

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO CONDUCT A CONFIRMATION HEARING
ON THE EXPECTED NOMINATION OF:
HONORABLE MARK T. ESPER TO BE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Tuesday, July 16, 2019

Washington, D.C.

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U.S. Senate

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Committee on Armed

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Washington, D.C.

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11 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30
12 Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon.
13 Inhofe, chairman of the committee, presiding.

14

15 Committee Members Present: Senators Inhofe
16 [presiding], Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst,
17 Sullivan, Perdue, Cramer, McSally, Scott, Blackburn,
18 Reed, Shaheen, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King,
19 Warren, Peters, Manchin, Duckworth, and Jones.

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1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES M. INHOFE, U.S.
2 SENATOR FROM OKLAHOMA

3 Chairman Inhofe: Our meeting will come to order.
4 Consistent with our policy to start on time, we will
5 doing that. Good morning.

6 Today we are considering the nomination of Dr.
7 Esper to be Secretary of Defense.

8 We thank all for being here today. We will
9 during your opening remarks, Dr. Esper, that you will
10 introduce any members of your family who are here and
11 support groups.

12 It is standard. We do have the eight required
13 questions you will have to respond to audibly so we
14 that in the record.

15 Have you adhered to applicable laws and
16 governing conflicts of interest?

17 Dr. Esper: Yes, sir.

18 Chairman Inhofe: Have you assumed any duties or
19 any actions that would appear to presume the outcome
20 confirmation process?

21 Dr. Esper: No, sir.

22 Chairman Inhofe: Exercising our legislative and
23 oversight responsibility makes it important that this
24 committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate
25 committees in Congress receive testimony, briefings,

1 reports, and recordings, records and other information
2 the executive branch on a timely basis. Do you agree,
3 confirmed, to appear and testify before this committee
4 requested?

5 Dr. Esper: Yes, sir.

6 Chairman Inhofe: Do you agree to provide
7 documents, and electronic communications in a timely
8 when requested by this committee, its subcommittees,
9 other appropriate committees of Congress and to
10 the requester regarding the basis for any good faith
11 or denial in providing such records?

12 Dr. Esper: Yes, sir.

13 Chairman Inhofe: Will you ensure that your staff
14 complies with deadlines established by this committee
15 their production of reports, records, and other
16 including timely responding to hearing questions for
17 record?

18 Dr. Esper: Yes, sir.

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

22 Dr. Esper: Yes, sir.

23 Chairman Inhofe: And finally, will those
24 briefers be protected from reprisal for their
25 briefings?

1 Dr. Esper: Yes, sir.

2 Chairman Inhofe: We need a confirmed leader to
3 the Department of Defense through the time probably --
4 always say the same thing -- the most challenging
5 Senator Reed and I agree with this. A confirmed
6 of Defense will be more effective in the Pentagon, in
7 Washington, and around the world. Dr. Esper, you have
8 nominated to lead the Department of Defense and
9 military through the historic transition.

10 In the last decade, America's main focus was
11 counterterrorism. We believe our military had the
12 everything. The last administration even thought we
13 cut our defense budget by hundreds of millions of
14 while fighting two wars, and everything would turn out
15 We found out that that was not the case.

16 While the cut in our defense budget was taking
17 it was actually between the 2 years of 2010 and 2015
18 cuts actually were 25 percent. And according to the
19 "Economist," this is a document that Senator Wicker
20 called our attention to and we checked out afterwards
21 found everything that was in this article to be
22 that while we were cutting ours 25 percent, the
23 increasing their military spending in that same time
24 by 83 percent.

25 Today we find ourselves in a new and different

1 for America's security. The American people can no
2 take America's military superiority for granted.
3 Russia have passed us in key areas and are catching up
4 other areas.

5 The National Defense Strategy, which is the
6 that we have used, which we have talked about and had
7 hearing on -- and everyone agrees that this was a
8 document and that is one that should be used and has
9 used for that purpose.

10 President Trump has supported a new National
11 Strategy with his defense budgets, putting us to a
12 repair readiness and restore our military advantage.

13 Hard work remains. Most importantly, we need a
14 agreement. If we do not get a budget agreement to
15 fiscal year 2020 that includes the growth in a top
16 will squander the progress that we have made in fiscal
17 2018 and 2019. As we all know, our top line in the
18 this new administration was at \$700 billion, and then
19 that for the next fiscal year, fiscal year 2019, it
20 billion. And then, of course, this bill we are at
21 billion.

22 We want to avoid the CRs. I think we all agree
23 that. The NDS Commission report said, quote,
24 and delayed funding placed the national defense
25 jeopardy. But this is not only about money. We

1 our way out of the competition with China and Russia.
2 need urgent change at a significant scale, and that
3 hard choices about threat priorities, critical defense
4 investments, and new operational concepts.

5 And these are choices that can only be made by a
6 Secretary of Defense who enjoys the trust and
7 the President and who has the support of those
8 with critical civilian leadership positions in the
9 Department of Defense.

10 We will recognize Senator Reed for his opening
11 statement, then recognize Senator Kaine for an
12 Senator Reed?

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

3 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman,
4 join you in welcoming Secretary Esper to this
5 hearing. And I would also like to welcome Secretary
6 family, including his wife Leah and their children,
7 John, and Kate. This effort is obviously not just the
8 individual member but the family too, and we
9 their service to the nation over many years. We are
10 pleased you could be here.

11 Secretary Esper, as we review your qualifications
12 serve as Secretary of Defense, I note that you have a
13 of experience in defense policy, including recent
14 the Secretary of the Army. Prior to that, you also
15 in senior leadership positions in both the public and
16 private sector. If confirmed, as the next Secretary
17 Defense, your background and experience should serve
18 well.

19 It has been nearly 7 months since the Department
20 had a Senate-confirmed Secretary of Defense. At no
21 time has the office of the Secretary remained vacant
22 long. Complicating the situation is that under the
23 Vacancies Act, Secretary Esper cannot serve as the
24 Secretary of Defense now that he has been nominated
25 position. Therefore, Secretary of the Navy Spencer is

1 serving as the Acting Secretary of Defense while the
2 considers Secretary Esper's nomination.

3 Given these extraordinary set of circumstances,
4 chairman and I agree that it is important to consider
5 nomination of Secretary Esper as expeditiously as
6 But let me be clear. His confirmation should not be a
7 routine matter. While Secretary Esper has been
8 the duties of the Secretary for the past several weeks
9 has served admirably as the Secretary of the Army, the
10 duties of the Secretary are unique. As such, I
11 is incumbent upon this committee to vigorously vet his
12 nomination and review his qualifications.

13 Secretary Esper, as we consider your nomination,
14 must bear in mind the national security challenges
15 our country. Currently, the Department is focused on
16 competition with near-peer adversaries like China and
17 as the Department pursues the new strategic direction
18 established by the National Defense Strategy. Also
19 North Korea remain dangerous, and the threat posed by
20 violent extremist organizations is not diminishing.
21 Furthermore, the Department must continue to recruit
22 retain high caliber individuals while restoring
23 and pursuing new high-end capabilities for the force.

24 I specifically want to raise two issues related
25 committee's duty to conduct congressional oversight of

1 Department. First, any effort to withhold or curtail
2 information necessary to fulfill the committee's
3 mandate is unacceptable. Former Acting Secretary of
4 Shanahan recently promulgated a memo governing the
5 committee's access to certain documents, including
6 orders, or EXORDs. The memo stated in part that the
7 administration would determine which materials should
8 provided to Congress based on whether the request
9 sufficient information to demonstrate a relationship
10 legislative function. I think we make that
11 not the Department of Defense.

12 Tensions often exist between the executive and
13 legislative branches regardless of political party.
14 However, as duly elected officials, this committee
15 understands what information is necessary to conduct
16 congressional oversight. We are judicious in the
17 requests we make to the Department, and we rigidly
18 and protect the sensitivity of the information
19 us for oversight purposes.

20 Second, the Department must keep Congress fully
21 currently informed of major military developments.
22 example, on May 5th, the President's National Security
23 Adviser announced that the U.S. was deploying a
24 strike group and a bomber task force to CENTCOM in
25 to a number of troubling and escalatory indications

1 involving Iran. The threats were apparently
2 enough not only to surge additional military
3 the region, but for Secretary Pompeo to cancel a
4 with German Prime Minister Merkel in order to fly to
5 But it took the Department of Defense more than 5 days
6 share any information with Congress. I find that
7 unacceptable.

8 Secretary Esper, you indicate in your advance
9 questions that, if confirmed, you will reassess the
10 Department's EXORD policy. I appreciate your
11 I hope that you will also make a concerted effort to
12 this committee fully and currently informed on
13 national security developments, particularly if it
14 surging additional military capabilities to a specific
15 region. Based on our working relationship during your
16 tenure as Secretary of the Army, I am confident we can
17 together to ensure that Congress has the information
18 needs to do the job.

19 Secretary Esper, as was discussed during General
20 Milley's confirmation hearing last week, there is a
21 staggering number of senior level civilian vacancies
22 throughout the Department. The constant turnover of
23 civilian leadership, coupled with the duration of
24 vacancies, has been troubling. Every member of this
25 committee wants to ensure that high caliber candidates

1 in the Department, and we will continue to fully
2 and expeditiously consider nominees for these

3 Secretary Esper, if confirmed, your ability to
4 effectively manage the difficult challenges facing the
5 Department, as well as extensive Pentagon bureaucracy,
6 require strong civilian leadership. I am concerned
7 Defense Department is adrift in a way I have not seen
8 whole time on Capitol Hill. Your success may even be
9 contingent upon ensuring these civilian vacancies are
10 quickly and with capable and talented individuals. It
11 hope that you will work with the White House to
12 them the importance of filling these positions.

13 Finally, let me close with the following. If
14 confirmed, you will help oversee national security
15 for a President whose temperament and management
16 challenging and likely very different from your own.
17 I do not agree with the President on many policy
18 do want him to be surrounded by leaders who can
19 thoughtful advice and counsel. Diversity of opinion
20 important when crafting policy and making decisions
21 impact the wellbeing of our men and women in uniform.
22 confirmed, you must be willing and able to provide the
23 President with your best policy advice even if the
24 disagrees with your counsel and it runs contrary to
25 policy goals.

1 But most importantly, while the Secretary of
2 serves at the pleasure of the President, we should
3 forget that they also oversee the finest fighting
4 the world: men and women who have volunteered to
5 cause great than themselves. Our service members and
6 families should always be at the forefront when
7 defense policy or military action. Secretary Esper,
8 confirmed, I am confident that you will do so.

9 Again, I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding
10 hearing. I look forward to the hearing and hearing
11 nominee. Thank you.

12 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed.

13 Senator Kaine, you are recognized to introduce
14 guest today.

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. TIM Kaine, U.S. SENATOR FROM
2 VIRGINIA

3 Senator Kaine: Mr. Chair, Ranking Member Reed,
4 colleagues on the committee, I actually will not
5 Dr. Esper because you all know him, but I will present
6 to you and recommend his nomination. You know him
7 of his work as Secretary of the Army and interaction
8 each of you.

9 Barbara Tuchman wrote in her 1962 Pulitzer Prize
10 winning book about the First World War, "The Guns of
11 August," that, quote, character begets power
12 hours of crisis. That is a quote that is about both
13 individuals and also about nations.

14 Over the past 2 years, my interactions with Dr.
15 have convinced me, have led me to the conclusion that
16 a person of sound character and moral courage, which I
17 believe are the most important traits of a Secretary
18 Defense charged with the lives of the women and men
19 serve the Department of Defense.

20 He was born in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, the same
21 that produced General George C. Marshall who, also as
22 adult, found his way to becoming a Virginian like Dr.

23 [Laughter.]

24 Senator Kaine: He spent the majority of his
25 service to the country starting with his entry into

1 United States military academy at West Point and
2 through his career in the Army, active, guard, and
3 service to the White House, service to this body. In
4 Dr. Esper has really sort of seen it all as an active
5 and reserve member, work in the private sector, work
6 think tanks on national security policy, service to
7 and Senate committees, service to individual Senators,
8 service to two Republican administrations.

9 You are familiar with his biography, but I just
10 to share two instances of working together with Dr.
11 which has led me to the conclusion that he is the
12 character who should lead the Department.

13 One of the first phone calls I received after I
14 introduced legislation to address challenges with the
15 unacceptably high unemployment rate of military
16 from then-Secretary Esper, who thanked me for the
17 legislation, who talked about his own concern about
18 Secretary of the Army and wanted to work together to
19 this very, very serious challenge. And we have worked
20 together cooperatively on that, and I have been
21 the Army's ongoing efforts in that way.

22 The same commitment to address the quality of
23 our military families was something that I noticed
24 committee began the investigation into the very
25 circumstances surrounding substandard military

1 initial responses by some in the Department and at the
2 themselves -- and I think we all experienced this --
3 skepticism, disbelief, denial, avoidance. That was
4 response of Secretary Esper. It was the Department of
5 Army that first developed the tenant bill of rights
6 became the basis of one of the key provisions that we
7 included in the NDAA this year.

8 Secretary Esper extended an invitation for
9 Warner and I to accompany him to see the conditions of
10 housing at Fort Belvoir, just 20 miles south of here
11 Virginia, Army Base. When a Secretary asks you to do
12 something, you kind of wonder if you are going to see
13 Potemkin village version of it that, you know, we have
14 of solved this and we are proud of our solution. No,
15 not see that. Secretary Esper took us to the
16 version of problematic housing and people who had been
17 treated badly and could not get help from their chain
18 command or the private housing companies. And we
19 very blunt way about problems these families had
20 that were heartbreaking in some ways.

21 And we had a roundtable discussion with other
22 around the table. And when the families presented
23 experiences, encouraged by Secretary Esper to do so,
24 then often base personnel would begin to respond, if
25 detected any delay or we cannot deal with that right

1 Secretary Esper in a firm and professional way but a
2 tough way would not let people get by with substandard
3 responses. He insisted that the families be dealt
4 fairly and promptly. That willingness to display
5 accountability was very, very impressive both to
6 Warner and me.

7 He has been proactive and he has been
8 acknowledge the comments made by the ranking member
9 the need for transparency and working with the
10 And I think those are trademarks of exceptional

11 Most of us were very discouraged by the
12 Secretary Mattis, and what we have hoped for is a
13 who could show the same level of candor and principle
14 willingness to remain independent even in the most
15 challenging circumstances. I believe that Dr. Esper
16 those traits and would encourage all of my colleagues
17 support his nomination.

18 Thank you, Mr. Chair, Ranking Member.

19 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Kaine.
20 you call that or not, I call it an excellent

21 [Laughter.]

22 Chairman Inhofe: And, Dr. Esper, you are
23 for comments you want to make, and your entire
24 will be made part of the record.

25

1 STATEMENT OF HON. MARK T. ESPER TO BE SECRETARY
2 DEFENSE

3 Dr. Esper: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I
4 Senator Kaine could stay here for the next couple
5 to me.

6 [Laughter.]

7 Dr. Esper: Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed,
8 distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor
9 privilege to appear before you as the President's
10 for Secretary of Defense.

11 And I would like to especially thank Senator
12 that very kind, gracious, humbling introduction. Sir,
13 will not let you down. You have been a leader here in
14 Senate. You have been a leader because you are a
15 a marine. You have always taken care of our service
16 women. And as you mentioned, I really enjoyed working
17 closely with you these past couple years, and our
18 at Fort Belvoir again assured me that there is
19 bipartisanship in this building on Capitol Hill, and
20 are leaders out there who will do the right thing.
21 know you will continue to demonstrate that leadership
22 our service men and women, for your constituents, for
23 nation. So thank you very much. I deeply appreciate
24 remarks.

25 I want to thank the President for this

1 for his confidence in me. I am grateful for the time
2 many of you have spent with me in recent weeks and
3 for the committee's swift attention to my nomination.
4 Although I have served 22 days as the Acting Secretary
5 Defense, today I appear before you as the Secretary of
6 Army in accordance with the Vacancy Act.

7 I would like to begin by recognizing my wife Leah
8 our children, Luke, John, and Kate, who join me today.
9 all military families, they have made many sacrifices
10 support of my service to the nation. Over the past 20
11 months, Leah has traveled with me many times to meet
12 Army families and spouses in both the United States
13 abroad. As a former military spouse herself, she has
14 an invaluable asset as we focused on a range of family
15 issues. So I want to publicly thank her for her
16 am confident that if I am confirmed, she will assist
17 taking care of our great families across the entire
18 Department of Defense.

19 As many of you know, I am blessed to have served
20 country in a variety of capacities on active duty in
21 regular Army for over 10 years in both the United
22 abroad during both war and peace. I am reserve duty
23 National Guard and Army Reserve for another 11 years;
24 Capitol Hill as a personal, committee, and leadership
25 staffer in the House and the Senate; in the Pentagon

1 as a war planner in the Army, second as a Deputy
2 Secretary of Defense, and third as a reserve augmentee
3 working for the Office of the Secretary of Defense for
4 Special Operations. And of course, I also worked in
5 private sector with a major corporation, a commission
6 focused on China, and at a think tank, and most
7 nearly 2 years, as Secretary of the Army. I believe
8 broad and diverse experience prepared me well for the
9 position of Secretary of Defense.

10 If confirmed, I intend to bring the same focus,
11 professionalism, thoughtfulness, and commitment to the
12 Department of Defense that I brought every single day
13 position as Army Secretary.

14 I am an avid supporter of the National Defense
15 and its clear-eyed assessment of the strategic
16 we find ourselves in today. The growing threats posed
17 great power competitors such as China and Russia
18 re-focus to high intensity conflict across all of the
19 military services. This requires us to modernize our
20 and capitalize on rapid technological advancements in
21 such as artificial intelligence, robotics, directed
22 and hypersonics.

23 We must also build more robust cyber capabilities
24 with your help, establish the United States Space

25 At the same time, we must be prepared to respond

1 regional threats such as Iran and North Korea, all the
2 maintaining pressure on terrorist groups such as ISIS
3 Qaeda.

4 This need to balance current readiness with
5 modernization is the Department's central challenge
6 require strong leadership, open and continuous
7 Congress, and the courage to make tough decisions.

8 If confirmed, I intend to continue advancing the
9 strategic goals set forth by my predecessors along
10 lines of effort.

11 First, we will continue to build a more lethal
12 increasing readiness and modernizing for the future.
13 goal is to deter war, and this can only be done with a
14 strong, modern, and ready military that has overmatch
15 domains. Our adversaries must see diplomacy as their
16 option because war with the United States will force
17 bear enormous costs.

18 Second, we will continue to strengthen our
19 and attract new partners. A strong network of
20 nations that are willing and able to fight together is
21 advantage that our adversaries do not possess. At the
22 time, I will continue to press our allies and partners
23 contribute more equitably to our shared security, as
24 other Secretaries of Defense have done in the past.

25 And third, we will reform the Department,

1 with the fourth estate. No reform is too small. In
2 Army, we found billions of dollars in savings by
3 hundreds of small stones that many said would not make
4 difference. I will also continue to take the approach
5 bureaucratic processes should not come at the expense
6 men and women serving around the world.

7 The bottom line is this: in an era of mounting
8 challenges and competing demands, we must actively
9 to free up time, money, and manpower to invest back
10 top priorities.

11 Lastly, as a personal priority of mine, I intend
12 place particular focus on the wellbeing of our
13 sailors, airmen, marines, and their families. I
14 very well the impact that issues such as housing and
15 care and spousal employment have on the readiness of
16 service members. I heard this firsthand during the
17 of town halls and private meetings that my wife and I
18 across the Army over the last 20 months. Our military
19 families are willing to make great sacrifices for
20 country, and in return, I am committed to ensuring
21 cared for properly.

22 As promised to this committee during my
23 hearing to become Secretary of the Army, if confirmed,
24 will approach these priorities with the values and
25 proven to maximize effectiveness of any team; to act

1 integrity; to collaborate broadly; to treat others
2 dignity and respect; to encourage innovation, critical
3 thinking, and straight talk; to empower people; and to
4 leaders accountable. These principles and the values
5 hold dearest as a profession must be lived and
6 upheld day in and day out by leaders.

7 Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, and members
8 this committee, thank you again for your time and
9 consideration today. I am truly honored to be part of
10 greatest military in the world, and if confirmed, I
11 continue to work closely with this committee and the
12 Congress as we prepare to meet the challenges that lie
13 ahead.

14 I am grateful for your consideration of my
15 and I look forward to your questions.

16 Thank you.

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

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1 Chairman Inhofe: Well, thank you, Dr. Esper.

2 Senator Kaine made a couple comments about your
3 accompanying him to installations in this area, and I
4 reminded that you accompanied me in some of these
5 also. You looked beyond just the Army. We were down
6 Fort Sill together, and we are talking about the
7 problems and the fact that initiated -- the first time
8 heard about housing problems actually was in Tinker
9 Force Base. You were aware of that. But at that
10 that we had, the trip that we had together to Fort
11 thing that impressed me -- and I think it fits into
12 hearing today -- was how well you did in communicating
13 the troops in the field. I mean, you were one of
14 that time, I thought, you know, you are really the guy
15 this job.

16 Dr. Esper: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 Chairman Inhofe: When you were with us in the
18 no. It was in June. You were actually the Acting
19 of Defense at that time. You said that the U.S.
20 Defense Strategy remains our guiding document. This
21 really significant. This has not happened before. We
22 hearing about this. This was put together by
23 Republicans, people who were top military people in
24 country, and no one at any time since we adopted this
25 well over a year ago has complained that it was not

1 properly. And so at that time, you talked about why
2 important.

3 And also, prior to that in March when you were
4 Secretary, in response to one of my questions, you
5 quote, Senator, you made a very important point. You
6 what we do need, we need a budget. The Russians are
7 modernizing. We must build the next generation of
8 systems now before Russia and China outpace us with
9 modernization programs. And we know that that is
10 what is happening today.

11 And by the way, Secretary Mattis -- and I
12 the comment that Senator Kaine made about him. Of
13 those were my sentiments also. But he agreed with
14 that this is what we needed to be doing and how
15 was.

16 So in the opening statement, I talked about the
17 that document that appeared or the article that
18 the "Economist" showed that in the same period of time
19 we were cutting our military spending by 25 percent,
20 was increasing theirs by 83 percent. You know, the
21 out there do not know this. They do not realize that
22 have competition that is out there that we have not
23 before. And when I see this, I look and I think that
24 have done a better job, but we need to do a better job
25 we have done before.

1 General Milley, when he became Chief of Staff,
2 percent of our Army brigades were at the highest level
3 readiness. Now it is 50 percent. Now, that is a huge
4 increase. So we are in the right area and we are
5 the right direction.

6 So anyway, in terms of the budget, this is your
7 opportunity to weigh in on this and what we are going
8 have to do in order to do the job that needs to be
9 this time, considering that we have peer competitors
10 never had before. So I would like to have you use
11 time you need to use and talk about the significance
12 budget deal that we are going to have to have.

13 Dr. Esper: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 First of all, I fully share all of your remarks,
15 the threat posed to us over the long run by China
16 overstated. And so for those reasons, I fully support
17 President's budget, the need for a 2-year budget deal,
18 of course, the need to have the authorizations and
19 appropriations bills passed on time. I cannot, again,
20 overstate how important it was for DOD last year to
21 a budget on time. It really allowed us to accelerate
22 readiness gains that we made, to advance our
23 efforts, and do all those things that the National
24 Strategy tells us to do.

25 Chairman Inhofe: That is good.

1 Also, we had asked General Milley when he was in
2 classify the areas that we have, to highlight the
3 where we need to catch up, and he mentioned nuclear
4 modernization, space, artificial intelligence, and
5 hypersonics. Now, you touched on this in your opening
6 statement.

7 What would be your priorities in this list, or
8 this be a longer list than it is?

9 Dr. Esper: Well, this may sound unconventional,
10 goes to Senator Reed's first point. If confirmed, I
11 staff up the top tier of the Pentagon soonest.

12 When we talk about the bigger picture issues that
13 mentioned, clearly modernization of the triad is top
14 priority. I think we need to fully develop the domain
15 space as a warfighting domain. We need to improve our
16 capabilities and policies with regard to cyberspace.
17 then, of course, there are a wide range of
18 capabilities we need to improve, and many of those
19 core technologies that we can speak about through the
20 course of the hearing.

21 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Dr. Esper.

22 Senator Reed?

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

24 And, Mr. Secretary, thank you.

25 In your opening remarks, you mentioned the

1 tensions between the United States and Iran. And the
2 Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, reportedly made
3 following statement. If you think the war in Iraq was
4 an attack on Iran would, in my opinion, be a
5 Iranian capacity to wage a series of terror attacks
6 the Middle East aimed at us and our friends and
7 worsen the situation in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon,
8 elsewhere is hard to overestimate.

9 Do you agree with Secretary Gates' assessment?

10 Dr. Esper: I agree we do not want war with Iran.
11 are not seeking war with Iran. We need to get back on
12 diplomatic channel.

13 Senator Reed: And that raises the obvious
14 How do we take steps that would mitigate a possible
15 escalation leading to kinetic activity? How do you do

16 Dr. Esper: A couple things. First of all, what
17 to do is trying to foreclose the opportunity for any
18 miscalculation and misunderstanding by developing a
19 which I understand we have set up a meeting to brief
20 committee on here soon, called Operation Sentinel
21 do passive patrolling, if you will, in the Strait of
22 Gulf of Oman, and in the Persian Gulf to deter any
23 provocative acts by the Iranians or the IRGC.

24 At the same time, from the highest levels of
25 government, from the President himself, we said we

1 anytime anywhere without precondition to discuss
2 the Iranians to get us on the diplomatic path.

3 Senator Reed: So you think that diplomatic path
4 most thoughtful way to proceed.

5 Dr. Esper: Diplomacy always is.

6 Chairman Inhofe: Mr. Secretary, you will likely
7 required in the course of your duties to opine with
8 to section 2808 with respect to the use of emerging
9 already appropriated for critical military projects to
10 used in the case most obviously presented to you for
11 wall construction. The legal requirement is that it
12 necessary to support the use of the armed forces along
13 border with Mexico.

14 Given the fact that this is a law enforcement
15 operation, given the fact that it is not something
16 typically in the operational spectrum of military
17 build walls across the border, how can you make that
18 justification?

19 Dr. Esper: Well, that was something that I will
20 to take a look at, if confirmed, Senator, and
21 look at the advice provided to me by the Chairman of
22 Joint Chiefs of Staff.

23 But in many ways, the operations that DOD is
24 at the border in support of DHS is not unlike what we
25 done in the past through multiple administrations over

1 years. I think in many ways, it is just one of those
2 we do, whether it is putting out wildfires in
3 helping with hurricane recovery in Texas or Puerto
4 flooding along the Mississippi. It is one of those
5 we provide to other parts of the government, to the
6 people.

7 Senator Reed: I guess one area, though, is that
8 would be diverting funds from projects that you have
9 us and said are absolutely critical to the military
10 readiness posture and operations for an activity which
11 long-term. This is a multiyear project. This is not
12 something like a flood where you have to rush in with
13 immediately within hours literally. There is a
14 and I think you should not miss that distinction.

15 Dr. Esper: No. I agree. And obviously, as we
16 proceed, if confirmed, I would want to have
17 you and be very transparent as we move through that

18 Senator Reed: Let me return to my comment about
19 EXORDs. I would hope that you could commit to us
20 that you would immediately take a thorough review and
21 you would revise the memorandum so that we could
22 a custom that I think this committee has done with the
23 Department of Defense over many, many years, far
24 my tenure on the committee. Is that something you

25 Dr. Esper: I will definitely commit to that,

1 And as I think you highlighted, you know, I spent my
2 formative years in Washington, D.C. on Capitol Hill.
3 why Congress is Article 1, and I know you have
4 oversight functions.

5 Senator Reed: You mentioned the importance of
6 and partners, Mr. Secretary. And there has been I
7 obviously, a discordance between some of the
8 which the administration has made with regard to NATO,
9 example, with regard to our relationships with many of
10 allies, the South Koreans, Japanese. Do you think we
11 improve not only the rhetoric but the substance of our
12 relationship with our allies?

13 Dr. Esper: There is always room for improvement
14 the relationship between our allies. You know, I was
15 appointed as Acting Secretary on June 24th. On June
16 took off in a plane and flew to Brussels to meet with
17 allies at the defense ministerial. And one of the
18 that I want to carry forth is this administration's
19 personal commitment to NATO as somebody who served in
20 that our article 5 commitments were ironclad, and that
21 would continue to build in a number of areas to
22 those partnerships and relationships.

23 Senator Reed: A final question. In your
24 our colleagues in NATO, did they raise the issue of
25 apparent discordance and diminishment of the

1 between our allies? Was that a significant point they
2 raised?

3 Dr. Esper: Actually I do not recall that coming
4 We discussed a range of issues, whether it involved
5 operations in Afghanistan, how we are strengthening
6 alliance, but that particular point did not come up.

7 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr.

8 Thank you.

9 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you.

10 Senator Wicker?

11 Senator Wicker: Secretary Esper, thank you for
12 testimony. Thank you for your service.

13 It is obvious from listening to both sides of the
14 here from my colleague, Senator Kaine, and also
15 Inhofe, that based on their direct observation and
16 you, both of them think you are an all-star. I tend
17 agree. I think your testimony has been right on
18 you are going to need to be an all-star because of the
19 challenges that Senator Inhofe has mentioned.

20 Let me also tell you something that you already
21 On this committee, Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member
22 work together as a team. There are some nuances in
23 would approach things. But the way they have directed
24 committee in the writing of the NDAA I hope sends a
25 to the rest of the world, to those adversaries that

1 Inhofe was referring to in that article from the
2 that we intend to give you and the admirals and
3 that will be working with you the tools you need to
4 challenges.

5 Now, our NDAA, which has been passed by the
6 at \$750 billion. The NDAA passed by the House, \$733
7 billion, a difference of \$17 billion. We are not
8 mathematicians up here, but Senator Fischer and I have
9 talking with staff. That is about a 2.3 percent
10 So I would say to my colleagues and say to you if the
11 and Senate cannot, in the next few days, work out the
12 difference between 2.3 percent in our versions and
13 the 2-year budget caps number, then shame on us. We
14 doing our duties. We are the Article 1 branch of the
15 government. We are the only people on the face of the
16 earth, the only people in the country could do this,
17 must negotiate it with the President of the United
18 The Secretary of the Treasury has been tasked with
19 negotiating with the House and Senate leaders on this.
20 I hope you will raise your voice and be a strong
21 I hope at this very moment you are raising your voice.
22 need a budget number this month. If we get to
23 15th, we start having brinksmanship and uncertainty
24 what we are going to do with this budget number. That
25 becomes a problem.

1 And thank you for talking about the things we are
2 to need to modernize. We are trying to bring our
3 up to date and then to look to the future. And so you
4 mentioned on page 3 of your testimony artificial
5 intelligence, robotics, directed energy, hypersonics;
6 next sentence, robust cyber capabilities. If we go to
7 month-long CR -- perish the thought that we would go
8 1-year CR -- if we go to a month-long CR October 1st,
9 does it do to these things which you have listed on
10 of your testimony as priorities?

11 Dr. Esper: Every day that a CR continues is one
12 day that we can invest in future capabilities and
13 technologies because a CR, of course, prohibits new
14 and we are stuck funding, if you will, legacy
15 or legacy equipment. And that is just in terms of
16 modernization, Senator. If you look at readiness,
17 equipping, the same problems. It just gets worse and
18 over time, and in many cases, you can never make it
19 terms of training, you cannot make that up.

20 Senator Wicker: So it is different from level
21 If somehow we could magically wave a magic wand and
22 level funding with an appropriate bill, that would be
23 different matter. But a CR does not do that. Does

24 Dr. Esper: I think anybody who has served in
25 will tell you that steady, predictable funding is a

1 success because you can manage your workforce. You
2 organize how you work in ways that are far more
3 than looking at inconsistent and unpredictable funding
4 coming your way.

5 Senator Wicker: Now, what does a CR, even a
6 CR, do to Senator Kaine's shipyards? What does it do
7 military and defense manufacturing as a whole during
8 period? And does it save us money?

9 Dr. Esper: Well, again for a new start program
10 CR, new starts are prohibited. So you would not be
11 begin a new program, launch a new program. Of course,
12 speak to the shipyards. You typically have lower
13 funding. So it affects your operations and
14 account. So you typically face challenges with regard
15 maintenance. And again, the challenges go on and on.
16 many cases, you cannot make that up. So instead you
17 tracking a situation where you are likely spending
18 dollars on legacy items, on legacy modernization

19 Senator Wicker: On a scale of 1 to 10, how
20 is it that we get this budget number?

21 Dr. Esper: 11.

22 Senator Wicker: Thank you. You are no
23 either.

24 [Laughter.]

25 Senator Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Shaheen?

2 Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

3 And thank you, Dr. Esper, for your willingness to
4 consider taking on this very difficult challenge at
5 critical time.

6 Secretary, we had the opportunity to visit last
7 I appreciated your coming in to talk to me.

8 One of the things that we discussed was the
9 of PFAS contamination that impacts more than 400
10 installations across the country. One of those is a
11 military installation at Pease, the former Pease Air
12 Base in New Hampshire. And the Air Force has been
13 responsive to the challenges of that contamination
14 the drinking water for the City of Portsmouth. But it
15 becoming more and more a serious issue not just on
16 installations but across the country.

17 So if confirmed, can you commit to taking a
18 more proactive stance to address PFAS contamination
19 that are affecting our installations and communities?

20 Dr. Esper: Absolutely, Senator. This is an
21 issue. We need to own it. And I do not know if we
22 task force, for example, in place, but if confirmed,
23 something I would look at doing to make sure that all
24 services are coordinated and we are approaching the
25 in an aggressive and holistic way.

1 Senator Shaheen: Thank you very much.

2 Another challenge that we are seeing in New
3 is with the KC-46 refueling tankers. General Lyons,
4 Commander of TRANSCOM, indicated that he was making
5 preparations to push back the retirement of 28 legacy
6 tankers and expressed concern about the costs that
7 associated with this decision.

8 I recently learned that as many as 121 active
9 airmen from Pease who have been there to support those
10 refueling tankers who are going to arrive at Pease
11 of the first National Guard bases to receive those
12 But they have been moved to continue to fly at other
13 bases to remain to support the tanker operation
14 that need to remain in service.

15 So, if confirmed, can you commit to review of the
16 program and the second and third order effects that we
17 now seeing as a result of these delays?

18 Dr. Esper: Absolutely, Senator. I think in the
19 of our meeting, I understand that you received a
20 Air Mobility Command committing that those billets
21 be moved, and in due course, they actually increase
22 number of billets.

23 I think the big issue that I need to go back and
24 with you on as well is what is the timing at which
25 aircraft return to Pease and to me, as I look at it.

1 So you have my commitment on that. You and I
2 worked together on things, and I think you know I will
3 follow through.

4 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you very much. I
5 appreciate that.

6 The 2019 worldwide assessment of the U.S. intel
7 community notes that our adversaries and strategic
8 competitors will look to the 2020 U.S. elections as an
9 opportunity to advance their interests. You mentioned
10 your opening statement the challenges with cyber
11 capabilities that we have. The report specifically
12 that Russia's social media efforts will continue to
13 aggravating social and racial tensions, undermining
14 authorities, and criticizing perceived anti-Russian
15 politicians.

16 Can you talk about whether the Department of
17 working on deterrence, cyber technology, and
18 techniques to respond to adversaries like Russia who
19 interested in affecting our elections?

20 Dr. Esper: Yes, Senator. We do work as part of
21 whole-of-government approach. We, of course, have
22 exceptional capabilities in our Cyber Command, and
23 important as our capabilities, last year the
24 put out a new NSPM-13, which really put our cyber
25 capabilities on a more offensive footing, allowing us

1 lean forward. And I think for those reasons it is why
2 saw in the 2018 elections no issues. And that is why
3 think we are more and more confident that the 2020
4 will also be unfettered, if you will.

5 I understand we gave you a briefing last week,
6 House and the Senate. Hopefully, that was reassuring.
7 this is something that we must stay on top of. The
8 integrity of our elections, the criticality of our
9 is something that cannot be influenced or threatened.
10 so we are committed to more than playing our fair
11 that regard.

12 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you. I very much
13 appreciate that.

14 Both the chairman and ranking member mentioned
15 openings that exist within the Department of Defense.
16 and I also discussed that and your commitment to try
17 address that as soon as possible. Have you discussed
18 the President or the White House the need to cooperate
19 filling those positions as expeditiously as possible
20 need to fully vet any nominees who are offered?

21 Dr. Esper: Senator, I met yesterday before I
22 over the secretaryship, if you will, to Secretary
23 I met with a representative from White House
24 went down the list of the 14 current slots that did
25 a Senate-confirmed person and talked about each. And

1 obviously, I urged them to help us push folks through.
2 have a few folks who will be coming here before the
3 committee who are on the executive calendar right now.
4 then I have due diligence back in the Pentagon to make
5 that we find names, we recruit the right people for
6 or five seats that still need to be filled. So there
7 range of responsibilities, and I did have that meeting
8 yesterday with the White House to discuss that.

9 Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

10 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Fischer?

12 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for your service to
14 country, and thank you for your willingness to
15 serve as the Secretary of Defense.

16 In our meeting last week, you made one point that
17 wanted to touch on again. In a strategic environment
18 defined by great power competition, the most effective
19 method of preventing great power conflict -- and that
20 nuclear deterrence -- is of growing importance. Do
21 to elaborate on that?

22 I recall that the global zero report from several
23 ago arguing that we should reduce our nuclear forces
24 because, quote, 9/11 exposed the lack of efficacy,
25 the irrelevance of nuclear forces in dealing with 21st

1 century threats. End quote. I do not think that
2 was valid then, and I certainly do not believe that it
3 valid now. What are your thoughts?

4 Dr. Esper: Senator, I had the privilege of
5 these issues in the past up here on Capitol Hill, and
6 convinced, after studying them for quite some time,
7 nuclear deterrent is essential to our security. It is
8 priority. It has kept the peace with regard to
9 nuclear war for 70 years now. And so I think the
10 part is to ensure that we have a modern, effective,
11 credible, safe, and reliable deterrent. And so that
12 we need to look at each leg of the triad. Each
13 certain capabilities to complement one another and
14 to modernize that triad as important to our safety and
15 security.

16 Senator Fischer: Earlier this year, we heard
17 Under Secretary Lord, and she stressed that we have
18 a point where delay of modernization is no longer an
19 Do you agree with her characterization that we do not
20 any margin of error in any of the programs, any leg of
21 triad, and that we must move forward with that
22 modernization?

23 Dr. Esper: It is clear that we do. Each leg is
24 different status, if you will. We need to certainly
25 modernize the GBSD, the ground-based strategic

1 deterrent. Obviously, we have plans to modernize the
2 class submarines, and then there obviously is a
3 underway already to modernize our long-range stealth
4 bombers.

5 Senator Fischer: We saw with the House NDAA some
6 their concern with the GBSD. You mentioned that as an
7 important point that we cannot let up on that
8 Is that correct?

9 Dr. Esper: That is correct. They are an
10 of the triad. They provide some capabilities that
11 legs of the triad do not. So for those reasons, I
12 is important that we maintain that.

13 Senator Fischer: You were recently in Brussels
14 had a meeting with other NATO defense ministers. And
15 one of the topics that you discussed was the fate of
16 Treaty. And as I am sure you are aware, critics of
17 administration continue to promote the narrative that
18 President's decision to withdraw from that treaty,
19 failed solely because of Russia's actions -- that has
20 created disunity in our NATO alliance.

21 Was that your impression?

22 Dr. Esper: No, Senator, it was not. I would say
23 things. I have worked these issues in the past with
24 to arms control. Russia has cheated or is cheating on
25 treaties. I give the Obama administration high marks

1 calling them out and trying to work this. And
2 Secretary Mattis worked this issue as well.

3 I think the INF Treaty has served us well, but it
4 works if both parties comply. And we have been
5 we, the United States -- in complying with the treaty.

6 But in discussions with NATO allies, both
7 and in the big-room sessions, if you will, I was
8 impressed by the fact that everybody was unified and
9 that we cannot stand by while Russia arms itself with
10 intermediate-range missiles, SSC-8s, that are nuclear-
11 and have most of Europe within their range. And so we
12 agreed on a path forward, and we also agreed publicly
13 think I mentioned it publicly -- that we encourage
14 come back into compliance. The United States will
15 compliance with all of our obligations until August
16 after that point in time, we will continue to pursue
17 in our best interests.

18 Senator Fischer: So what are our next steps in
19 response to Russia's violation?

20 Dr. Esper: Well, we obviously need to prepare
21 missile defenses to defeat those intermediate-range
22 missiles, and the Army has been working on that as I
23 the other services are as well. But then the other
24 to make sure that we develop our own conventional --
25 conventional -- INF range missiles to deal not just

1 Russia but China. Most of China's inventory is
2 intermediate-range missiles, and so we need to make
3 have the capability as well to respond, should we, God
4 forbid, get in a fight with them one day.

5 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

6 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Blumenthal?

7 Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

8 Welcome, Dr. Esper, and thank you for your
9 our nation. Thank you to your family as well.

10 We have not had a chance to visit yet, but I hope
11 before the vote, we will have an opportunity to get
12 together. And I hope also that you will have an
13 to visit Connecticut, particularly our sub base and
14 shipyard which, as you know, is the submarine capital
15 world, and perhaps stop by Rhode Island while you are

16 Dr. Esper: If confirmed, you have my commitment
17 maybe in August as soonest.

18 Senator Blumenthal: Wonderful.

19 And that reflects I think a commitment that you
20 reiterated to our superiority in the undersea domain,
21 well as continued superiority in the air, which
22 F-35 and our helicopter force. And I notice you are
23 for the record.

24 Dr. Esper: I am sorry. Yes. I do. We need to
25 sustain the F-35 program. It is the world's premier

1 generation fighter which provides extraordinary
2 capabilities.

3 You mentioned rotary wing. As you know, the Army
4 undertook an initiative, a top priority to modernize
5 aviation fleet, future vertical lift, and there are
6 opportunities there that will give us unprecedented
7 and payload and whatnot.

8 And then I think the third thing you mentioned
9 do have to modernize the submarine force, the boomers,
10 you will. I have had the privilege in the past of
11 those vessels. They are very impressive, but they
12 be modernized to deal with the challenges we face
13 in the future.

14 Senator Blumenthal: I want to ask you about a
15 that I raised with then-Acting Secretary Shanahan
16 expenditures at Trump-branded properties. In response
17 question to him, the Department provided a list of
18 expenditures made by civilian and uniformed Department
19 Defense personnel at Trump properties between January
20 2017 and June 14th, 2017. The total is about \$147,000
21 during just those 6 months. The Pentagon spent over
22 at the Trump National Golf Club in Palm Beach, over
23 at the Trump Hotel, Las Vegas, over \$16,000 at the
24 hotel, Trump Ocean Club, Panama, among many other
25 and restaurant expenses at Trump properties.

1 I know you are not a lawyer, but you no doubt
2 understand that the Emoluments Clause forbids the
3 receiving money from these type of expenditures by
4 government personnel that enrich him as the owner of
5 properties.

6 I would like a commitment from you that you will
7 provide all of the additional information about
8 expenditures at these properties from 2017 to the
9 and that you will commit to providing also additional
10 information about the official purpose of these
11 travel expenses, if any, and in fact, that you will go
12 further and declare these properties to be off-limit
13 establishments, as the Pentagon does for military
14 when they are spending taxpayer money. This money is
15 taxpayer money. The expenditures were put on the
16 travel charge card, and I think the American people
17 have a lot of reservations about this practice.

18 Dr. Esper: Yes, sir. I will certainly look into
19 issue and provide as much transparency as you can.
20 said, I am not a lawyer, but your requests sounds like
21 something which I should have a counselor with me.
22 will do my best to get you the information.

23 Senator Blumenthal: Well, I am asking that you
24 to provide the information, not for your legal

25 Dr. Esper: I certainly am committed to providing

1 information.

2 This also is an important chance to say one thing
3 It is very important to me to continue the long-held
4 tradition that DOD remain apolitical. And so my
5 is to make sure that we conduct ourselves that way.
6 will certainly look into that information, and I will
7 into what you are saying. I want to make sure that we
8 conducting ourselves in a professional and ethical
9 all times.

10 Senator Blumenthal: And I would just add in
11 to the answer that you gave to my colleague, Senator
12 Shaheen, about the threats from Russian interference
13 elections, I am by no means as comforted as you seem
14 by the information available to us about the response
15 by our government. It is a whole-of-government
16 but I think that threat is real, urgent, increasing,
17 far we have been doing more but still way short of
18 necessary. And that is my impression from the
19 you referred to. And I would like your commitment
20 will provide us more information about it.

21 Dr. Esper: Absolutely, Senator. I did not mean
22 convey that I am comfortable with where we stand. I
23 this is going to be an ongoing threat for some time.
24 Obviously, Russia is the principal issue, but there
25 other countries out there who would want to influence

1 change our elections. So I think we need to be on
2 vigilant. And I certainly cannot attest today that
3 will be flawless, but like I said, I think we were in
4 better posture in 2018. I think we addressed the
5 adequately, but we always will have a lot of work to
6 because people want to influence our elections.

7 Senator Blumenthal: And one last question. Will
8 commit to recuse yourself from involvement in any
9 involving Raytheon in light of your past involvement?
10 know you have committed through November. What about
11 beyond?

12 Dr. Esper: I am fully committed to living up to
13 ethics obligations, the laws, the regulations, my
14 Senator.

15 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Cotton?

17 Senator Cotton: Thank you, Secretary Esper, for
18 long history of service to the country, starting first
19 young Army officer and continuing with your time here
20 Congress and at the Pentagon and over the past 2 years
21 Army Secretary. Thanks for continuing to serve the
22 in this new capacity.

23 I want to talk briefly about a point that Senator
24 Blumenthal just raised, the period in your career when
25 were not in government but you were in industry,

1 specifically at Raytheon. This is obviously not
2 precedent. Bill Clinton's Secretary of Defense,
3 Perry, did time in the private sector before serving
4 Secretary of Defense, as did many other notable
5 leaders like Frank Kendall of the Obama

6 How many years were you working these issues
7 with your time as a young cadet up until the time you
8 government service did you spend before going to

9 Dr. Esper: I have spent, since departing my
10 at age 18, 37 years. Easily 25 of those have been in
11 service.

12 Senator Cotton: Dedicated to the defense of this
13 nation?

14 Dr. Esper: Dedicated to the defense of the
15 advancing our national security. Absolutely, Senator.
16 has been my life's work.

17 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

18 How long were you at Raytheon?

19 Dr. Esper: 6 and a half years.

20 Senator Cotton: Okay.

21 And I would say they have a large presence in
22 Arkansas, as do most major defense contractors and
23 other defense contractors, that Raytheon does a lot to
24 contribute to our national security. As well, I am
25 proud of those Arkansans who are helping, whether they

1 at Raytheon or other defense contractors putting some
2 most lethal weaponry in the hands of our troops all
3 the world. But they are obviously a for-profit
4 they are in competition with those other companies as

5 Have you fully divested from Raytheon?

6 Dr. Esper: I have fully divested in accordance
7 all my ethics obligations and requirements.

8 Senator Cotton: You have no ongoing financial
9 the performance of Raytheon?

10 Dr. Esper: No, I do not. The only thing I have
11 remaining, which has been listed on my financial
12 form, is deferred compensation, which is money I
13 which is out there. But it is nothing that can be
14 influenced, if you will.

15 Senator Cotton: Not contingent on Raytheon's
16 performance, either strong or poor.

17 Talk a little bit more about the recusal issue.
18 one thing for, say, a deputy assistant secretary of
19 to recuse himself from issues. It is another thing
20 Secretary of Defense. There are certain issues of
21 national import that it is hard for anyone besides the
22 Secretary to make. So could you talk to us about how
23 recusal from issues related to Raytheon will work?

24 Dr. Esper: Yes, sir. Obviously, I have a robust
25 screening process so that anything that comes before

1 either written or people appearing before me or
2 that that would be clearly flagged and screened to
3 that I remain compliant. I would remain in constant
4 with our ethics personnel. They are great career
5 professionals who have been very helpful across the

6 I also found in my time as Secretary of the Army
7 clearly with this promotion, if confirmed, even higher
8 I really dealt nearly all the time with broad policy
9 matters, strategy, things like that. I never got into
10 business, if you will, of picking programs or things
11 that. So I am fully confident of what my obligations

12 And I guess the important thing to say is this.
13 lived an ethical life. I am going to continue to live
14 those ethics, those principles, whether it involves
15 or any other company for that matter. So it is my
16 commitment to the nation's security. It is my
17 the men and women in uniform that drives me, not
18 else.

19 Senator Cotton: I know you have, and I know that
20 will continue to live that ethical example for all of
21 men and women of the Department of Defense when you
22 Secretary of Defense.

23 I will note that although this is often perceived
24 issue for both Republican and Democratic DOD officials
25 alike, members of this committee know that in some

1 there is a tendency to actually be too hard on former
2 associates and employers because of the exact kind of
3 perception that is sometimes raised when you leave
4 and go into government.

5 Of course, there are lots of advantages of having
6 kind of industry experience as well. In my closing
7 here, I want to ask you about that.

8 This committee has prioritized opening the
9 to smaller companies, not the giant defense
10 especially when it comes to leading technology. I
11 say that has been done with some limited success. How
12 you plan to take advantage of your private sector
13 to break down those barriers to entry in the Pentagon?
14 how do you plan to make it an attractive place for
15 and firms that do not have a very large organization
16 decades of experience of dealing with government
17 and acquisition at the Pentagon?

18 Dr. Esper: So my experience is that in many ways
19 find your greatest innovation, your greatest
20 entrepreneurship is happening at the smaller levels,
21 small shops, those small innovators that are out there
22 creating incredible technologies. That is one reason
23 the Army we established Army Futures Command and put
24 Austin, Texas to capitalize on those folks who are
25 with the cutting edge ideas.

1 In my time at Raytheon, I spent a lot of time
2 and meeting not just with members of the company but
3 their supply chain. And having that supply chain is
4 integral. In many cases, it is fragile. We have
5 today about CRs. Often the folks that pay the price
6 extended CR or the cancellation of contracts or the
7 a new start are folks way at the end of the supply
8 just do not have the means to sustain themselves. So
9 very conscious, based on my time in business, of what
10 means to the supply chain, how you have to make sure
11 nurture them, and make sure you have robustness
12 is the robustness that drives both innovation but also
13 ensures you have the competition that drives down cost
14 drives up performance.

15 Senator Cotton: Well, thank you, Secretary
16 guess you will not be getting a new title after the
17 votes to confirm you, but you will have a new job.
18 know that you will continue to set the example of
19 leadership that Senator Kaine praised you for and
20 opinion I share.

21 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Peters?

22 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 Secretary Esper, thank you for your service to
24 country.

25 Secretary Esper, in 2014, Secretary Hagel issued

1 guidance for upgrading certain discharges to
2 Hagel policy directed review boards to give, quote,
3 consideration to the possibility that PTSD contributed
4 veteran's loss of their honorable discharge.

5 That is why I introduced legislation to codify
6 principles of this policy into law. The Fairness for
7 Veterans Act was included as section 535 of the fiscal
8 2017 NDAA. And I recently sent a letter to the
9 of Defense to get an update on the implementation of
10 law.

11 I think you would agree that troops that are
12 from mental trauma associated with their service
13 have their records tarnished over an episode of
14 that may be related to the trauma that they are
15 suffering from.

16 So my question to you, sir, is can I get your
17 that this law will be executed as intended under your
18 leadership, if confirmed, and that I can get your
19 to keeping Congress informed of the law's

20 Dr. Esper: Yes, sir. As you described it, it
21 make eminent sense. From my time in uniform, of
22 spent my time in war. I know the impacts. I think
23 like that go a long way to signaling that we
24 these things happen. Damage, harm is not just
25 can be mental. And it also goes a long way to us

1 any stigmatization with regard to mental health

2 Senator Peters: Well, I appreciate that

3 And I am hearing from some of my constituents
4 wait times of over 12 months for a decision to appeal
5 occurring, and I would certainly like you to look into
6 the Department needs, including support from Congress,
7 expedite these decisions of status upgrades and hope
8 your commitment.

9 Dr. Esper: I mean, the bureaucracy on these
10 terrible. We need to just go after it hard
11 the matters involving life and health and those
12 People cannot wait for 12 months to get something like
13 addressed. So you have my commitment to go after the
14 bureaucracy on that as well.

15 Senator Peters: Great. I appreciate that.

16 Secretary Esper, I would like to quote from
17 Mattis, his letter of resignation on December 20th of
18 He addressed it to President Trump, and he said -- I
19 going to quote this -- because you have the right to
20 Secretary of Defense whose views are better aligned
21 yours on these and other subjects, I believe it is
22 me to step down from my position.

23 And in his resignation letter, he emphasized the
24 of alliances and the true value to the United States
25 the international order. And let me quote again from

1 letter. He said, it must be conducive to our
2 prosperity, and values, and we are strengthened in
3 effort by the solidarity of our alliances. End of

4 These principles, of course, are difficult to put
5 price on, but they were clearly essential to Secretary
6 Mattis and something that he was willing to resign as
7 Secretary of Defense.

8 So my question to you is tell me a little bit
9 your view on the importance of the U.S.-led
10 order to support our security, prosperity, and our
11 And would you be a Secretary of Defense with views
12 aligned with Secretary Mattis or more aligned with
13 Trump?

14 Dr. Esper: Well, Senator, you know, as I said in
15 opening statement, as I messaged to the field on my
16 day as Acting Secretary, the note I sent to the field
17 that I fully support the National Defense Strategy, to
18 include explicitly a line of effort too which talks
19 building alliances and strengthening our partnership.
20 am fully committed to that. I realize the importance

21 The international rules-based order in the wake
22 World War II is the order that has ensured prosperity
23 security now for 75 years, and I am fully committed to
24 I think that is the one thing that is certainly under
25 from Russia and certainly China. China wants to

1 global order. They want to do everything from replace
2 institutions to replace the dollar. And so I am fully
3 committed to that. I see the big picture, if you
4 that is how I commit to these problems. It is how I
5 addressing these problems, if you will.

6 Senator Peters: So is it safe to say you are
7 closely aligned with the views of Secretary Mattis
8 President Trump?

9 Dr. Esper: I do not know where to pick between
10 two. But clearly I share Secretary Mattis' views and
11 expressed that publicly.

12 Senator Peters: Well, is there an issue or
13 you would be asked to support that would run counter
14 values and principles? Would you be willing to resign
15 ran counter to your values and principles?

16 Dr. Esper: In my time in the Army, I grew up
17 view that if you are asked to do anything that is
18 immoral, or unethical, then that would be the point at
19 you have to consider resignation.

20 Senator Peters: And you would be willing to do

21 Dr. Esper: Absolutely.

22 Senator Peters: Thank you.

23 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Rounds?

24 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 Mr. Esper, first of all, I want to thank you for

1 service to our country, to your family who recognize
2 this is one of those challenging times in which you
3 tried to fill a couple of different positions all at
4 same time. But your work and your background makes
5 eminently qualified for the position that we are
6 today.

7 I wanted to ask a couple of questions with regard
8 that background, which I think helps, but I am not
9 you have had an opportunity to share with the public.

10 There has been some concern expressed about your
11 working for Raytheon. I am curious, though, if you
12 discuss the insights that you have developed and how
13 period of your life would inform your decision-making,
14 should you be confirmed as Secretary of Defense.

15 Dr. Esper: Senator, my years in business really
16 me a breadth of experience and knowledge about what
17 industry tick, what motivates them. As the previous
18 question we had from Senator Cotton, I got a rich
19 understanding of the supply chain, how important it
20 yet how fragile it is at the same time. I understand
21 what motivates companies in order to grow and change
22 adapt. And you also get a good understanding of how
23 organize to address work. You understand their
24 with DOD bureaucracy and where the possible fixes may

25 And so all those things and more I think really

1 me as Army Secretary to look hard at all of our
2 to make sure that we got them in the right place. And
3 will tell you of the 18 or 19 or so major defense
4 that we had, nearly all of them but maybe one or two
5 meeting cost, schedule, and performance because myself
6 others like Under Secretary McCarthy had brought to
7 table a business background that helped us understand.
8 some cases, we leveraged that certainly to stop
9 or stop acceptance of certain items, and all those
10 leveraged to make sure that we got to the warfighter
11 tools and weapons equipment they need and tried to be
12 good stewards of the taxpayers' dollar at the same

13 Senator Rounds: Let us go to cyberspace for just
14 minute. We fight not just in the air, on land, on
15 under sea, space, but cyberspace as well. And you
16 worked as the Secretary of the Army during a time in
17 cyber has become part of the focal point with regard
18 defense strategies. There is a clear understanding
19 can always do better and that we divide this out in
20 defensive and offensive capabilities. You have
21 some new tools and some new capabilities in the last
22 of months. You have got a new presidential directive
23 replaced PPD-20, which allows you some latitude. You
24 also got section, I believe it is, 1632 of the
25 Defense Authorization Act of 2018 where you are

1 with the use of identifying cyber activities outside
2 war zone as traditional military activities.

3 Secretary Spencer of the Navy was recently
4 little bit and I think unjustly for laying out a very
5 report in which he identified all of the major
6 that the Department of the Navy has concerning cyber
7 activity. I think he could have used any one of the
8 different departments and come up with the same

9 Could you share a little bit with us your
10 about what our needs are and how serious the threats
11 with regard to cyber operations, cybersecurity, both
12 defensive and offensive capabilities, and where you
13 going with regard to cyber and its connection with the
14 of the different domains?

15 Dr. Esper: Senator, clearly cyber is a domain of
16 warfare. We are at war, if you will, in the cyber
17 now, constantly battling countries such as Russia or
18 who are trying to do everything from steal our
19 influence elections to put out disinformation about
20 United States.

21 I think on the defensive side, we remain
22 whether it is as a government or in the private
23 just asked about my experience in the private sector.
24 private sector is also vulnerable.

25 On the offensive side, I think we have a lot of

1 capabilities, but policy had not caught until, as you
2 the passage of NSPM-13. Probably more needs to be
3 need to remain vigilant on that front.

4 And I am talking at the strategic level. It also
5 applies at the tactical level as well. The Army has
6 remarkable work, if you will, preceding me in terms of
7 standing up Army Cyber Command, creating cyber MOSs,
8 creating a cyber officer corps, and really employing
9 tools at both a tactical and operational level as

10 We just have to get used to the fact that this is
11 domain of warfare, that we will probably be in
12 conflict with countries below the threshold of kinetic
13 conflict, and that is just the way the world will be
14 now on. And we have to continue to develop and make
15 that we retain cutting edge capabilities and overmatch
16 that area.

17 Senator Rounds: Thank you.

18 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Heinrich?

20 Senator Heinrich: Thank you, Chairman.

21 Secretary, I want to start and just say I
22 your focus on technologies like artificial
23 hypersonics, directed energy. These are our path to
24 offset advantages over our adversaries, and said
25 way, these are the path to effective deterrence. So I

1 appreciate that and look forward to working with you
2 those issues.

3 A little closer to home, at least my home, I was
4 pleased to learn that Holloman Air Force Base is one
5 three finalists chosen as a candidate location for a
6 permanent formal training unit for the F-16. As you
7 since 2017, Holloman has actually been home to a
8 formal training unit providing an unmatched location
9 producing new pilots and shaping our combat air power.

10 As the Air Force makes its final decision, I
11 simply ask that you ensure that their selection
12 the airspace, the existing facilities, the existing
13 infrastructure, and the very supportive community, and
14 years of successful training that is already there at
15 existing Holloman Air Force Base.

16 Dr. Esper: I will, yes.

17 Senator Heinrich: Thank you.

18 I want to return to an issue that Senator Shaheen
19 brought up. Unfortunately, New Mexico has also
20 from some quite severe impacts, environmental impacts,
21 caused by hazardous chemical runoff at our military
22 installations. And I want to make clear. We are very
23 of our military bases in New Mexico. But PFAS at
24 well as Holloman, and jet fuel at Kirtland have had
25 adverse impacts on local communities and, in

1 the water tables that they rely on. In a dry
2 like New Mexico, water is everything with regard to
3 community and economic development. For example, a
4 dairy farmer outside of Cannon Air Force Base lost the
5 entirety of his family business because of PFAS
6 contamination in the water table.

7 So I would just urge that the Department of
8 make remediation of these types of contaminants a top
9 priority, not just PFAS but also jet fuel, and fixing
10 wrongs is not only the right thing to do, but it is
11 I believe owes its military families and the
12 that support them day in and day out. And so I would
13 ask that you commit to me and to this committee that
14 will make contamination, whether it jet fuel or PFAS
15 other things that we have created along the way as we
16 done this hard work, a top priority for the

17 Dr. Esper: I do, Senator.

18 Senator Heinrich: I want to ask one more
19 here. According to the report on effects of a
20 climate to the DOD published in January of this year
21 will quote this -- climate effects lead to increased
22 maintenance and repair requirements for training and
23 lands and associated infrastructure and equipment.
24 quote. And I would simply ask if you concur with that
25 statement.

1 Dr. Esper: I am sorry. Can you repeat that last
2 again?

3 Senator Heinrich: Sure. It said that climate
4 lead to increased maintenance and repair requirements
5 training and testing lands and associated
6 equipment.

7 Dr. Esper: That is probably true. You know, one
8 the issues that we experienced in the Army, as we
9 the impacts of climate change, particularly in our
10 bases, was the impacts of desertification on the
11 installations. So I am sure it is true with New
12 well.

13 Senator Heinrich: Do you think there are ways in
14 DOD can be more energy resilient as we move forward?
15 have specific thoughts on that?

16 Dr. Esper: We do. In fact, I will speak for the
17 We do have a project, for example, at Fort Drum where
18 have done that, in Hawaii. I know Senator Hirono is
19 We have a multi-fuel project that we put in Hawaii to
20 sure that we had resiliency and also could provide
21 our military there for an extended period of time. So
22 think it is something we need to build into it because
23 rely heavily on energy. Energy is not cheap, and we
24 conserve as much as we can.

25 Senator Heinrich: Last week during his

1 meeting, General Milley mentioned the importance of
2 artificial intelligence to DOD modernization. I
3 several technologies. Can you just share your
4 about the importance of technologies like AI, directed
5 energy, as well as hypersonics in maintaining the
6 that we have historically had?

7 Dr. Esper: Yes, sir. You mentioned several top
8 technologies. I share those, hypersonics, directed
9 robotics, autonomy. It is one reason why in the Army
10 restructured our Rapid Capabilities Office to be the
11 Capabilities and Critical Technologies Office.

12 Different people put different things number one.
13 me, it is artificial intelligence. I think artificial
14 intelligence will likely change the character of
15 and I believe whoever masters it first will dominate
16 battlefield for many, many, many years. It gets to
17 how we can think more quickly, how we can work
18 and semi-autonomously. I just think it is a
19 game changer.

20 That is why in the Army we stood up an Artificial
21 Intelligence Task Force at Carnegie-Mellon University
22 Pittsburgh. We have to get there first. We have to
23 because, again, whoever gets there first will dominate
24 many years.

25 Senator Heinrich: Thank you, Chairman.

1 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Perdue?

2 Senator Perdue: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 Mr. Secretary, thank you and thank you for your
4 for a lifetime of public service and also for being
5 to step up at this point in your career for this huge
6 responsibility.

7 Sir, it seems to me that the world has never been
8 dangerous at any time in my lifetime than it is right
9 Five threats across five domains. You talked about
10 and cyber as the two added domains today. I want to
11 about the rise of China and the relationship that our
12 play in that.

13 But I want to clear up one thing today. There
14 lot of people who say, well, we spend \$730 billion-
15 billion on our military. I would remind everybody we
16 now for the first time, thanks to you and others and
17 President, that we have our first audited DOD November
18 last year. We are gaining great insight how to save
19 In fact, if we were to go to a 1-year CR this year,
20 are \$4 billion that have already been identified by
21 Department of Defense they do not want to spend but
22 would be obliged to spend if we end up in a 1-year CR.
23 mentioned that earlier.

24 Today, China spends, if you adjust it for
25 power parity, almost on parity with the United States,

1 that much different. And they are really focused on
2 naval forces. Their Belt and Road Initiative -- they
3 got 36 ports in Africa, 51 ports in South America that
4 have made these proprietary loans to.

5 My fundamental question, sir, in a strategic
6 relationship with Secretary Pompeo and Secretary of
7 how do we deter China in a world that we see what
8 interests are in the west Pacific, South China Sea, et
9 cetera, as well as Africa and Southern Asia? How do
10 our allies and relationships we have had since World
11 to actually deter not only China but Russia in this
12 environment?

13 Dr. Esper: Yes, sir. You took the answer from
14 First of all, we have to have a whole-of-
15 approach. So it is not just DOD. It is Department of
16 State. It is USAID. It is HHS. It is DOJ.
17 to be in on this because that is how the Chinese
18 it.

19 And then you are right. We have to really muster
20 allies and partners to do the same, whether it is in
21 or in Asia. And I will tell you in Asia, many
22 over there are quite concerned about China's
23 is a hegemon, if you will, and if not that, exercising
24 suzerainty over the region. So it is something we
25 really work aggressively on. If not, we are going to

1 ourselves --

2 The Chinese are very patient. They are very
3 If you go back to arguably probably their greatest
4 Deng Xiaoping, who had a famous saying that said
5 like bide your time. Hide your actions. Play the
6 game. They are playing the long game, and we are
7 the short game. I think that is that is where the --
8 is so important about the NDS is it points us to have
9 own long game so we can be at the right point in time.
10 do not want to be adversaries with China. We want to
11 competitors. We want to compete in the economic
12 But we have to make sure we are addressing the
13 concerns first.

14 Senator Perdue: As you consider this role and as
15 President chose you, it seems to me there are three
16 areas of areas to consider. One is your commitment to
17 National Defense Strategy. Are you today committed
18 satisfied that the National Defense Strategy will
19 interests not only of America but of the free world
20 forward?

21 Dr. Esper: Absolutely, Senator. What really
22 me about the defense strategy is that for the first
23 ever, it recognized China as a strategic competitor
24 could be an adversary if we are not careful.

25 Look, I was in the Senate here in 2000-2001 where

1 debated China's entry into the World Trade
2 we granted the authority. And the argument that we
3 into at the time was if we let them into these
4 they will democratize. They will become more benign.
5 will become a normal actor on the world stage. They
6 us wrong.

7 Senator Perdue: Well, Michael Pillsbury in his
8 "The Hundred-Year Marathon," admits -- Henry Kissinger
9 talking about the same thing now. Hank Paulson says
10 in his new book -- that we got it wrong, that we
11 Deng Xiaoping. I lived over there, and I can tell you
12 got it wrong. And we now know from the Made in China
13 what their initiatives are to achieve.

14 And my experience with the Chinese culture is
15 never tell you -- and this goes back to the warring
16 period you mentioned earlier with Confucius and Sun
17 that they never tell you what they are going to do
18 they made a decision that you do not have the
19 the will to stop them.

20 Do you agree with that?

21 Dr. Esper: Yes, sir.

22 Senator Perdue: So the next thing. It seems to
23 have to have a close relationship with our Secretary
24 State. It sounds like you have a long background with
25 individual who is in there now. Right?

1 Dr. Esper: We have a common background.

2 Senator Perdue: And the third thing is I think
3 to have a commitment that over the long term that we
4 turning into a militaristic country. President
5 had that opportunity. He set the stage for the next
6 hundred years I believe by paying down the debt of
7 II and keeping us from becoming a military state. Can
8 tell the rest of the world that that is not where we
9 headed with you as Secretary of Defense and that the
10 diplomacy answer you gave earlier -- would you double
11 on that? And given your private sector background,
12 how that depth gives you the ability to transcend both
13 worlds.

14 Dr. Esper: I agree, Senator. I was going to say
15 greatest power we have is the power of our values and
16 culture. People around the world aspire to come to
17 country for those two things alone. That is why they
18 up in embassies and consulates in 180 other countries
19 the world to come to this country because they know we
20 believe in freedom and democracy and individual
21 all that will be protected. And that is the power
22 have that we have to leverage is the power of our
23 our way of life and our government.

24 Senator Perdue: Thank you, sir.

25 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 Chairman Inhofe: Senator King?

2 Senator King: Welcome, Mr. Secretary. Thank you
3 your service and your willingness to continue to

4 You made a point in your opening statement that
5 jumped out at me that I had not really thought about
6 explicitly before. Our adversaries do not have
7 have allies. That is one of our asymmetrical
8 that we should maintain it seems to me. You concur, I
9 assume.

10 Dr. Esper: Absolutely concur. And as I also
11 my remarks, good alliances are made of strong capable
12 partners. And that is why when I went to NATO to tell
13 how much I support the alliance, I reminded them too
14 they also have article 3 commitments to build their
15 capacity, to build their own capabilities, and that
16 living up to what I thought Obama administration did a
17 good job at. That is advancing the Wales Summit
18 that everybody commit at least 2 percent of GDP to
19 And we are far away from that right now. But a
20 collective security depends on everybody doing their
21 share.

22 Senator King: Absolutely, but the bottom line is
23 we have allies. They do not. And that is an
24 we should maintain.

25 Dr. Esper: Not just maintain. We should keep

1 it. We should expand our networks.

2 Senator King: In his non-introduction, Senator
3 mentioned Barbara Tuchman's "Guns of August." And the
4 strongest message of that book is mistakes and
5 miscalculation leading to war.

6 I saw a map this morning of military assets in
7 Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. There are so
8 opportunities for mistake and miscalculation on both

9 Do you have any specific plans, thoughts,
10 tactics for deconfliction to avoid a miscalculation
11 could lead to a military confrontation with Iran?

12 Dr. Esper: Yes, Senator. In fact, the same
13 to mind when he mentioned Barbara Tuchman's book.
14 Miscalculation in Syria led to how many years of war
15 many millions of people died on both sides.

16 The one idea we have from a DOD perspective was
17 develop this Operation Sentinel, if you will, whereby
18 working with our allies, mostly our allies, and
19 the region, provide monitoring of the Strait of
20 Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman, provide escorts and
21 to put ourselves in a place where we deter a
22 a miscalculation.

23 No better way was that most demonstrated recently
24 an IRGC watercraft approached a British-owned vessel
25 carrying oil, and they likely would have either

1 or brought it into the Iranian shore and created an
2 international incident were it not for a British
3 intervening. And just the simple thing of appearing
4 scene and the warship putting itself in between the
5 boats and the merchant vessel was enough to deter
6 that could have escalated out of control. That is the
7 of concept we are trying to envision in DOD throughout
8 strait so we do not get into a military fight. We
9 into the diplomatic realm.

10 Senator King: Do we have any mil-to-mil contact
11 the Iranians? Do we have any opportunities to
12 as to what actually our intention -- my concern is
13 one side making what they perceive to be a defensive
14 the other side sees as an offensive move, and that is
15 make mistakes and get on the escalation ladder.

16 Dr. Esper: In my short 21 days, I was not made
17 of any direct contacts we have. But I do know that we
18 communicate them. I have through allies where we
19 what we are trying to do and why.

20 Senator King: I was going to suggest that there
21 some communications through allies in the region just
22 avoid, again, a miscalculation.

23 Dr. Esper: I believe transparency and
24 always good in these types of situations so that,
25 there is no misunderstanding about one's intentions.

1 Senator King: Changing the subject, we have
2 lot today about China, a lot about Russia. I am
3 and I am seeing signs of connections between China and
4 Russia cooperation. Is this a concern, and do you see
5 as sort of a national strategy 2.0 dealing with a
6 adversary?

7 Dr. Esper: I think you see a number of things
8 In some places, they are coordinating. In some
9 are cooperating. In other places, it is just a
10 of interests. And interestingly, in some places, they
11 competing. I know Senator Sullivan -- he and I have
12 about the Arctic. That is one area where --

13 Senator King: It is a surprise to me that you
14 about the Arctic with Senator Sullivan. But go ahead.

15 [Laughter.]

16 Dr. Esper: Shocking.

17 Senator King: It is shocking. Did he quote
18 Mitchell in that conversation?

19 [Laughter.]

20 Senator King: I am sorry. Go ahead.

21 Dr. Esper: Fehrenbach.

22 So the Arctic is one place where Russia does not
23 China nor, by the way, do we want China.

24 Senator King: China recently declared itself a
25 Arctic nation.

1 Dr. Esper: I guess 900 miles constitutes near.

2 Senator King: Yes, right. It is on the same
3 But this is a concern, is it not, of linkages between
4 two?

5 Dr. Esper: Yes, sir. Absolutely. That is why
6 to work carefully with our allies and partners. In
7 context of the Arctic, we have great allies and
8 sit on the Arctic Council who can really help us in
9 regard, ensure there is nothing there. But in other
10 as well, we need to work with our partners.

11 Another country I am very concerned about is
12 see Egypt in some ways drifting off into that sphere,
13 want to make sure we get them back. It is the largest
14 Arab army in the region, and they are an influencer.
15 have to be very conscious of those facts.

16 Senator King: My time is up, but I assume you
17 similar concerns about Turkey and what is going on

18 Dr. Esper: Even more so because they are a NATO
19 They have been a longstanding and very capable NATO
20 but their decision on the S-400 is the wrong one and
21 disappointing.

22 Senator King: Thank you.

23 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Tillis?

25 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 Secretary Esper, thank you for being here. I
2 thank you and your wife for spending time down at Fort
3 taking a look at the military housing situation. So
4 will start there.

5 Can you give me a brief update on anything that
6 have been tracking specifically about programmatic
7 and some of the tenant bill of rights and things that
8 Army first started working on that has been scaled up
9 DOD?

10 Dr. Esper: Yes, sir. The last major effort I
11 participated in about a month and a half ago -- I made
12 time off -- was I chaired along with -- invited
13 Spencer and Secretary Wilson. We sat down in our
14 quarterly CEO board of directors meeting with the
15 CEOs and talked through a number of issues. We
16 them with our draft bill of rights for feedback and
17 clear that these were the things we were going to
18 with regard to ensuring our service members were
19 that we wanted to standardize that across the services
20 that somebody moving from Fort Here to Air Base There
21 have the same expectation of what their rights and
22 responsibilities were and that our next move was to
23 once we nailed down that bill of rights, to translate
24 into updated tenant leasing agreements, again, so it
25 operationalized in a legal sense. And that is where I

1 last left it.

2 At the same time, we continued, in the Army at
3 to move forward with conducting town halls and
4 on any work orders. We were putting more and more
5 place at each installation, Fort Bragg in particular,
6 make sure that we had our own people in place on site
7 ensure that during PCS transitions, that there was a
8 party objective person to make sure that our families
9 not being taken advantage of.

10 There is more and more. I think we have been
11 keep the committee informed as we went, but I am very
12 encouraged. The challenge will be sustaining it over
13 long haul and that is going to be my commitment to
14 committee.

15 Senator Tillis: Thank you.

16 You and I had breakfast over at the Pentagon a
17 so ago and you were going through your strategy to
18 every program, determine whether or not -- and I am
19 going to mention one of my favorites here, but
20 whether or not it really was, given scarce resources,
21 pursuing certain programs. And I think in your
22 testimony, you mentioned a number of these rocks that
23 have overturned. Everybody thought it was not
24 but in totality, it has resulted in real savings.

25 Can you talk a little bit about that briefly? I

1 got a couple other questions I hope to get in.

2 Dr. Esper: Yes, sir. At the end of the day,
3 Milley and I spent 50-60 hours going program by
4 over 500 programs, and at the end of the day, we
5 eliminated, or delayed nearly, I think, 186 programs,
6 produced over \$30 billion in savings. It was a shift
7 the legacy to the future. I think it reflected our
8 commitment to the National Defense Strategy, and that
9 same type of approach I hope to bring to the
10 confirmed.

11 Senator Tillis: I am going to ask you anyway.
12 grass growing bullet program survive?

13 Dr. Esper: That is General Milley's favorite. I
14 that was killed long ago.

15 Senator Tillis: The reality up here -- and I
16 is something Senator Perdue is very worried about.
17 know, it seems to be almost impossible for us to
18 divide on funding. I am very concerned that we are
19 get into a posture of short-term CRs.

20 Can you explain to this committee how disruptive
21 is to your mission and particularly in the wake of
22 been a pretty good cycle over the past couple years
23 reliable funding --

24 Dr. Esper: Yes, sir.

25 Senator Tillis: -- and what may suffer as a

1 Dr. Esper: A CR, a continuing resolution, as you
2 puts a number of limitations on what we can and cannot
3 First of all, it funds the Department at last year's
4 which is likely not enough to begin with. But then it
5 prohibits things like new starts, which is critical if
6 are trying to modernize the force consistent with the
7 National Defense Strategy. It prohibits no changes in
8 quantities for production. So we are trying to
9 munitions stocks. If we find the need to increase the
10 number of this munition or that munition, we will not
11 able to do it. And of course, if the money comes late
12 you do not have enough money, you cannot fill training
13 in your schoolhouses. You cannot buy maintenance and
14 parts to some degree. We have proposals across all
15 services to increase the end strength. We likely will
16 be able to do that as well. So it impacts everything
17 across the board, and in many cases, you cannot
18 ground. You cannot go back and fill a seat in a
19 so it has a direct impact on training.

20 Senator Tillis: Thank you.

21 The last question I would have for you -- number
22 know that the other departments have done some of the
23 like you did in the Army. I hope we are going to see
24 identification of all programs and making tough
25 up to the DOD so that you can report back similar

1 the other lines of service.

2 But I think the other thing that we have to talk
3 -- I do not expect you to get into details in
4 if we are not going to be able to end sequestration,
5 sequestration, one of the things we need to think
6 what kind of authorities or other things we could
7 potentially consider to lessen the impact on what I
8 probably one of the worst votes that we have seen up
9 modern history. So we just need your feedback on that
10 that we can weather the storm because I think the
11 going to cycle around potentially in this Congress.

12 Dr. Esper: Yes, sir.

13 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Kaine?

14 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

15 Dr. Esper, are you familiar with the Stephen
16 phrase, the main thing is to keep the main thing the
17 thing?

18 Dr. Esper: I have not heard that before, but that
19 clever.

20 Senator Kaine: It is something that I like to
21 myself to not focus on smaller order problems and
22 bigger ones to get worse. That is one of the reasons
23 was very happy to hear you testify earlier with
24 Iran that diplomacy should be our preferred position.

25 I am deeply worried about the escalating tensions

1 Iran for a number of reasons, including I believe an
2 objective view would place the beginning of these
3 escalations with the U.S. backing out of a diplomatic
4 And I do not want to be in a position where we would
5 have to look our troops in the face and say we had a
6 diplomatic deal. We tore it up, and now we are going
7 have to send you into a war. I think that would be
8 difficult.

9 But one of the other reasons that I am worried
10 escalating tensions in the Middle East is I think the
11 thing right now -- and General Milley testified
12 to this last week -- for the next probably centuries,
13 relationship between the United States and China is
14 be definitive not only for our nation but even for the
15 world.

16 Dr. Esper: I -- I am sorry.

17 Senator Kaine: No. Go ahead.

18 Dr. Esper: I agree, Senator. The challenge we
19 making sure that the near-term challenges do not
20 commitment and resourcing to the far term, the far
21 challenges that we have to get on now. We cannot wait
22 15 years. That is the biggest challenge we face right

23 Senator Kaine: I very much worry that another
24 against a smaller, weaker, faraway nation would take
25 our focus on China. And China is a full-spectrum

1 competitor. General Milley was talking about -- and
2 talked in this hearing -- it could be air, sea, land,
3 space. But outside of the military realm, economic,
4 diplomacy, it is a full-spectrum competitor and we
5 focus on it.

6 Let me ask you a question about sort of your
7 about this. As we focused in an earlier generation on
8 Soviet Union as a key threat, one of our strong assets
9 the network of allies, beginning with Truman and NATO
10 article 5 and joint defense. We had partners and
11 a degree that the Soviet Union did not. They had
12 nations, but they did not have the same network of

13 Extract the lesson and let us move over into Asia
14 now. My view of China is they do a lot of deals, but
15 do not have allies to the same degree we do. And even
16 we are in nations where they are doing a lot of deals,
17 is a skepticism about China's intent.

18 We do not have the same formalized alliance
19 in the INDOPACOM as we do in Europe, and maybe we do
20 need it. You need to do things that are right for
21 not just recreate old models. We have a lot of
22 relationships.

23 But talk a little bit long term from the
24 if you were Secretary, what would your thinking be
25 sort of the alliances in the INDOPACOM and how we

1 those to advance our common interests.

2 Dr. Esper: Senator, I think you have covered it
3 I mean, we do have -- our alliances in Asia are
4 bilaterally with the principal -- Australia, Japan,
5 Korea. In a perfect world, you would expand that and
6 them all together, but there are obviously historical
7 animosities that go back to World War II and prior
8 prevent that.

9 So I think our challenge is to continue building,
10 much as we can, alliances and partnerships. I think
11 is a good place to start, to expand that.

12 But the bigger issue you mentioned -- it is what
13 concerns me -- is we eventually won in the Cold War
14 Russia did not have the economic might to win at the
15 and they were using force. They were compelling
16 be in their orbit, to be part of the Warsaw Pact.
17 great economic power and potential, and they are using
18 They are using it in the region to influence others,
19 overtly or covertly, if you will. They are taking
20 of small countries who need capital, and they are
21 them into debt in a way that they are able to capture
22 strategic ports, critical minerals and resources, you
23 it. But one of the biggest concerns is simply that,
24 they will use their economic might that is only
25 mean, it is just a matter of time before they match us

1 possibly surpass us, that they will use that in a way
2 will pull even likely partners, if not our current
3 away from us. That is the big challenge that I think
4 face with China, that we did not face with Russia.

5 Senator Kaine: And that is a full spectrum.
6 not just a DOD responsibility, although the DOD owns a
7 chunk of it, but there are others as well.

8 Dr. Esper: Yes, sir. That was my response
9 I think we have got to leverage USAID. We got to
10 our values, our culture, every department of the
11 States Government.

12 Senator Kaine: How is the DOD and the
13 viewing Turkey's decision on the S-400? As a
14 acquisition decision or as a fundamental change in
15 and possibly a fundamental change in the nature of the
16 Turkey relationship?

17 Dr. Esper: It is certainly disappointing. Those
18 my words. Very disappointing. Turkey has been a
19 longstanding NATO ally, a very capable one. I think
20 were one of the original allies, if I think back to
21 alliance formed. And so it is very disheartening to
22 they have drifted over the past several years.

23 But the policy that I have communicated to my
24 counterpart, if confirmed, defense minister is that
25 either have the S-400 or you can have the F-35. You

1 have both. Acquisition of the S-400 fundamentally
2 undermines the capabilities of the F-35 and our
3 retain that overmatch in skies going forward.

4 Senator Kaine: Thank you.

5 Thanks, Mr. Chair.

6 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Hawley?

7 Senator Hawley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 Dr. Esper, congratulations on your nomination. I
9 you are a fantastic candidate. I look forward to
10 you.

11 I have been very encouraged today to hear you
12 about the importance of NDS and the much needed
13 focus that it brings not just to the Department but to
14 nation's political leadership and hopefully across
15 whole of government and also about the nature of China
16 strategic competitor here. Now, I want to talk more
17 that in a little bit more detail, if I could.

18 If China were to seize control of Taiwan, what
19 that mean for U.S. interests and for a free and open
20 Pacific more broadly?

21 Dr. Esper: Well, first of all, it would affect
22 obligations under the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979.
23 is the first thing that came to mind when you said

24 Clearly what it does is it signals, contrary to
25 the Chinese like to say, that they are willing to use

1 to get their way. That is something they promised.
2 Obviously, they consider Taiwan a part of China.
3 historical ties there, if you will, that they say and
4 cultural ones. But I think that would really change
5 dynamics of the Pacific, and it would really cause
6 to all their neighbors and partners for the reasons
7 were discussing earlier. By the way, I think that is
8 of what you see playing out in the streets of Hong
9 these days is a lot of concern about what has happened
10 China assumed control of Hong Kong in 1997.

11 Senator Hawley: The Department, rightly mind
12 said that a Chinese fait accompli in relationship to
13 is a major threat that we need to focus on. Now, I
14 heard some argue and recently that the best way to
15 Chinese fait accompli in Taiwan is by escalating
16 horizontally by deliberately expanding the conflict in
17 to impose costs on China without actually defeating
18 attack itself. And I just have to say for my own
19 not convinced by this. This sounds to me like a way
20 impose significantly more costs on this country, more
21 lost, more treasure expended, whereas we could be
22 on blunting the initial Chinese assault and then
23 them in as a conflict as possible.

24 So let me just ask you in your opinion what would
25 take to defeat a Chinese fait accompli in the way that

1 limits the cost and the danger to Americans?

2 Dr. Esper: Senator, I like to begin far left of
3 fight and talk about how do we continue to engage the
4 Chinese, encourage their development as a normal
5 a responsible player in the international realm, if
6 will, how do we restrict our competition with them to
7 economic realm, and how do we resolve problems
8 diplomatically. That is where I think we need to go.
9 not need a war with China, and that is kind of my
10 is how do we deter conflict.

11 Senator Hawley: As we think about that
12 however, and planning for it and signal what it is
13 were going to do if we were confronted with situations
14 we do not like, such as Chinese aggression against
15 elsewhere in the Indo-Pacific, what is your view on
16 best limit the potential exposure to us in any such
17 conflict? I mean, how are we going to counter Chinese
18 aggression should that ultimately come to pass? What
19 question is really about is how are we going to
20 do it. We hope not to have to do it, but if we have
21 it, how are we going to be prepared to do it in a way
22 limits our exposure, limits the danger to us, but is
23 effective?

24 Dr. Esper: I believe in Ronald Reagan's dictum,
25 through strength. So we have to have really capable

1 as I said in my opening remarks, whether it is in the
2 space, and your conventional domains of air, land.
3 subsurface, by the way is important in that theater --
4 have such a capable military that we deter any
5 whatsoever. That is number one.

6 Number two, it goes back to building a network of
7 capable allies and partners who can help us present a
8 bigger display of commitment and resolve than we would
9 otherwise, you know, as ones or twos.

10 And so I think we need to look aggressively again
11 else we can develop relationships. That is one thing
12 to do, if confirmed, pursue new partnerships with
13 like Indonesia, Vietnam, and others to really build a
14 community of likeminded nations who are not there to
15 confront China but to deter bad behavior and making
16 embrace and sustain the international rules-based
17 has sustained us now for decades.

18 Senator Hawley: By my count, over \$20 billion
19 been directed towards the European Deterrence
20 EDI, since fiscal year 2015. Would you support an
21 initiative like EDI in the Indo-Pacific to make sure
22 INDOPACOM has what it needs to address near-term
23 shortfalls?

24 Dr. Esper: Yes, sir, in principle. I would want
25 understand where the money is coming from to pay for

1 and all that. We have to, again, approach these
2 holistically.

3 Senator Hawley: One last thing here. I have
4 clear my support for the President's commitment to a
5 and open Indo-Pacific. And as part of that effort, I
6 it is essential that our regional allies contribute
7 fair share to their defense.

8 And with that in mind, how should we expect
9 others to contribute to their defense, whether in
10 military acquisitions or otherwise?

11 Dr. Esper: Well, I support sales to Taiwan. It
12 again a commitment we made under the Taiwan Relations
13 I have seen, in my years in D.C., successive
14 commit to that and fulfill it in various ways. And so
15 is a place to begin right there with arms sales. It
16 gives them a capability. It builds interoperability
17 forth. And so that is where I would start on that

18 Senator Hawley: Thank you, Dr. Esper.

19 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Warren?

21 Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 Secretary Esper, prior to becoming Army
23 were the top lobbyist for Raytheon which, of course,
24 nation's third largest defense contractor. Now, under
25 current ethics rules, you are prohibited from

1 in any decisions involving Raytheon for 2 years after
2 appointment as Army Secretary. But because you have
3 been in government for 20 months, that recusal period
4 to expire in November, which means you will soon be
5 participate personally and substantially in matters
6 involving your former employer. That is a conflict of
7 interest given that Raytheon does billions of dollars
8 of business every year with the Defense Department.

9 So, Secretary Esper, your predecessor, Acting
10 Shanahan, committed to extend his recusal from all
11 involving his former employer, Boeing, for the
12 his government service. If you are confirmed, will
13 the same and commit to extending your recusal from any
14 all matters involving Raytheon for the duration of
15 tenure as Secretary of Defense?

16 Dr. Esper: You know, Senator, we had this
17 in your office.

18 Senator Warren: Yes, we did.

19 Dr. Esper: We had this discussion a couple years

20 You know, on the advice of my ethics folks at the
21 Pentagon, the career professionals, no, the
22 is not to. The belief is that the screening process I
23 in place, all the rules and regulations and law that I

24 Senator Warren: So let us just cut to it. You
25 going to do what Acting Secretary Shanahan agreed to

1 that is agree not to be involved in decisions
2 former employer where you were head lobbyist for the
3 duration of your time as Secretary of Defense.

4 Dr. Esper: Senator, I cannot explain why he made
5 commitment. We obviously come to the --

6 Senator Warren: But you are not willing to make
7 same commitment. Is that right?

8 Dr. Esper: He was fulfilling a different role
9 am, and he obviously --

10 Senator Warren: You are unwilling to make that
11 commitment. Is that right, Dr. Esper?

12 Dr. Esper: He has a different professional
13 than I.

14 Senator Warren: I will take that as a yes, you
15 unwilling to make that commitment.

16 That is not the only ethics problem with your
17 nomination. Part of the deal you got from Raytheon
18 left as their top lobbyist was at least \$1 million in
19 deferred compensation after 2022. Now, the law
20 you from participating in matters that would affect
21 Raytheon's ability or willingness to hand you this
22 payout.

23 But there is a catch. In a recent memo, you
24 an exception to your ethics obligations by writing
25 can get a waiver to participate in matters that

1 predictably affect Raytheon's financial interest if it
2 quote, so important that it cannot be referred to
3 official. End quote. This smacks of corruption,
4 simple.

5 So here is my question. Will you commit that
6 your time as Defense Secretary, that you will not seek
7 waiver that will allow you to participate in matters
8 affect Raytheon's financial interests?

9 Dr. Esper: Well, Senator, let me correct the
10 with regard to what you said. At any time in the past
11 some months, to include the last 3 weeks, did I
12 seek or receive or be granted any waiver.

13 Senator Warren: I appreciate, Dr. Esper, that
14 not in the past asked for one, but you are the one --

15 Dr. Esper: If I can answer the question.

16 Senator Warren: -- who has detailed an exception
17 your ethics obligation by saying that you can seek a
18 in the future. And so I am asking, if you are
19 will you agree not to seek such a waiver. I think it
20 fair question. It is a yes or no.

21 I have other ethics issues I would like to cover.

22 Dr. Esper: I know, but I would like to -- I
23 is a good debate.

24 Senator Warren: No. I am not trying to have a
25 I want to know if you will agree not to seek such a

1 Dr. Esper: So let me just read to you. This is
2 letter from the Director Standards of Conduct Office

3 Senator Warren: Is that a yes or a no?

4 Dr. Esper: -- it says --

5 Senator Warren: I will take it then as a no, you
6 not agree not to seek such a waiver.

7 Dr. Esper: Mr. Chairman, I would like to submit
8 for the record.

9 Senator Warren: I have a third question to ask
10 ethics. I think I am entitled to ask these questions.

11 Dr. Esper: But I just want to answer your

12 Senator Warren: The question is a yes or no.

13 Chairman Inhofe: I am going to interrupt for a
14 here. I think that Dr. Esper has the opportunity,
15 have the opportunity to answer the questions that you
16 asking. You have asked several questions. He is
17 answer a question. We would like to recognize him to
18 that question.

19 Senator Warren: I presume, Mr. Chairman, I will
20 extra time then?

21 Chairman Inhofe: Yes, you can have extra time.

22 Dr. Esper: I would just like to submit this for
23 record. It is a statement from the Director of the
24 Standards of Conduct Office. I will not read the
25 thing in the interest of time, but it says, quote, at

1 time while serving as the Secretary of the Army or the
2 Acting Secretary of Defense did you -- he is writing
3 -- request, seek, or receive a waiver or authorization
4 related to your ethics agreement and ethics
5 Unquote.

6 Chairman Inhofe: Okay.

7 Senator Warren: So I stipulated earlier that I
8 understand you have not asked in the past. So I will
9 question again. Will you agree not to ask for a
10 during the time you serve as Secretary of Defense?

11 Dr. Esper: No, Senator, I will not because I am
12 to continue to abide by the rules and regulations and
13 going to continue to consult closely --

14 Senator Warren: Thank you. I have a third

15 Dr. Esper: -- with my ethics personnel to ensure
16 we stay in the ethical mid-field.

17 Senator Warren: I recently introduced
18 block the revolving door between the Pentagon and
19 defense contractors like Raytheon by prohibiting big
20 contractors from hiring former senior DOD officials
21 years after they leave government. If it were the
22 could not go back to work at Raytheon or any other
23 contractor immediately. In other words, it would help
24 the revolving door.

25 If confirmed, will you commit not to work for or

1 paid by any defense contractor for at least 4 years
2 your government service?

3 Dr. Esper: No, Senator, I will not.

4 Senator Warren: All right. So let me get this
5 straight. You are still due to get at least a million
6 dollar payout from when you lobbied for Raytheon. You
7 not commit to recuse yourself from Raytheon's
8 insist on being free to seek a waiver that would let
9 make decisions affecting Raytheon's bottom line and
10 remaining financial interests. And you will not rule
11 taking a trip right back through the revolving door on
12 way out of government service or even just delaying
13 trip for 4 years after you leave government.

14 Secretary Esper, the American people deserve to
15 that you are making decisions in our country's best
16 interests not in your own financial interests. You
17 make those commitments to this committee. That means
18 should not be confirmed as Secretary of Defense.

19 Dr. Esper: Senator, if I may answer your
20 the age of 18, I went to West Point, and I swore an
21 defend this Constitution. And I embraced a motto
22 duty and honor and country. And I have lived my life
23 accordance with those values ever since then. I went
24 for this country. I served overseas for this country.
25 stepped down from jobs that paid me well more than

1 was working anywhere else. And each time, it was to
2 the public good and to serve the young men and women
3 in our armed services.

4 So, no, I disagree -- I think the presumption is
5 some reason anybody that comes from the business or
6 corporate world is corrupt.

7 Senator Warren: So I am asking the question --

8 Chairman Inhofe: Okay. That is it.

9 Senator Warren: No. This is not right, Mr.

10 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Sullivan is recognized.

11 Senator Warren: I did not ask a question at the

12 Chairman Inhofe: You have gone 2 minutes over
13 time.

14 Senator Warren: No. I have not gone over. He
15 gone over, and he is not willing --

16 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Sullivan?

17 Senator Warren: -- to make the commitment that
18 not engage in conflicts of interest for the company
19 which he was a lobbyist.

20 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Sullivan?

21 Senator Warren: This is outrageous.

22 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 And I want to thank Secretary Esper for your
24 our country. I want to thank the family members here.
25 have three children myself, and it is not always easy.

1 Families are in public service as well. So I want to
2 you for all that you have done for your dad and your

3 Mr. Secretary, I am going to ask you. Let us
4 back to this issue. Will you commit to abide by all
5 and ethics requirements regarding your prior
6 regard to Raytheon unequivocally?

7 Dr. Esper: Absolutely. And can I make one other
8 on this?

9 Senator Sullivan: You may.

10 Dr. Esper: I think it is important. It will
11 30 seconds.

12 President Obama strongly believed in ethics in
13 government. As he was staffing out his cabinet in
14 reached out to the top lobbyist at Raytheon at the
15 he brought him into his government to be the Deputy
16 Secretary of Defense with only a 1-year recusal
17 was a good man and he was an ethical man.

18 Senator Sullivan: Let me --

19 Dr. Esper: And that person, by the way, was
20 unanimously by this committee and went to the floor of
21 Senate and was confirmed by the vote of 93 to 4. And
22 think that was the right decision to make. I thought
23 person brought a great --

24 Senator Sullivan: Let me raise another issue. I
25 bunch of questions, but this is important. You saw

1 Rounds, Senator Cotton raise this issue as well.

2 Senator Warren casually throws out the word
3 "corruption" -- casually throws out the word
4 hoping you are going to get a little stink on it. In
5 27 years of service to your country, as a military
6 as a staffer, as someone who has gone to war for
7 have you ever been accused of corruption before?

8 Dr. Esper: No, sir, never in my life.

9 Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

10 You and I have had many good meetings. I
11 our visits up in Alaska. Let me highlight a couple
12 where I think the Pentagon needs to focus more. You
13 heard a lot about allies from both sides, which I
14 important. You talked about the National Defense
15 Senator Hawley was talking about China. I think the
16 National Defense Strategy does a great job in terms of
17 raising the issue of the rise of China and our focus
18 Indo-Pacific.

19 One area where I think we need to do a better job
20 our force posture in the region. Will you commit to
21 with this committee with regard to our force posture
22 Indo-Pacific?

23 Dr. Esper: Yes, sir, because I think it is
24 consistent with the National Defense Strategy, which
25 I am committed to do.

1 Senator Sullivan: Let me talk to the issue of
2 Arctic. I do not want to disappoint Senator King by
3 raising these issues, so I will.

4 You know, it does seem like most agencies in
5 the exception of the Pentagon, are focused on this.
6 I have seen Secretary Pompeo gave a very important
7 the strategic interests we have. Mr. Chairman, I am
8 to submit for the record several articles just in the
9 couple weeks that focus on Russia, China's interests
10 Arctic, how it is a strategic area, how a lot of
11 is waking up to this with the exception of the

12 [The information follows:]

13 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Sullivan: You and I have talked about
2 lot. Let me just give you one example.

3 The Russians are doing all kinds of things, new
4 new airfields, new military commands in the Arctic.
5 is talking about the Arctic as the new Suez Canal that
6 are going to control. And we had a provision in this
7 NDAA that just said America should have a port, which
8 does not have right now, that could handle resupplying
9 destroyer, not even an aircraft carrier in the Arctic.
10 Pentagon opposed this. Fortunately, this committee
11 the Pentagon's bad advice.

12 Can you commit to me to work with this committee
13 taking a strong look, a personal look at America's
14 and military interests in the Arctic and how to
15 those?

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

17 Senator Sullivan: Let me talk a little bit about
18 Alaska. Mr. Secretary, you had the opportunity to
19 Alaska as Secretary of the Army. I would like to say
20 constitutes three pillars of America's military might.
21 are the cornerstone of missile defense. We are a
22 for expeditionary forces like the 425 and the 1st
23 Brigade, which is getting ready to go to Iraq. And we
24 the hub of air combat power for the Arctic and the
25 Pacific. As a matter of fact, by the end of next

1 will have over 100 fifth generation combat-coded
2 based in Alaska because of our strategic location,
3 of the fact, as Billy Mitchell did say -- again, I do
4 want to disappoint Senator King -- that Alaska was the
5 strategic place in the world, given its strategic

6 The Air Force is evaluating its OCONUS locations
7 deployments of KC-46's. Alaska has 50-year-old
8 there.

9 What kind of strategic message would we send our
10 potential adversaries like Russia, like China, like
11 Korea where supersonic fighters can get to these
12 Alaska within just a few hours if we were to collocate
13 100 fifth generation fighters with KC-46 tankers in
14 strategic area? What kind of message would we be
15 and will you commit to work with me and this committee
16 the most strategic OCONUS placements of our KC-46
17 the Air Force is looking to do that?

18 Dr. Esper: I will, Senator.

19 Senator Sullivan: And what kind of message would
20 collocation --

21 Dr. Esper: Well, I think what it would send --
22 know, it is hypothetical -- is that we are committed
23 NDS and that we have extreme strategic reach if you
24 do that.

25 Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

1 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

3 Senator Jones?

4 Senator Jones: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 And thank you, Secretary Esper, for your service,
6 you being here. Thank you to your family for their
7 for your service. And I appreciate all the work that
8 have done since I have been in the Senate and the time
9 spent the other day talking about your nomination.

10 We have talked, and you have mentioned several
11 think in almost every question a commitment to the
12 I think we all are committed to this.

13 I think my question, though, involves how often
14 we be looking at the NDS. How should we tweak it?
15 instance, we have pulled out of the JCPOA. We have
16 Iran now enriching uranium clearly, one would argue,
17 path toward nuclear arms. So often do we look at
18 do you know of any adjustments that need to be made
19 particularly if, in fact, we have a nuclear-armed
20 would that affect implementation of the NDS?

21 Dr. Esper: I think strategy should be reviewed
22 constantly and certainly referred to constantly. And
23 events change, you need to adapt your strategy to the
24 that you live in. So I think it is a continuous,
25 process. There is nothing in the world right now that

1 out to me that says we need to change. While the NDS
2 about Russia and China as strategic competitors in
3 of great power competition, it also explicitly cites
4 fact that we have to deal in the meantime with
5 challenges such as Iran and North Korea and others.

6 Senator Jones: Well, as you look forward,
7 clearly we are seeing Iran on a path with their
8 program. Are there things that we need to be doing
9 we need to prepare to prevent Iran from obtaining
10 arms?

11 Dr. Esper: I do think we need to get back into a
12 negotiated path with them, preferably an updated
13 JCPOA, if you will, that addresses with finality a
14 verifiable, irreversible, and permanent prohibition on
15 nuclear work and efforts. So that would be number
16 then we also need to address the means to deliver
17 ICBMs. So to me those are at least two things in a
18 JCPOA that we want to address.

19 You know, as you look across all the countries,
20 those who supported JCPOA 1, that people would agree
21 do not need Iran to go down that path. It is bad for
22 region, and it is bad for the continent of Europe as

23 Senator Jones: All right. Thank you.

24 I want to get back to also the discussion we have
25 about alliances. Everybody understands the alliances

1 how important it is. But it is easier to say and talk
2 in a hearing than to do. And clearly Russia, China,
3 everyone is trying to threaten our alliances, to break
4 our alliances. That is pretty obvious whether it is
5 China is doing in the Belt and Road Initiative to what
6 is doing particularly in Turkey.

7 My question, though, is what can we do better
8 it seems to me that some of our government's own
9 also undermining those alliances. We got trade
10 where we are fighting with our friends, which is
11 the opportunity to talk to China. The President often
12 undermines his own intelligence folks by saying this
13 Russian interference is fake news and a hoax and
14 And that is a term that gets used often to the leader
15 North Korea, the leader of Russia, and others.

16 What are we doing wrong in terms of that, and can
17 not also undermine those alliances by the actions of
18 government? And what would you suggest we do

19 Dr. Esper: Well, I think, first of all, from a
20 perspective, we need to keep doing now what we are
21 well. I have had the chance on many occasions in the
22 years as Secretary of the Army to visit our Joint
23 Center at Hohenfels, Germany where we train all of our
24 allies together fighting against a notional Russian
25 if you will. So we need to sustain those things. And

1 the way, that was a big change from when I last served
2 Italy in the early 1990s. So we need to sustain those
3 things.

4 And then I will tell you when I attended the
5 ministerial in Brussels about 2 and a half, 3 weeks
6 as Acting Secretary, we were having very honest, very
7 discussions thinking ahead on any number of things by
8 we could improve the alliance in terms of its
9 talked about what is called the 4 by 30s initiative.
10 an idea by General Mattis where we had 30 squadrons,
11 surface combatants, and 30 brigades ready within 30
12 and we are taking that seriously in terms of how we
13 that. We talked a lot about 5G, how do we make sure
14 keep 5G and Huawei out of our networks.

15 And so the alliance is really looking forward. I
16 they have a great leader -- we have -- in Jens

17 Senator Jones: Mr. Secretary, let me just ask
18 question, though. When the President does some
19 you willing to stand up and say, Mr. President, your
20 may be undermining our ability to strengthen these
21 alliances? Can you do that?

22 Dr. Esper: My commitment to all of you is that I
23 always give the President or all of you my candid,
24 advice, what I think is the right course of action.

25 Senator Jones: And I believe your commitment,

1 appreciate your time and effort, and I look forward to
2 confirmation. Thank you, sir.

3 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Cramer?

4 Senator Cramer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for all of your service
6 to your family. It is tremendous. And by the way,
7 sacrificial service. And I know that throughout that
8 service, I am sure you have had people who have
9 with your line of work, have probably even been
10 times. I am sorry it had to happen in this committee.
11 know, as you can tell, by and large we are not here to
12 question your integrity. That has already been well
13 established by lots of people.

14 I appreciated both in your opening statement and
15 answers to questions of Senator Fischer, your
16 the nuclear triad, the importance of that deterrence,
17 specifically the ground-based strategic deterrent. As
18 know, North Dakota is home to about 150 of the
19 III's scheduled by the Air Force to be replaced as
20 the modernization effort somewhere in the 2028 to 2035
21 frame as they are assumed -- an analysis determined
22 they would probably be aging out the legacy missiles
23 that time. But there are some that want to delay
24 think that further study is required.

25 One of the things I really appreciated that you

1 mentioned multiple times, and that is the importance
2 understanding the long game, being committed to a
3 plan, commitment to the NDS. Can you speak just a
4 further about the importance of specifically that one
5 of the triad, that ground-based strategic deterrent,
6 sticking to the time frame is important?

7 Dr. Esper: The time frame is important because
8 need to modernize the triad. It needs to be -- two
9 deterrence are having a capability and the will to use
10 The capability means that the triad, at least in this
11 the ground-based strategic deterrent, must be
12 be effective. We want it to be safe as well. And it
13 to build in all those other mechanisms. It needs to
14 cyber-protected, for example. So that is a reason to
15 modernize it. And as I said, each leg of the triad
16 different capabilities. In the case of our ground-
17 strategic deterrents, you have a quicker means of
18 communication. They can reach targets much more
19 and because they are at a fixed site, they are more
20 accurate. So all those things are arguments in favor
21 having a ground-based strategic deterrent option.

22 Senator Cramer: Thank you.

23 Another issue that you have raised a fair bit --
24 have talked about the new domain of space, as well as
25 As you know, the Defense Authorization Act that came

1 this committee and then the Senate includes standing
2 Space Force. The House similarly. They call it a
3 Corps. But we have had some serious consideration and
4 discussion and some disagreement on what the
5 ought to look like for that. And I know there have
6 multiple options that have been presented, proposals
7 administration, DOD. The one we settled on was a
8 the most recent, and that is something that would be
9 to the Marine relationship to the Navy.

10 And I guess I would be interested just in your
11 about that and what we have settled on. The
12 model is where I focused a lot of my attention,
13 that there is a permanent seat with the Joint Chiefs,
14 know, the responsibility of the commanders to answer
15 directly to the Secretary of the Air Force. But some
16 that has been in dispute, and I would just be
17 your observations.

18 Dr. Esper: I obviously support the budget
19 that we put forward with regard to standing up the
20 Force. At this point in time, the House has a view on
21 and the Senate has a view. And I think obviously, if
22 confirmed, I would want to engage the committee as you
23 approach conference -- both committees -- to come up
24 the right solution.

25 But I think when you step back from it, you have

1 yourself what are we trying to do. And I think what
2 trying to do is recognize that space is no longer a
3 from which we support combat operations or from which
4 look down upon the world and see what is happening.
5 now a warfighting domain not because we made it that
6 because the Russians and Chinese are making that way.
7 so what you want to do, as much as possible, to make
8 that we are sufficiently robust in the space
9 domain is to ensure you have unity of command and
10 effort, people who are focused on that as a
11 thing going forward.

12 The closest analogy I have to this and I think I
13 have mentioned to you is when in 1947, they pulled the
14 Air Corps out of the United States Army. It freed up
15 aviators to think about warfighting in the air domain
16 how you conduct warfare unencumbered by a hierarchy,
17 will, that was focused on ground combat.

18 And so that is how I think about this problem. I
19 we just got realize that it is a new domain of warfare
20 and it requires a different organizational construct
21 different way of thinking about it.

22 Senator Cramer: I think your illustration is
23 point. And I appreciate again your service and your
24 answers.

25 I yield.

1 Chairman Inhofe: And I appreciate that also
2 one of the few up here who was around at that time. I
3 remember it vividly.

4 I would like to announce that questions for the
5 -- we are going to try to expedite this and we are
6 have a deadline on questions for the record. They
7 be submitted by close of business today. And we say
8 the members, and I would ask any staff that is
9 someone here today to tell their member the same

10 Senator Manchin?

11 Senator Manchin: Secretary Esper, thank you very
12 for being here today and the service you have given to
13 country. I thank your family attending with you.

14 I have often told my children and my
15 put ourselves forward to serve in public service. And
16 said you are going to hear a lot of things, and when
17 you are going to get upset about it and it kind of
18 you and all that. But it is a very small price to pay
19 you think about the great opportunities in life we
20 living in the greatest democracy and the freedoms that
21 have. That is a very small price to pay. So I hope
22 realize that this is part of this process.

23 I am sure there are people in the private sector
24 would like for all of us to sign a 4-year deal, no
25 speaking engagements, no income enhancement after we

1 public service. I am sure they are out there.

2 So with that being said, thank you for your
3 your stellar career.

4 I want to get to the thing you and I have talked
5 and you were kind enough to come and we sat down. The
6 defense industrial base has long been targeted by
7 espionage, as we know. The Chinese are the greatest
8 proliferators of that. And to show the public a
9 here is the Javelin, the United States FGM-148 Javelin
10 tank missile, and it shows the H-12 Red Arrow anti-
11 missile from the Chinese. Here we have the General
12 MQ-9 Reaper UAV, and if you look below, you have the
13 Rainbow UAV from China. If you look also at Northrop
14 Grumman MQ-8 Fire Scout unmanned helo and look down
15 Mr. Secretary, the Chinese SVU-200 Flying Tiger
16 helo. And then at the top of the food chain, the
17 Martin F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, and you look at the
18 Shenyang J-31 fighter. Now, there is no way this
19 been -- absolutely no way any of this could have been
20 accomplished in the record time that they did it if it
21 not for the espionage.

22 So you and I spoke about this before. So I would
23 you how are you planning to hold those services in the
24 entire food chain, not just at the top -- and we have
25 about this. How can we do this, sir, and hold

1 accountable? Because right now there is no
2 whatsoever. If they have been stolen and espionage is
3 happening at the lower food chain, which is going to
4 subcontractor, a subcontractor to a subcontractor,
5 at the top of the food chain has to be held
6 you might want to answer that.

7 Dr. Esper: Yes, sir. The Chinese are probably
8 perpetrating the greatest theft of intellectual
9 human history in terms of what they are doing and
10 with regard to our national security. I am well aware
11 this. I said earlier when we talked about cyber, that
12 think we were vulnerable defensively. We were nearly
13 strong as our offensive. So we need to build it up.

14 My time in the private sector -- one of the
15 I bring is -- you know, the bigger companies have the
16 to address cybersecurity. They are working pretty
17 they are conscious of their supply chains. But when
18 work your way down those chains, the second, third,
19 fifth, sixth tier, they simply just do not have the
20 protect themselves. And oftentimes in my experience,
21 in the private sector -- the committee had a hearing
22 under Senator Levin many years ago -- that is where
23 Chinese were getting in. They were working their way
24 the small --

25 Senator Manchin: I think quickly, Mr. Secretary,

1 could just ask you. Would you be receptive to
2 holding the primary contractor responsible for the
3 food chain of the product they have been awarded?

4 Dr. Esper: I would have to think about that and
5 because I am trying to dodge it but because there are
6 obviously legal restrictions --

7 Senator Manchin: I understand.

8 Dr. Esper: -- on what you can require. But I do
9 we need to tackle it together because I agree with you
10 the threat.

11 Senator Manchin: We are not going to stop it,
12 everything I am passing around here. That will never
13 stopped unless we hold everyone accountable. And if
14 boys at the top that have the money to do this to
15 but also protect the opportunity for those people to
16 to contract.

17 The second thing very quickly -- I will follow up
18 this.

19 Dr. Esper: Again, I just do not want to put a
20 on the small guy who cannot afford to do something.

21 Senator Manchin: No, no. It is not going to be
22 small guy. I am saying hold that top guy responsible.

23 Dr. Esper: Well, sometimes they interpret that
24 of then requiring --

25 Senator Manchin: Well, they will pass it down if

1 can. I understand that.

2 Dr. Esper: And I understand that too.

3 Senator Manchin: That is where the market has
4 balance itself out, but we have got to have
5 built in. So I look forward to working with you.

6 National Guard. We get so many experts. And
7 look at basically what we have got, we have got 54
8 teams in the National Guard. There are National Guard
9 units in seven States with 1,400 National Guard
10 conducting space duties. All of this expertise. And
11 sometimes there is still kind of a shun from our
12 military, if you will, to part-time National Guard,
13 not the National Guard we have known. Tell me how you
14 intend to strengthen that, if you can expedite that,
15 basically build off of that cost saving measures.

16 Dr. Esper: I think it is a great asset. When I
17 into the Army 2 years ago, I was really impressed that
18 were building the teams at that time. These are very
19 capable people that Monday through Friday are working
20 companies or doing IT. They are involved in space.
21 think we need to continue to go after them, recruit
22 adapt our personnel management procedures to get them
23 and have them work for us on the weekends doing either
24 defensive, preferably offensive cyber.

25 Senator Manchin: Thank you, Secretary. I look

1 to voting for you.

2 Dr. Esper: Thank you, sir.

3 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you.

4 Senator Scott?

5 Senator Scott: I want to thank the Secretary and
6 family. Thank you for your dedicated years of
7 are a highly qualified candidate. I am very
8 that Senator Warren would demonize you after your
9 service simply because you served in the private
10 There are a lot of us who have been in the private
11 and that does not take anything away from our ability
12 our job. I guess she just needed a moment for her
13 presidential campaign. But I believe you deserve to
14 confirmed, and I know you have done a great job as
15 of the Army and I know you will do a great job in

16 As we talked about, one of my biggest concerns is
17 Venezuela. We have got -- Maduro is clearly killing
18 citizens. Kids like my grandkids do not have food,
19 medicine. They are dying constantly. I have been to
20 border. Many of us have. Russia is there. China is
21 Iran is there. Hezbollah is there. Elan is there.
22 there. All the bad guys are there. Cuba is there.
23 Putin are putting up with this and supporting it. And
24 wrong.

25 So my question for you is -- you know, everybody

1 country has spent a fortune in time and money in the
2 East. And what the question is, what is the status of
3 U.S. forces and their readiness in this hemisphere to
4 only deter but to defeat any enemy that seeks to harm
5 think this is national security, us or our allies.
6 our enemies even think we care about what is going on?
7 mean, if you look at the amount of troops we have in
8 hemisphere versus all over the world, you would not
9 that they would think we have any concern.

10 Dr. Esper: Senator, I think we discussed this at
11 another meeting we had. But it is an important
12 Under the National Defense Strategy, it is identified
13 economy of force, if you will. We do do a number of
14 down there, training exercises with partners. Our
15 operations folks are down there. I think importantly,
16 also leverage other parts of the government, whether
17 USAID and Department of State functions down there.
18 what has been very successful -- and I actually
19 in this during one of my times at Fort Benning,
20 we do a lot of IMET training where we bring officers
21 those countries down there to do it.

22 But to the broader point, you are right. We have
23 illegal Maduro regime down there that is killing its
24 suppressing their rights. They have driven that
25 into the ground, and they are spreading that -- the

1 that that would spread throughout the region. And you
2 right. It has invited in all the spoilers who want to
3 either enable the illegal Maduro regime or kind of
4 finger in our eye. And you named them all. And so it
5 something we need to pay attention to, and I know the
6 admiral down there, Admiral Faller, is focused on
7 it is something that I am going to continue to pay
8 attention to, as has the White House, by the way.

9 Senator Scott: None of us want to go to war. We
10 Maduro out and we want freedom and democracy, not only
11 there, but Cuba, all these places. So what can the
12 Department of Defense do that would put more pressure
13 Maduro to step aside?

14 Dr. Esper: There are things to put pressure but
15 are also other things we can do. I spoke earlier
16 importance of our values and what we speak to. One of
17 things we need to highlight more is the fact, for
18 that we got the U.S. naval ship Comfort down there.
19 out in the waters off of South America. And just
20 of engagements to show America's commitment without
21 heavy hand that sometimes we get accused of exercising
22 the region. You know, at one point when it looked
23 regime may get turned over, we flew in humanitarian
24 down there to show our commitment.

25 So there are things like that we could do.

1 in the cyber realm there are things we can do. In
2 ways, we need to take our cues from -- the State
3 would lead on this. Take our cues from our diplomats
4 ground and find out what do they recommend. What role
5 we play to best kind of move that situation forward.

6 Senator Scott: Thanks for your decades of
7 I apologize you were demonized earlier.

8 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Hirono?

9 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10 Nice to see you, Dr. Esper.

11 As part of my responsibility, I ask the following
12 questions of every single nominee who comes before any
13 the five committees on which I sit. So here are the
14 questions.

15 First, since you became a legal adult, have you
16 made unwanted requests for sexual favors or committed
17 verbal or physical harassment or assault of a sexual

18 Dr. Esper: No, Senator.

19 Senator Hirono: Have you ever faced discipline
20 entered into a settlement related to this kind of

21 Dr. Esper: No, Senator.

22 Senator Hirono: You have testified that you
23 resign if you were asked to do anything illegal,
24 unethical. And certainly the country cannot afford to
25 a yes-man leading the DOD.

1 So I just want to ask you. There was a time when
2 President did not acknowledge the importance of NATO,
3 Secretary Mattis tried to convince him otherwise.
4 have taken the same position as Secretary Mattis?

5 Dr. Esper: Senator, if I understand your
6 have taken that position. I think I said my second
7 Acting --

8 Senator Hirono: Yes. I know that, but this
9 standing up to the President. That is what I am

10 Dr. Esper: Well, in terms of expressing the
11 of NATO?

12 Senator Hirono: Yes.

13 Dr. Esper: And not just NATO, all of our allies
14 partners.

15 Senator Hirono: Another question. The President
16 announced unilaterally getting out of Syria, and this
17 move that General Mattis very much disagreed with.
18 you have done what General Mattis did, not necessarily
19 resign, but to take the position that was not a wise
20 decision on the part of the President?

21 Dr. Esper: I take the position I have taken with
22 everybody I have worked for, even Members here in
23 and that is I owe the principal, in this case, the
24 President, my honest, candid advice in terms of what I
25 is the right course forward.

1 Senator Hirono: Yes, and also to uphold the
2 Constitution and the interests of our country.

3 Dr. Esper: That is the oath we swear. Yes,

4 Senator Hirono: So you were asked earlier about
5 support for reviewing the dishonorable discharge of
6 people who had come back from deployment or during
7 deployment with PTSD. And I think that recognition of
8 high incidence of PTSD and other illnesses -- that is
9 thing that you are acknowledging.

10 Let me point to a group of people that I wanted
11 mention to you that would be, I would say, similarly
12 situated. There was a recent report by NPR about the
13 of veterans who have fought for this country, but
14 a lot of incidence of PTSD, et cetera have been
15 And these veterans joined the military believing that
16 the benefits would be expedited citizenship --
17 citizenship. For one thing, a lot of the men do not
18 know that they actually have to apply for citizenship,
19 this is not automatically conferred to them because
20 have served. And apparently that is also an issue.
21 are sent back. And we are talking about probably
22 of former service members who have been deported in
23 way. They go back to the countries of their birth
24 know nothing about, having to leave, in instances,
25 children, et cetera.

1 So can you make sure that the naturalization
2 for eligible service members is clarified so they all
3 understand? Because one of the inducements to serving
4 country that they know -- our country is the only one
5 know -- they actually have to apply, and they should
6 under a mistaken impression that this is automatic.

7 Dr. Esper: Yes, ma'am. I obviously have a soft
8 in my heart for anybody who serves and anybody who
9 and fights for the country should go to the front of
10 line.

11 Senator Hirono: So this is a group that
12 needs your help, and I do not know if this is a matter
13 has ever been brought to your attention. But I would
14 to have a commitment from you, just as you are very
15 concerned about those veterans who are discharged
16 dishonorably to review those, that this is a group of
17 veterans that you would want to help. Yes. So you
18 saying yes.

19 Dr. Esper: Yes, ma'am, I am. Just as you
20 it, absolutely.

21 Senator Hirono: And of course, the people who
22 doing the deporting would be Homeland Security. So
23 you pledge that you will not expend any DOD resources
24 help the Department of Homeland Security identify and
25 these veterans?

1 Dr. Esper: In fact, ma'am, what I would like to
2 confirmed, is reach out to DHS regardless and just
3 what is going on with this and kind of come back to

4 Dr. Esper: Yes, I would like to have that.

5 And one of the other things that the President
6 is that he has eliminated a program called parole in
7 which says that family members of those who are in
8 cannot be deported. And he has stopped that. And so
9 would like to have your commitment that you would
10 for the reinstatement of the parole in place program
11 the service member's family members are not deported
12 he or she is in service to our country.

13 Dr. Esper: I am not familiar with that program
14 but you have my commitment to look into it for sure.

15 Senator Hirono: You have been asked a lot about
16 I could, just one short question. A lot of discussion
17 the importance of our alliances. And you noted that
18 the first things you did as the Secretary of the Army
19 to Brussels to indicate the importance of NATO. So I
20 like to ask for your commitment that one of the first
21 you would do, knowing the importance of the Indo-
22 Command, the biggest physical AOR, that you would go
23 Secretary of Defense to visit Japan, South Korea
24 particularly, but that is something that General
25 when we became Secretary. Would you commit to that?

1 Dr. Esper: Yes, ma'am, I do absolutely. It is
2 important. And by the way, I will visit INDOPACOM
3 headquarters as well. I did that as Army Secretary.
4 a fantastic trip.

5 Senator Hirono: Thank you.

6 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you.

8 Senator McSally is recognized. However, I want
9 one comment since I am going to ask Senator Ernst to
10 the rest of the meeting, to apologize to you for what
11 had to be confronted with. It was unfair and you
12 beautifully. Thank you.

13 Senator McSally: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

14 Secretary Esper, it is good to see you again.
15 Congratulations. Your nomination was tweeted out the
16 before you were supposed to come visit Arizona. And
17 you are confirmed, I look forward to hosting you back
18 Arizona not just for your mission related to your
19 Secretary of the Army but also Secretary of Defense.
20 just wanted to extend that invitation.

21 Dr. Esper: Sometime in my life I want to make it
22 Fort Huachuca.

23 Senator McSally: Sometime in your life. All
24 We will do it soon. So thanks for that.

25 I appreciated working with you on many issues in

1 past.

2 We only have 4 and a half minutes. So I will
3 into a few here.

4 The first is I am grateful for your partnership
5 have been in the Senate specifically on the issue of
6 combating sexual assault. We have got some good
7 in this year's defense bill to build on the past
8 initiatives related to the investigation and the
9 side of things. But we have more work to do on the
10 prevention side and the education side and to
11 altogether. So I just want to get your commitment to
12 continue to partner with me on this really important

13 Dr. Esper: Absolutely, Senator. And just let me
14 you for your courage and your leadership on this. And
15 are fully committed to implementing all the
16 of the task force.

17 Senator McSally: Great. Thank you. I
18 that.

19 I want to talk about China. Do you agree China
20 biggest long-term threat to our national security?

21 Dr. Esper: I do not like to paint them as a
22 right now, but certainly a strategic competitor.

23 Senator McSally: Potential.

24 Dr. Esper: Absolutely.

25 Senator McSally: And there are many elements we

1 talk about, but one I want to talk about is in the
2 5G. You touched on this at a recent NATO defense
3 ministerial meeting I think related to communications
4 network security. I am particularly concerned about
5 reports this spring. Specifically there was a CNN
6 highlighting some rural wireless carriers in America
7 allowed to use Chinese technology on their cellular
8 that are right near U.S. military installations,
9 facilities of ICBM silos. Again, the concern is
10 surveillance and then also disruption or the potential
11 that.

12 So I just want to get your thoughts on it. Are
13 aware of those reports and the danger of them being so
14 and the impacts of that, and what can we do in order
15 protect our assets on our bases from threats like

16 Dr. Esper: I have not heard that report. I am
17 surprised. I do not believe in coincidence like that.
18 will tell you last summer when I was visiting Fort
19 where our missile base is, if you will, they told me
20 some Chinese tourists somehow wandered up upon our
21 there. So, look, the Chinese have a grand plan out
22 collect data on us whether it is a physical collection
23 whether it is collection over the Internet. You name
24 We need to be aware of that.

25 Senator McSally: Right, exactly.

1 Just recently Secretary of Commerce Ross
2 restrictions on U.S. tech companies selling to Huawei
3 be relaxed, saying that the ban would only apply to
4 that pose a national security threat. How do you see
5 playing a part in deciding where that national
6 threat is and how we can combat it?

7 Dr. Esper: Yes, Senator. My understanding is
8 Huawei would remain on the entities list. There would
9 presumption of denial, of course, and that it would
10 for non-national security items. So that is where I
11 that DOD needs to participate with Commerce to make
12 that clearly noting has a dual-capable national
13 nexus.

14 Senator McSally: Great. Thanks.

15 And the last one I have. I want continue again
16 another element of China's aggression and concerns in
17 South China Sea. Earlier this month, China launched
18 of its DF-26 missiles in the South China Sea, its most
19 powerful anti-ship ballistic missile. Again, it is
20 incredibly provocative given the timing of it all, but
21 increasing to show their aggression in the region. We
22 have some capabilities, of course, which we have
23 combating that. But I just want to get your thoughts
24 their aggression in the South China Sea -- this is
25 of the last incidents -- and the best way that we can,

1 our international partners, combat that.

2 Dr. Esper: Well, as I recall, a few years ago,
3 President of China made a commitment to our President
4 militarize the South China Sea, and then they
5 went and militarized the South China Sea. So we
6 concerned because it undermines the international
7 based order certainly in terms of freedom of
8 freedom of the seas. It affects commerce. They are
9 undermining customary international law. So we need
10 very aware of this, and we need to have a strategy to
11 after it.

12 Senator McSally: Thanks. Again, that we cannot
13 ourselves. Right? So our leadership and executing
14 National Defense Strategy where we are having more
15 dedicated to that region, working with allies and
16 partnerships, to stop this has got to be --

17 Dr. Esper: And we have exercised our rights
18 freedom of navigation operations, what we call FONOPs,
19 we have had participation too by our allies, and that
20 important. It is not just the U.S. versus China. It
21 be the world versus China on these things where they
22 breaking the law.

23 Senator McSally: Exactly. Thanks, Secretary
24 appreciate it.

25 Senator Ernst [presiding]: Senator Duckworth?

1 Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

2 I am the last one here, but I wanted to stay
3 want to go over some really important points that you
4 had conversations about in our meeting. So I want to
5 over again the importance of logistics infrastructure.

6 As we are focused on great power competition, as
7 outlined in the NDS -- we talked about this -- our
8 logistical tail -- it needs to be robust enough to
9 our shipping priorities. Would you commit to me that,
10 you are confirmed, you will pay closer attention to
11 logistical needs, to include funding for sealift,
12 and other aspects of our logistics infrastructure,
13 also includes amphibious shipping for the Marine

14 Dr. Esper: Absolutely, Senator. Just to share
15 you for the broader audience, look, the Army gets to
16 fight through sealift. 90 percent of its equipment
17 sea, and if it cannot get there, it will not be in the
18 fight. It will not be relevant. And I have had his
19 conversation as Secretary of the Army with Secretary
20 Navy Spencer, and he agrees. We need to modernize and
21 capacity into our sealift.

22 And second, with regard to the Marines,
23 They need to have the requisite number of amphibs to
24 their missions. They are short now. And that is
25 that I am committed to seeing through.

1 Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

2 I want to address the night courts that you
3 We discussed this a little bit. The savings and
4 recapitalization enabled reprogramming to unifying the
5 Army's efforts behind these priorities. And I
6 you for that. If confirmed, will you carry out a
7 rigorous defense-wide review or multiple service-
8 reviews to focus on future game changers, which might
9 include things like AI, hypersonics, nuclear command
10 control. You have touched on this a little bit.

11 Dr. Esper: Absolutely. I mean, the Congress and
12 American people were very generous with what they give
13 for defense, and I think we can make better use of
14 single dollar certainly before we come back asking for

15 Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

16 Again, I want to address, since I get the last
17 here I guess, about the ongoing use of the 2001 and
18 AUMFs. The U.S. Constitution vests with Congress the
19 and solemn responsibility to declare war. However,
20 past several years, administrations from both parties
21 used the existing AUMF in a way that outstrips the
22 Congress and has at best dubious legal justifications.

23 In a real world example of current concern, do
24 believe that the 2001 AUMF or the 2002 AUMF provides
25 necessary legal authorization for us to use military

1 against Iran?

2 Dr. Esper: Not to conduct a war, Senator, as you
3 discussed, but obviously, the President has under
4 the right to respond if attacked. But, no, not in
5 how you described it, as we discussed, to conduct a

6 Senator Duckworth: But Article 2 is aside from
7 AUMF.

8 Dr. Esper: Right. I said if Iran were to attack
9 our soldiers, we always have the right of self-defense
10 to execute those types of --

11 Senator Duckworth: But that is under Article 2.
12 speaking specifically of the 2001 and 2002 AUMFs.
13 either one of those authorize you to --

14 Dr. Esper: No, because 2001 applies to terrorist
15 groups and organizations, and that would not be the
16 here with regard to the country of Iran.

17 Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

18 Again, I want to touch a little bit on the issue
19 sexual assault and harassment. We have had civilian
20 military representatives from DOD come in for years
21 to take the problem seriously and effect real change.
22 Disappointingly, estimated prevalence rates are
23 Will you commit to working on a major effort to reform
24 prevention efforts, not through changes in regulation,
25 an actual cultural change that needs to happen?

1 Dr. Esper: Absolutely, Senator. This is
2 intolerable what we see is happening out there. The
3 should be zero. And we need to continue to jump on
4 problem, take care of the survivors, the victims, and
5 also hold the perpetrators accountable.

6 One of the things that I found coming into the
7 Secretary of the Army that we were not leveraging,
8 think is what you were saying, is I do not think we
9 leveraged well enough in the past the culture of the
10 and the chain of command that says leaders at every
11 down to the squad leader level, get involved and take
12 task on and make sure they know their soldiers well
13 and they prevent sexual assault and harassment before
14 begins, not deal with it after the fact.

15 Senator Duckworth: Well, there is about a minute
16 I want to give you an opportunity to address the
17 to, I would think, reaffirm your willingness to stand
18 recommendations of your ethics committee, ethics
19 and how you will conduct yourself in terms of

20 Dr. Esper: Absolutely, Senator. Look, it is
21 just the laws and regulations and policies. I will
22 follow those. But it is the spirit of that. What you
23 up with in the Army, what I grew up with in the Army,
24 Senator Ernst grew up with in the Army is the
25 the nation, living an honorable life, and living

1 That is what drives me. That is what drives me.

2 Senator Duckworth: Thank you. Thank you for
3 many, many years of service, and I look forward to
4 confirmation.

5 Dr. Esper: Thank you, Senator.

6 Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

7 I yield back.

8 Senator Ernst: Thank you very much, Senator
9 I want you to see, Mr. Secretary, that it is the
10 logisticians that are left cleaning up the battlefield
11 [Laughter.]

12 Dr. Esper: I recall you were a logistician.

13 Senator Ernst: So, Secretary Esper, I do want to
14 you very much for being here today and representing so
15 And I want to thank your family as well for stepping
16 because it does take an entire family unit to make
17 things work.

18 I want to further extend my appreciation for the
19 that you have not only served in the United States
20 services as a member of the military, but the fact
21 have also served in public service and in the private
22 sector. And I think that makes you extraordinarily
23 rounded and fit for the capacity that you have been
24 nominated for. So thank you very much for that.

25 I would like to build upon the sexual assault,

1 harassment issue that Senator Duckworth and Senator
2 have mentioned. Senator Hirono always mentions it as

3 I have introduced a Military Special Victims
4 Act, and it is really placing additional command
5 and training, oversight on a full spectrum of sexual
6 misconduct actions, as well as domestic violence. A
7 of those domestic violence issues have not been
8 addressed, I have seen, in the last several years. So
9 think there are a number of us that are really intent
10 making sure, as Senator Duckworth said, that we are
11 the culture. We cannot just be out there making
12 efforts on training. We have to change the culture.

13 And so I will just give you a couple seconds
14 further reiterate your stance on that.

15 Dr. Esper: Again, there is no room in the Army
16 sexual -- I am sorry -- in the military for sexual
17 harassment of any type, bullying, you name it. And we
18 to continue to work on it and stamp it out. And it is
19 just a values issue. I mean, it is a readiness issue
20 well because it undermines the cohesiveness of a unit.
21 tear down one person or many people. So we need to go
22 it aggressively.

23 I am not familiar with the legislation, but I
24 is fair to say how people conduct themselves at home
25 they conduct themselves in the workplace eventually.

1 not change personalities and behaviors in between the
2 Eventually it comes out. So I think the more ways we
3 after it and address this problem and change the
4 one of the things we were looking at doing in the Army
5 is not just starting when they get to their first unit
6 even basic training. You work all the way back to
7 come to the recruiting station and start signing
8 to make sure they know up front that we are going to
9 you to a higher standard. You are going to live the
10 values, and you are going to treat everybody with
11 and respect. Start the training, the inculcation, the
12 development of those values then from literally day
13 continue that training and education throughout the
14 of their career in the service.

15 Senator Duckworth: Thank you. I appreciate
16 I know a number of us look forward to working with you
17 that issue.

18 We have talked a lot about some of the major
19 our near-peer adversaries, as we have focused very
20 the National Defense Strategy. The National Defense
21 Strategy, of course, outlined three main lines of
22 the readiness, which we have addressed in a number of
23 readiness and lethality; building up of alliances.
24 thank you very much for your commitment to work in a
25 of-government approach and working with our allies on

1 And then as well, our modernization of our forces and
2 platforms and equipment.

3 If confirmed, would you have anything additional
4 you would like to see we focus on as a line of effort?

5 Dr. Esper: As I said in my opening remarks, I
6 support all three lines of effort on the National
7 Strategy. But, again, what is personal to me, what I
8 lived through, what my wife lived through was taking
9 our families. Families are critical to readiness.
10 cannot ask a soldier, sailor, airman, or marine to go
11 and deploy and be worried about what is happening at
12 We can do better. We always got to strive to do
13 But that would be something I would want to pull up
14 and make sure I emphasize during my tenure, if

15 Senator Ernst: Absolutely. And I very much
16 that. And we have heard the testimony from a number
17 those that serve on this committee. They witnessed
18 your family visiting some of the readiness centers
19 have and addressing concerns of our military families,
20 housing first and foremost. You and I have had many
21 discussions about family members and service. And so
22 you for that as well.

23 Serving as a former soldier and as a spouse of a
24 enlisted soldier, just understanding some of the
25 that our families face when they are far from home and

1 need to support those families is very, very clear to
2 us. We hope that we can project that to the broader
3 States as well.

4 But thank you for that great commitment.

5 You answered a number of the questions I think
6 had earlier in the committee hearing.

7 I would remind those that are here for your
8 that questions for the record must be submitted by
9 business tonight.

10 We will go ahead and close this hearing, but
11 want to extend my gratitude to you, Secretary Esper,
12 stepping up during a very challenging time as we face
13 friends and adversaries all around this globe. So
14 that, I will give you 10 seconds to close out your
15 statement.

16 Dr. Esper: Just thank you for your time, for the
17 committee's time, for expediting this consideration of
18 It is a calling. I feel it is a privilege for me to
19 this opportunity. So, again, my vow is I will not let
20 down in this regard. So thank you very much.

21 Senator Ernst: And I believe that to be true. I
22 forward to supporting your nomination. Thank you very

23 This closes today's hearing.

24 [Whereupon, at 12:13 p.m., the hearing was

25