
however you want to phrase it, that Senator Kaine raised in
his questions.

Do you support the development of directed energy
weapon systems, and what are your thoughts in particular on
that line of research?

Dr. Porter: Yes, Senator, I do. I actually was able to read the transcripts of that hearing, and I think Dr. Griffin spoke very eloquently about the need to address that and across the board, as he said, ground, air-based. How do we address that problem, and yes, I support it completely.

Senator Heinrich: How do you think we can establish -- and you touched on this a little bit and I appreciate it. We cannot punish failure because when you are testing to failure, you are actually testing the limits. We need to do that.

Dr. Porter: Absolutely.

Senator Heinrich: How do we establish a culture of persistence that does not kill a program with great potential at the first technological challenge or setback?

Dr. Porter: I think it comes from leadership from the top. People will follow how their leaders set the standards for expectations. If the leadership at the top allows for that failure, that experimentation, the pushing the boundaries, then it will flow down.

Senator Heinrich: I was also encouraged by your comments on establishing a culture of execution that really embraces the use of disciplined experimentation and prototyping to quickly drive down technological risk, and when you do that, sometimes you fail.
Dr. Porter: Correct.

Senator Heinrich: That is part of the process. But all too often, emerging technologies do not make it from one side of the so-called valley of death to the other, but they die due to endless pursuit of perfection in the lab not because they are not good technologies and useful and fieldable technologies.

So what kind of policies are you thinking about that could encourage operational prototyping, increase speed of delivery, get things out the other side and into the hands of an actual operator?

Dr. Porter: So this is something I have a great passion for that I intend to work, if confirmed, with the under secretary. This is something he shares the same passion for, and I think we do need to look how do we encourage, how do we incentivize that behavior you are alluding to. Stop polishing the apple. It is good enough. You got to get it out. As a former scientist, I understand the compulsion for perfection. However, it can lead to, obviously, the reality is, if you have delivered perfection too late, it is no good.

Senator Heinrich: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Heinrich.

Senator Sullivan:
Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I want to congratulate the nominees and their families. I appreciate all your desire to serve your nation at a very important, challenging time.

Let me go back to -- I know that it has been raised a couple times already. But Mr. Stewart and Mr. Slavonic, the issue of training standards. I think it cannot be overemphasized. I know the chairman talked about it. Have any of you read the book by T.R. Fehrenbach called “This Kind of War”?

Mr. Stewart: No, sir, I have not.

Mr. Slavonic: Sir, I have read excerpts of the book.

Senator Sullivan: So I have extra copies. I typically give it to all the nominees, including now the current Secretary of Defense, of course, has read it. It is kind of a standard fare for Marine infantry officers. But the last Secretary of Defense had not. So I will provide you a copy when you guys come by my office soon.

But the point of that is it is all about the Korean War in 1950 and what happened and how we went from the most formidable military in the history of the world to one that had a real hard time stopping a third world peasant army because the training standards were relaxed and not focused on.

So I just want to encourage all of you -- I know you
already heard it from a number of us, but as we rebuild the
force, keeping the high standards possible is just critical.
And you will get political pressure from this body, I
guarantee you, to lower the standards. Do not do it. Do
not do it. There is a number of us who think that the most
important thing we can do is make sure there are super high
standards because that is the best way to bring men and
women home from combat if and when they are sent.

So can I get your commitment, both of you, to make sure
that we maintain not only the high standards, but if you
want to even make them higher and more rigorous, you will
have the support certainly of most members of this
committee.

Mr. Stewart: Yes, Senator. If confirmed, we will do
that.

Mr. Slavonic: If confirmed, yes, sir.

Senator Sullivan: And then you will read this book,
"This Kind of War," by T.R. Fehrenbach.

Mr. Stewart: I look forward to it.

Senator Sullivan: I guarantee you the Secretary of
Defense probably has a couple copies on his -- okay.

Let me ask another question, Dr. Anderson, as it
relates to missile defense. This committee last year -- we
had a bipartisan bill, very strongly bipartisan, which was
new in missile defense. Typically, if you look at the
history of missile defense, it has actually, unfortunately, been a partisan issue. But a bipartisan bill last year that passed and the NDAA fully funded to significantly boost the nation’s missile defense, which we need right now, given the rogue threats.

The chairman and I were recently at Fort Greeley, Alaska where a lot of our missile defense assets are taking place.

Let me ask two questions. Are you familiar with what we just did in the last NDAA on bolstering our nation’s missile defense? What more do we need to do from your perspective? And importantly, the bill that we just passed - the implementation of that needs to happen very quickly.

So let me give you one example. It was a little bit surprising and frustrating when we were at Fort Greeley recently. They are building a new missile field at Fort Greeley. It was part of our bill. But when we asked them how long it would take, they said 5 to 6 years. 5 to 6 years. My point was, well, we won World War II in less amount of time. We cannot build a missile field for 20 new silos in less than 5 to 6 years?

So what should we be looking at for the next phase in missile defense, but also implementing what was, like I said, a very big bipartisan push to advance our missile defense system? 5 to 6 years to me is ludicrous. We need
to do a much better job. How do we do that?

Dr. Anderson: Senator, I think leadership has to play a large role in this. There is a clear sense of urgency, as indicated in your question, when we are considering rogue threats, in particular, Iran and North Korea. They have both been working on long-range missiles for quite some time, and the aim should not be to stay abreast of those threats, but in my view actually to stay ahead of them.

And the specific circumstance you just mentioned on the delay of the missile field is -- I am not familiar exactly with the delay, why someone is saying that, but it sounds to me very unfortunate.

Senator Sullivan: Well, if you are confirmed, can you commit to work with this committee to more rapidly implement the bill that we all agreed to last year and is fully funded? But it just seems remarkable. And we all need to look at this, but why it would take so long to actually just build an additional missile field. Will you commit to working with us to accelerate that?

Dr. Anderson: Senator, if confirmed, absolutely.

Senator Sullivan: And your ideas on additional missile defense we would welcome.

Dr. Anderson: Yes. So I know a number are under consideration to look at, for example, some unmanned systems that, for example, drones that may have some anti-missile
defense capabilities particularly in sort of the boost-phase intercept, which many would consider kind of the holy grail of missile defense.

In the next few weeks, I know the Department is planning to release its missile defense review, and I would anticipate that they will talk about some of these cutting-edge technologies again to stay ahead of threats that are evolving. It involves not only kill vehicles but also a series and suites of sensors as well to make sure we have the maximum time available to track and to shoot down them in a timely manner.

I think another area that is emerging is there is a lot of attention in terms of kind of the cost ratios to make sure that our interceptors are not costing more than the missiles coming our way. And that is an important sort of equation that has to be looked at over time if we are to sustain those levels of funding.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

Senator Warren?

Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you to our nominees for your willingness to serve.

Science and technology funding can often be directed
toward the most immediate technical priorities. But as we address short-term needs, it is absolutely critical that we do not take our eye off basic research and the longer-term bets on emerging technologies.

So, Dr. Porter, can I ask you how you plan to ensure the protection of the Defense Department’s funding for basic and applied research? And just say a word about your top S&T priorities, if you could.

Dr. Porter: So you have hit the nail on the head with that. That is always the challenge. They call it the tyranny of the immediate. And, of course, I spent time at DARPA. It was one of the best jobs I ever had, and part of the reason for that is that DARPA does really keep its eye on that ball, as you said. We need to protect DARPA. We need to make sure they can continue to take on the really hard things. Much of what they try does not work, but the things that work are what give us our technologies we rely on today. I think you all are well aware of that. So that will be something that we make sure that we protect.

Senator Warren: Good. I really like hearing your strong commitment to this because I think it is absolutely crucial, and it has got to start at the top.

You know, one of the concerns I often hear is about the failure to convert promising new technologies in the lab to the field, what you referred to as the valley of death. And
I am glad that you and Dr. Griffin will be focused on science and technology.

But I remain concerned that splitting oversight of R&D from the Department’s acquisitions office may actually make this problem worse. So can you just say something about how you plan to ensure that our R&D program stays closely linked with the Department’s acquisition requirements and that these promising technologies are nurtured to the point that they can make it into the field?

Dr. Porter: So I think it starts with strong relationship building across that bridge between A&S and R&E. I am fully committed, if confirmed, to develop that bridge with them.

Senator Warren: Good, good. It is going to be a challenge, like the point about basic research and keep your eye on this.

So I have another one here, Dr. Porter. If confirmed, you are going to be the steward of our defense research enterprise. This is not only the network of federal labs but also organizations like DARPA where you have been with its focus on emerging technologies, DIUx which coordinates with non-traditional commercial partners and Strategic Capabilities Office which integrates new capabilities into existing equipment and which your colleague, Dr. Roper, previously ran.
Can I have your commitment that, if confirmed, you will prioritize the needs of these offices and that you will ensure that they have sufficient resources and authorities to accomplish their objectives?

Dr. Porter: Yes, ma’am, absolutely if I am confirmed.

Senator Warren: Good, good.

You know, I am especially concerned about the Strategic Capabilities Office. As you are aware, the SCO now reports to the research and engineering organization that you help lead. But no one has been selected to lead that office since Dr. Roper’s departure. And I have seen public reports that suggest that the SCO could be disbanded. And I would just like to give you an opportunity to clear this up.

Dr. Porter: So because of the situation that I am currently in, I am not, of course, aware of any of the internal decisions.

Senator Warren: Let me ask it this way. Do you believe that the Strategic Capabilities Office should be maintained and strengthened?

Dr. Porter: Yes, ma’am. If you think about it, it is a perfect complement to what DARPA does. Right? It is about how do you take existing technologies that are already proven and use them in new ways which, by the way, our adversaries are very good at doing. So we need to make sure we are doing that as well.
Senator Warren: Good, good, because I want to hear the
support for that.

Dr. Porter: Absolutely.

Senator Warren: That is good.

You know, the SCO has moved rapidly to extend the shelf
life of our existing equipment in some amazingly creative
ways. And if we are going to stay the most technologically
innovative military in the world, I think we need that kind
of fast and creative thinking.

Dr. Porter: Agreed.

Senator Warren: Good, good. I am glad to hear it.

Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Warren.

Let me share. Since you did not use all of your time,
I will use a little bit by announcing the news just broke
that President Trump will be meeting with Kim Jung-un. The
place will be Singapore. The time will be June 12th.

Senator Cotton?

Senator Cotton: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for your appearance today and thank you
for being once again willing to serve your country.

General Stewart, what is your assessment of the impacts
and challenges to the Department of Defense’s readiness as a
result of 7 years of the Budget Control Act and repeated
continuing resolutions?

Mr. Stewart: It has been devastating. You have to
have a consistent budget that you can count on to make long-
range plans.

Senator Cotton: Many Members of Congress were
celebrating and spiking the football a couple of months ago
when Congress passed a 2-year budget and then a 1-year
omnibus spending bill to implement the first year of that
2-year budget. Those are good things for the military.

How important is it, though, that we implement the
second year of that budget in a timely fashion by passing
the Department of Defense appropriations bill this summer?

Mr. Stewart: It is very important. And then a
continuation on that for 2020.

Senator Cotton: That is my next question, which is
that 2-year budget expires now in less than 18 months. The
budget caps and sequestration or the Budget Control Act
return in fiscal year 2020 and 2021, which is October 1,
2019.

How important is it that this Congress act to repeal
those caps and sequestration as we have failed to do for the
last 7 years under the Budget Control Act?

Mr. Stewart: I think Secretary Mattis has made it very
clear that that is very important, Senator.

Senator Cotton: Thank you.
I want to turn now to a broad question about the health of retention and keeping our troops on board. I will start with a specific example from the Army. There has been some reporting recently about the Army reducing and not meeting its recruiting goals. I spoke with Secretary Esper about this. He said that is not exactly right. So part of this is the result of the Congress not doing our job in a timely fashion. I forget which version of the NDAA last year set a 10,000-man goal for recruiting. Another one set 5,000. The Army went with the more conservative version. So they set it first at 10,000. When we compromised between the two chambers, it was at 7,500. That accounts for a 2,500 personnel reduction.

But then the Army succeeded in retaining more than its initial target, and because they have an overall cap, they had to reduce recruiting by the resulting level. So that is good news for retention. Obviously, recruiting though is still strained.

Can you talk a little bit about what we are doing in the Department to succeed in retention and what we can do to improve a little bit on recruiting?

Mr. Stewart: Well, Senator, I have not been read in on exactly what they are doing, but if confirmed, I would get back with you to see what they currently are doing.

As far as the future for recruiting, I think it is
very, very important that we understand that we are looking
for a different type of individual. They are social media-
oriented. I think the previous Secretary of Defense,
Secretary Carter, had some unique ideas on the force of the
future that we might look at and pursue. If confirmed, I
would go ahead and look at those as a starting point and
then work from there.

Senator Cotton: And what about retention? What is
your sense of why we are succeeding on retention, beating
our goals? What are the key factors do you think that we
are getting our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines and
their families to say we want to sign up for another hitch?

Mr. Stewart: I think we are providing a very good
benefits package for them, Senator. I think it equates very
easily with the civilian community. In other words, it is
very favorable for them. They like the stability I think in
many cases. The changes that have been made I think are
important as far as stability, as far as movement, those
kinds of things. And so I think the leadership is starting
to listen to the ideas that are out there, and thus, it is
having a tremendous impact on our retention.

Senator Cotton: Thank you for those answers. And
thank you, in particular, for noting the non-monetary
reasons why our troops reenlist. I think that is important.
You know, this Congress has done a pretty good job over the
last 15 years of trying to keep pace with civilian pay and
benefit packages, but we will never be able to keep pace
entirely, especially in some certain critical skills, which
leads me, Mr. Slavonic, to my final question for you. And
that is about Navy and Marine Corps aviation.

We have seen the Air Force struggle to get the number
of pilots it needs in part because of the issues that
General Stewart and I were just raising. Our military is
never going to be able to pay pilots what the private
airlines or private charters can pay. Senator King and I
have had private roundtables with company-grade pilots.
They want to fly. They are staying in the service because
they joined to fly a high performance aircraft in defense of
our nation. They like the bonuses but the bonuses are never
going to match what they get in civilian life.

I am beginning to see reports that the Navy and Marine
Corps may face the same stress on its pilots. Could you
talk a little bit about the status of the pilot force, as
you understand it, in the Navy and Marine Corps and what the
Department of the Navy can do to make sure that we keep the
appropriate number of pilots in the service?

Mr. Slavonic: Yes, sir. As you stated, the Navy and
Marine Corps are beginning to have problems in that area.
As Mr. Stewart stated, it is not always about the money, the
compensation. So I have to think that we have to be more
creative. We have to maybe develop a program where we keep
those Southwest, American Airlines pilots who left the Navy,
somehow be able to create a flow-in/flow-out ability to keep
them in the reserves, allow them to work in the civilian
world, but yet if and when the balloon goes up, that we can
call them and ask them to come and serve. So I think we
need to work harder in that area than we have in the past.
I know that program is there, but I think recruiting -- we
just have to work that much harder.

Senator Cotton: General Stewart, you raised your hand.

Mr. Stewart: Yes, sir. If you had the conversation
with the company-grade pilots, I am sure they told you that
they want to fly. And so ultimately if the dollars are not
there to keep their training up, to keep their proficiency,
they are going to leave. And so ultimately having the
training dollars to go ahead and train and do what they love
to do does have an impact on retention.

Senator Cotton: Thank you. My time has expired, but
Drs. Porter, Anderson, and Verdon, sorry we did not get to
you. You have very important jobs, and thank you for being
willing to do them.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Cotton.

Senator Blumenthal?

Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thank you
all for your service and to your families as well.
Dr. Porter, as you know, we are seeing progress in the F-35 program. The system development and demonstration phase was completed last month. The achievement of that milestone is important to the program. It is the most comprehensive flight test program in aviation history, and it will permit the F-35 program to move forward, fortunately, with completing the operational test and evaluation. The F-35 flight testing continues in support of phased capability improvements and modernization of the F-35 as part of the joint program’s offices continuous capability development and delivery framework. All of that process describes continuing development of this century’s next fighter aircraft, which will be essential not only to our national security but to much of the world’s.

I wonder what more research and engineering can be done or is necessary, so far as you know, to assure that the program is continued and completed.

Dr. Porter: Senator, I am not familiar on where the R&E role may play at this stage in that program’s development.

Senator Blumenthal: Are there particular aspects of the F-35 that you plan to focus on?

Dr. Porter: At this time, I would have to say I am not familiar enough to say that the answer is yes or no. It is something I would have to get smarter on to know whether it
makes sense to have continued R&E engagement for later upgrades and so forth.

Senator Blumenthal: How about for the Colombia class submarine?

Dr. Porter: My answer would be the same on that.

Given that these are acquisition programs, the question is how do we work with A&S to ensure we understand what follow-on capabilities they may need in these programs.

Senator Blumenthal: Do you see an opportunity for R&D in undersea warfare, particularly as to unmanned --

Dr. Porter: Absolutely, absolutely. There are a lot of challenges with undersea, particularly unmanned submarines and submersible vehicles. Those are challenging problems. Underwater comms, for example, is one example where there is a continuing need to do R&E work.

Senator Blumenthal: How would you assess our R&D as compared to other leading adversaries?

Dr. Porter: Generally speaking or specifically?


Dr. Porter: On undersea warfare. I do not know enough about where our adversaries are putting their money. So I would not be able to give you a good answer on that right now. I would be happy to look into it and get back to you and confirm that.

Senator Blumenthal: If you would, I would appreciate
it.

How about more generally our R&D compared to our leading adversaries?

Dr. Porter: So it does vary by area, but we have talked today on some of these topics, and I think the things that we need to worry about are areas like advanced analytics, artificial intelligence, machine learning. You have heard a lot of those, obviously. Biotechnology is one that we need to be mindful of. Hypersonics, directed energy weapons. I am probably forgetting some. Cybersecurity would be one that I would be mindful of in terms of our peer adversaries. So there are a whole host of technology areas that I am concerned that our peer adversaries are getting ahead of us on.

Senator Blumenthal: In particular, artificial intelligence?

Dr. Porter: Yes.

Senator Blumenthal: Could you talk about that a little bit?

Dr. Porter: Sure. So as you are aware, that is a very hot topic these days. People are very excited about the opportunities that artificial intelligence and what I would call machine learning, which is what it is really doing -- it is teaching machines to train on data, to learn to do things faster than humans can do, for example, detecting
There is a lot of investment going on in China right now. There is a lot of investment globally going on right now. There are a lot of opportunities for people to get in and do well. And so we have to make sure we are staying ahead of that.

Senator Blumenthal: My understanding is that China has particularly devoted resources.

Dr. Porter: Correct, absolutely correct.

Senator Blumenthal: Are you concerned about that kind of investment?

Dr. Porter: Of course, Senator, yes.

Senator Blumenthal: And will you be an advocate for increased investment?

Dr. Porter: Increased and focused and make sure that we are using those capabilities to solve military-relevant problems.

Senator Blumenthal: Thank you.

My time has expired. I again thank you all for your service. The topics that have been explored here certainly could use a lot more of our attention, and I look forward to doing it with you. Thank you very much.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.

Senator Tillis?

Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Congratulations to all of you for being nominated. Mr.
Slavonic, it is good to see you over there. It was a pleasure to work with you when you were supporting one of my colleagues.

I actually only have a few brief comments. I intend to support all of you and your nomination.

But I do want to go back to some comments that were made earlier. I think, Dr. Porter, it was you who said we do not punish those who fail, and we need incentives within the DOD to get things faster. I also do not think that we punish people who succeed but they took too long to do it.

And I did not have a chance to go back to my office and bring my 680-page RFP for the next generation handgun that took 10 years that has 680 pages in it but only 39 pages are specs. But we all know that all those other pages are relevant, complex, and costly for our suppliers to respond to. And that is an unacceptable success. For us to be in the procurement phase now is a good thing, but the reality is we probably already should have been working on the next generation handgun.

So each of you are going to go into areas where you are either going to have a direct line responsibility or matrix responsibilities where each and every one of you need to root out that sort of culture that is the complete opposite of what my experience was in business around lean design.

Each and every one of you need to do it.
We need to be relevant again. I think it was Senator King that said that Silicon Valley has given up on us because, on the one hand, Senator Warren is right. We need to be thinking about the long-term big problems that DARPA is trying to tackle. On the other hand, when we stand up the Army Futures Command, wherever it is going to be, we also have to recognize that in the cyber space, a number of other spaces, look, we got to get a solution in 6 months because it is going to change in 12. And we have got acquisition and procurement systems that cannot move at that speed, which is why we are losing ground with our adversaries.

And I also think that there should be some reward for making a bad decision earlier so you can get on to a good decision not only within the halls of R&D efforts, but the whole of government.

I also believe for the two nominees who are going to be responsible for manpower and reserve affairs that we get better leverage out of our enlisted. When I would go and work in a manufacturer, a financial services entity, you would go to the C-suite to figure out what they thought the problem was, but you went into the factory or you went into the banking centers to come up with good solutions. And I do not see that systemic level of engagement. And we have to have a culture where we are looking down for the
solutions that come up. It is a traditional organizational construct in business. It is about as rare as a leprechaun riding a unicorn in the government.

And so we have to figure out a way -- I have not used that analogy before. I am sure somebody will criticize it. But we have got to have leaders going into these agencies who think lean, who find examples of it better not happen again, like that 689-page RFP. And all I want is your commitment to engage. You are going to be busy. But you have got to have transformation efforts within your agencies to look at specific initiatives so that when in the Personnel Subcommittee we come down and talk about manpower and reserve initiatives that are getting lean, that are producing value, that are freeing up resources across all your agencies, that I for one think we should reward you and plow back in for more change.

Look, I will vote for every repeal of sequestration that ever gets to the Senate floor. It is a disaster. There is no business that would stay in business in the competitive environment that you all play if they ran their books that way.

We have got a 5-year modernization plan and a 2-year funding strategy. So the fact of the matter is, as impressive as that plan was -- it was outlined by General Mattis and General Dunford a few weeks ago -- Secretary
Mattis -- we do not have any certainty that we are going to realize it over 5 years. We may. But we have our adversaries that are planning 10-year horizons and they are committed. And we have to recognize that is a problem Congress needs to fix.

So I want your commitment coming up with very enlightened and specific transformation efforts for the agencies you are going to lead, and I would like to speak with you about it. We can do it in the office. We do not have to do it in a hearing. And I also want your commitment to cast light on past decisions of past Congresses that are preventing you from realizing some of those goals, specifically how we should act beyond the funding piece. And with that commitment, that is all you need, just straight down the line, yes or no, to get my support.

Thank you.

Dr. Anderson: Yes, sir.

Dr. Porter: Yes.


Let me commend Senator King because you always stay to the bitter end. I am very proud of you.

Senator King: It is only because I have so much to learn, Mr. Chairman.

[Laughter.]
Senator Inhofe: Any further comment?

Well, thank you very much. It has been very enlightening. Certainly I am in full support of all of you, and I think we have got a lot to work going forward. I think Senator Tillis pretty much outlined it for us. So thank you so much for your service and for your being here today.

We are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:12 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]