HEARING TO CONDUCT A CONFIRMATION HEARING

ON THE EXPECTED NOMINATION OF:

HONORABLE MARK T. ESPER TO BE SECRETARY OF

Tuesday, July 16, 2019

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

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

Committee Members Present: Senators Inhofe [presiding], Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Perdue, Cramer, McSally, Scott, Blackburn, Reed, Shaheen, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Warren, Peters, Manchin, Duckworth, and Jones.
OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES M. INHOFE, U.S. SENATOR FROM OKLAHOMA

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

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

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

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

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

Dr. Esper: Yes, sir.

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

Dr. Esper: No, sir.

Chairman Inhofe: Exercising our legislative and oversight responsibility makes it important that this committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees in Congress receive testimony, briefings,
reports, and recordings, records and other information
the executive branch on a timely basis. Do you agree,
confirmed, to appear and testify before this committee
requested?

Dr. Esper: Yes, sir.

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

Dr. Esper: Yes, sir.

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

Dr. Esper: Yes, sir.

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

Dr. Esper: Yes, sir.

Chairman Inhofe: And finally, will those
briefers be protected from reprisal for their
briefings?
Dr. Esper: Yes, sir.

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

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

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

Today we find ourselves in a new and different
for America’s security. The American people can no
take America’s military superiority for granted.
Russia have passed us in key areas and are catching up
other areas.

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

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

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

We want to avoid the CRs. I think we all agree
that. The NDS Commission report said, quote,
and delayed funding placed the national defense
jeopardy. But this is not only about money. We
our way out of the competition with China and Russia. need urgent change at a significant scale, and that hard choices about threat priorities, critical defense investments, and new operational concepts.

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

We will recognize Senator Reed for his opening statement, then recognize Senator Kaine for an Senator Reed?
STATEMENT OF HON. JACK REED, U.S. SENATOR FROM ISLAND

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

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

It has been nearly 7 months since the Department had a Senate-confirmed Secretary of Defense. At no time has the office of the Secretary remained vacant long. Complicating the situation is that under the Vacancies Act, Secretary Esper cannot serve as the Secretary of Defense now that he has been nominated position. Therefore, Secretary of the Navy Spencer is
serving as the Acting Secretary of Defense while the
considers Secretary Esper’s nomination.

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

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

I specifically want to raise two issues related
commitee’s duty to conduct congressional oversight of
Department. First, any effort to withhold or curtail information necessary to fulfill the committee’s mandate is unacceptable. Former Acting Secretary of Shanahan recently promulgated a memo governing the committee’s access to certain documents, including orders, or EXORDs. The memo stated in part that the administration would determine which materials should provided to Congress based on whether the request sufficient information to demonstrate a relationship legislative function. I think we make that not the Department of Defense.

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

Second, the Department must keep Congress fully currently informed of major military developments. example, on May 5th, the President’s National Security Adviser announced that the U.S. was deploying a strike group and a bomber task force to CENTCOM in to a number of troubling and escalatory indications
involving Iran. The threats were apparently
enough not only to surge additional military
the region, but for Secretary Pompeo to cancel a
with German Prime Minister Merkel in order to fly to
But it took the Department of Defense more than 5 days
share any information with Congress. I find that
unacceptable.

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

Secretary Esper, as was discussed during General
Milley’s confirmation hearing last week, there is a
staggering number of senior level civilian vacancies
throughout the Department. The constant turnover of
civilian leadership, coupled with the duration of
vacancies, has been troubling. Every member of this
committee wants to ensure that high caliber candidates
in the Department, and we will continue to fully
and expeditiously consider nominees for these

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

Finally, let me close with the following. If
confirmed, you will help oversee national security
for a President whose temperament and management
challenging and likely very different from your own.
I do not agree with the President on many policy
do want him to be surrounded by leaders who can
thoughtful advice and counsel. Diversity of opinion
important when crafting policy and making decisions
impact the wellbeing of our men and women in uniform.
confirmed, you must be willing and able to provide the
President with your best policy advice even if the
disagrees with your counsel and it runs contrary to
policy goals.
But most importantly, while the Secretary of
serves at the pleasure of the President, we should
forget that they also oversee the finest fighting
the world: men and women who have volunteered to
cause great than themselves. Our service members and
families should always be at the forefront when
defense policy or military action. Secretary Esper,
confirmed, I am confident that you will do so.

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

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed.

Senator Kaine, you are recognized to introduce
guest today.
STATEMENT OF HON. TIM KAINE, U.S. SENATOR FROM VIRGINIA

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

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

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

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

[Laughter.]

Senator Kaine: He spent the majority of his service to the country starting with his entry into
United States military academy at West Point and through his career in the Army, active, guard, and service to the White House, service to this body. In Dr. Esper has really sort of seen it all as an active and reserve member, work in the private sector, work think tanks on national security policy, service to and Senate committees, service to individual Senators, service to two Republican administrations.

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

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

The same commitment to address the quality of our military families was something that I noticed committee began the investigation into the very circumstances surrounding substandard military
initial responses by some in the Department and at the
themselves -- and I think we all experienced this --
skepticism, disbelief, denial, avoidance. That was
response of Secretary Esper. It was the Department of
Army that first developed the tenant bill of rights
became the basis of one of the key provisions that we
included in the NDAA this year.
Secretary Esper extended an invitation for
Warner and I to accompany him to see the conditions of
housing at Fort Belvoir, just 20 miles south of here
Virginia, Army Base. When a Secretary asks you to do
something, you kind of wonder if you are going to see
Potemkin village version of it that, you know, we have
of solved this and we are proud of our solution. No,
not see that. Secretary Esper took us to the
version of problematic housing and people who had been
treated badly and could not get help from their chain
command or the private housing companies. And we
very blunt way about problems these families had
that were heartbreaking in some ways.
And we had a roundtable discussion with other
around the table. And when the families presented
experiences, encouraged by Secretary Esper to do so,
then often base personnel would begin to respond, if
detected any delay or we cannot deal with that right
Secretary Esper in a firm and professional way but a tough way would not let people get by with substandard responses. He insisted that the families be dealt fairly and promptly. That willingness to display accountability was very, very impressive both to Warner and me.

He has been proactive and he has been acknowledge the comments made by the ranking member the need for transparency and working with the And I think those are trademarks of exceptional Most of us were very discouraged by the Secretary Mattis, and what we have hoped for is a who could show the same level of candor and principle willingness to remain independent even in the most challenging circumstances. I believe that Dr. Esper those traits and would encourage all of my colleagues support his nomination.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, Ranking Member.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Kaine.

you call that or not, I call it an excellent

[Laughter.]

Chairman Inhofe: And, Dr. Esper, you are for comments you want to make, and your entire will be made part of the record.
STATEMENT OF HON. MARK T. ESPER TO BE SECRETARY DEFENSE

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

[Laughter.]

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

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

I want to thank the President for this
for his confidence in me. I am grateful for the time many of you have spent with me in recent weeks and for the committee’s swift attention to my nomination. Although I have served 22 days as the Acting Secretary Defense, today I appear before you as the Secretary of Army in accordance with the Vacancy Act.

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

As many of you know, I am blessed to have served country in a variety of capacities on active duty in regular Army for over 10 years in both the United abroad during both war and peace. I am reserve duty National Guard and Army Reserve for another 11 years; Capitol Hill as a personal, committee, and leadership staffer in the House and the Senate; in the Pentagon
as a war planner in the Army, second as a Deputy Secretary of Defense, and third as a reserve augmentee working for the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Special Operations. And of course, I also worked in private sector with a major corporation, a commission focused on China, and at a think tank, and most nearly 2 years, as Secretary of the Army. I believe broad and diverse experience prepared me well for the position of Secretary of Defense.

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

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

We must also build more robust cyber capabilities with your help, establish the United States Space At the same time, we must be prepared to respond
regional threats such as Iran and North Korea, all the
maintaining pressure on terrorist groups such as ISIS
Qaeda.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

    As promised to this committee during my hearing to become Secretary of the Army, if confirmed, will approach these priorities with the values and proven to maximize effectiveness of any team; to act
integrity; to collaborate broadly; to treat others
dignity and respect; to encourage innovation, critical
thinking, and straight talk; to empower people; and to
leaders accountable. These principles and the values
hold dearest as a profession must be lived and
upheld day in and day out by leaders.

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

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

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Esper follows:]
Chairman Inhofe: Well, thank you, Dr. Esper.

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

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

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

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

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

So in the opening statement, I talked about the that document that appeared or the article that the “Economist” showed that in the same period of time we were cutting our military spending by 25 percent, was increasing theirs by 83 percent. You know, the out there do not know this. They do not realize that have competition that is out there that we have not before. And when I see this, I look and I think that have done a better job, but we need to do a better job we have done before.
General Milley, when he became Chief of Staff, percent of our Army brigades were at the highest level readiness. Now it is 50 percent. Now, that is a huge increase. So we are in the right area and we are the right direction.

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

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

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

Chairman Inhofe: That is good.
Also, we had asked General Milley when he was in classify the areas that we have, to highlight the where we need to catch up, and he mentioned nuclear modernization, space, artificial intelligence, and hypersonics. Now, you touched on this in your opening statement.

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

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

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

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Dr. Esper.

Senator Reed?

Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. And, Mr. Secretary, thank you.

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

Do you agree with Secretary Gates’ assessment?

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

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

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

At the same time, from the highest levels of
government, from the President himself, we said we
anytime anywhere without precondition to discuss the Iranians to get us on the diplomatic path.

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

Dr. Esper: Diplomacy always is.

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

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

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

But in many ways, the operations that DOD is at the border in support of DHS is not unlike what we done in the past through multiple administrations over
years. I think in many ways, it is just one of those we do, whether it is putting out wildfires in helping with hurricane recovery in Texas or Puerto flooding along the Mississippi. It is one of those we provide to other parts of the government, to the people.

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

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

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

Dr. Esper: I will definitely commit to that,
And as I think you highlighted, you know, I spent my formative years in Washington, D.C. on Capitol Hill. why Congress is Article 1, and I know you have oversight functions.

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

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

Senator Reed: A final question. In your our colleagues in NATO, did they raise the issue of apparent discordance and diminishment of the
between our allies? Was that a significant point they raised?

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

Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr.

Thank you.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you.

Senator Wicker?

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

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

Let me also tell you something that you already On this committee, Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member work together as a team. There are some nuances in would approach things. But the way they have directed committee in the writing of the NDAA I hope sends a to the rest of the world, to those adversaries that
Inhofe was referring to in that article from the
that we intend to give you and the admirals and
that will be working with you the tools you need to
challenges.

Now, our NDAA, which has been passed by the
at $750 billion. The NDAA passed by the House, $733
billion, a difference of $17 billion. We are not
mathematicians up here, but Senator Fischer and I have
talking with staff. That is about a 2.3 percent
So I would say to my colleagues and say to you if the
and Senate cannot, in the next few days, work out the
difference between 2.3 percent in our versions and
the 2-year budget caps number, then shame on us. We
doing our duties. We are the Article 1 branch of the
government. We are the only people on the face of the
earth, the only people in the country could do this,
must negotiate it with the President of the United
The Secretary of the Treasury has been tasked with
negotiating with the House and Senate leaders on this.
I hope you will raise your voice and be a strong
I hope at this very moment you are raising your voice.
need a budget number this month. If we get to
15th, we start having brinksmanship and uncertainty
what we are going to do with this budget number. That
becomes a problem.
And thank you for talking about the things we are to need to modernize. We are trying to bring our up to date and then to look to the future. And so you mentioned on page 3 of your testimony artificial intelligence, robotics, directed energy, hypersonics; next sentence, robust cyber capabilities. If we go to month-long CR -- perish the thought that we would go 1-year CR -- if we go to a month-long CR October 1st, does it do to these things which you have listed on of your testimony as priorities?

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

Senator Wicker: So it is different from level If somehow we could magically wave a magic wand and level funding with an appropriate bill, that would be different matter. But a CR does not do that. Does Dr. Esper: I think anybody who has served in will tell you that steady, predictable funding is a
success because you can manage your workforce. You organize how you work in ways that are far more than looking at inconsistent and unpredictable funding coming your way.

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

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

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

Dr. Esper: 11.

Senator Wicker: Thank you. You are no either.

[Laughter.]

Senator Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Chairman Inhofe: Senator Shaheen?

Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I think the big issue that I need to go back and with you on as well is what is the timing at which aircraft return to Pease and to me, as I look at it.
So you have my commitment on that. You and I worked together on things, and I think you know I will follow through.

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

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

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

Dr. Esper: Yes, Senator. We do work as part of whole-of-government approach. We, of course, have exceptional capabilities in our Cyber Command, and important as our capabilities, last year the put out a new NSPM-13, which really put our cyber capabilities on a more offensive footing, allowing us
lean forward. And I think for those reasons it is why
saw in the 2018 elections no issues. And that is why
think we are more and more confident that the 2020
will also be unfettered, if you will.

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

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

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

Dr. Esper: Senator, I met yesterday before I over the secretaryship, if you will, to Secretary I met with a representative from White House went down the list of the 14 current slots that did a Senate-confirmed person and talked about each. And
obviously, I urged them to help us push folks through.

have a few folks who will be coming here before the
committee who are on the executive calendar right now.
then I have due diligence back in the Pentagon to make
that we find names, we recruit the right people for
or five seats that still need to be filled. So there
range of responsibilities, and I did have that meeting
yesterday with the White House to discuss that.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Fischer?

Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

I recall that the global zero report from several
ago arguing that we should reduce our nuclear forces
because, quote, 9/11 exposed the lack of efficacy,
the irrelevance of nuclear forces in dealing with 21st
century threats. End quote. I do not think that
was valid then, and I certainly do not believe that it
valid now. What are your thoughts?

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

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

Dr. Esper: It is clear that we do. Each leg is
different status, if you will. We need to certainly
modernize the GBSD, the ground-based strategic
deterrent. Obviously, we have plans to modernize the
class submarines, and then there obviously is a
underway already to modernize our long-range stealth
bombers.

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

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

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

Was that your impression?

Dr. Esper: No, Senator, it was not. I would say
things. I have worked these issues in the past with
to arms control. Russia has cheated or is cheating on
treaties. I give the Obama administration high marks
calling them out and trying to work this. And Secretary Mattis worked this issue as well.

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

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

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

Dr. Esper: Well, we obviously need to prepare missile defenses to defeat those intermediate-range missiles, and the Army has been working on that as I the other services are as well. But then the other to make sure that we develop our own conventional -- conventional -- INF range missiles to deal not just
Russia but China. Most of China’s inventory is intermediate-range missiles, and so we need to make have the capability as well to respond, should we, God forbid, get in a fight with them one day.

Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Blumenthal?

Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

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

Senator Blumenthal: Wonderful.

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

Dr. Esper: I am sorry. Yes. I do. We need to sustain the F-35 program. It is the world’s premier
generation fighter which provides extraordinary
capabilities.

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

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

Senator Blumenthal: I want to ask you about a
that I raised with then-Acting Secretary Shanahan
expenditures at Trump-branded properties. In response
question to him, the Department provided a list of
expenditures made by civilian and uniformed Department
Defense personnel at Trump properties between January
2017 and June 14th, 2017. The total is about $147,000
during just those 6 months. The Pentagon spent over
at the Trump National Golf Club in Palm Beach, over
at the Trump Hotel, Las Vegas, over $16,000 at the
hotel, Trump Ocean Club, Panama, among many other
and restaurant expenses at Trump properties.
I know you are not a lawyer, but you no doubt understand that the Emoluments Clause forbids the receiving money from these type of expenditures by government personnel that enrich him as the owner of properties.

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

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

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

Dr. Esper: I certainly am committed to providing
information.

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

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

Dr. Esper: Absolutely, Senator. I did not mean
convey that I am comfortable with where we stand. I
this is going to be an ongoing threat for some time.
Obviously, Russia is the principal issue, but there
other countries out there who would want to influence
change our elections. So I think we need to be on
vigilant. And I certainly cannot attest today that
will be flawless, but like I said, I think we were in
better posture in 2018. I think we addressed the
adequately, but we always will have a lot of work to
because people want to influence our elections.

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

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

Senator Blumenthal: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Cotton?

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

I want to talk briefly about a point that Senator
Blumenthal just raised, the period in your career when
were not in government but you were in industry,
specifically at Raytheon. This is obviously not precedent. Bill Clinton’s Secretary of Defense, Perry, did time in the private sector before serving Secretary of Defense, as did many other notable leaders like Frank Kendall of the Obama

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

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

Senator Cotton: Dedicated to the defense of this nation?

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

Senator Cotton: Thank you.

How long were you at Raytheon?

Dr. Esper: 6 and a half years.

Senator Cotton: Okay.

And I would say they have a large presence in Arkansas, as do most major defense contractors and other defense contractors, that Raytheon does a lot to contribute to our national security. As well, I am proud of those Arkansans who are helping, whether they
at Raytheon or other defense contractors putting some
most lethal weaponry in the hands of our troops all
the world. But they are obviously a for-profit
they are in competition with those other companies as

Have you fully divested from Raytheon?

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

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

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

Senator Cotton: Not contingent on Raytheon’s
performance, either strong or poor.

Talk a little bit more about the recusal issue.

one thing for, say, a deputy assistant secretary of
to recuse himself from issues. It is another thing
Secretary of Defense. There are certain issues of
national import that it is hard for anyone besides the
Secretary to make. So could you talk to us about how
recusal from issues related to Raytheon will work?

Dr. Esper: Yes, sir. Obviously, I have a robust
screening process so that anything that comes before
either written or people appearing before me or
that that would be clearly flagged and screened to
that I remain compliant. I would remain in constant
with our ethics personnel. They are great career
professionals who have been very helpful across the
I also found in my time as Secretary of the Army
clearly with this promotion, if confirmed, even higher
I really dealt nearly all the time with broad policy
matters, strategy, things like that. I never got into
business, if you will, of picking programs or things
that. So I am fully confident of what my obligations
And I guess the important thing to say is this.
lived an ethical life. I am going to continue to live
those ethics, those principles, whether it involves
or any other company for that matter. So it is my
commitment to the nation’s security. It is my
the men and women in uniform that drives me, not
else.
Senator Cotton: I know you have, and I know that
will continue to live that ethical example for all of
men and women of the Department of Defense when you
Secretary of Defense.
I will note that although this is often perceived
issue for both Republican and Democratic DOD officials
alike, members of this committee know that in some
there is a tendency to actually be too hard on former
associates and employers because of the exact kind of
perception that is sometimes raised when you leave
and go into government.

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

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

Dr. Esper: So my experience is that in many ways
find your greatest innovation, your greatest
entrepreneurship is happening at the smaller levels,
small shops, those small innovators that are out there
creating incredible technologies. That is one reason
the Army we established Army Futures Command and put
Austin, Texas to capitalize on those folks who are
with the cutting edge ideas.
In my time at Raytheon, I spent a lot of time and meeting not just with members of the company but their supply chain. And having that supply chain is integral. In many cases, it is fragile. We have today about CRs. Often the folks that pay the price extended CR or the cancellation of contracts or the a new start are folks way at the end of the supply just do not have the means to sustain themselves. So very conscious, based on my time in business, of what means to the supply chain, how you have to make sure nurture them, and make sure you have robustness is the robustness that drives both innovation but also ensures you have the competition that drives down cost drives up performance.

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

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Peters?

Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Esper, thank you for your service to country.

Secretary Esper, in 2014, Secretary Hagel issued
guidance for upgrading certain discharges to 
Hagel policy directed review boards to give, quote, 
consideration to the possibility that PTSD contributed 
veteran’s loss of their honorable discharge. 
That is why I introduced legislation to codify 
principles of this policy into law. The Fairness for 
Veterans Act was included as section 535 of the fiscal 
2017 NDAA. And I recently sent a letter to the 
of Defense to get an update on the implementation of 
law. 
I think you would agree that troops that are 
from mental trauma associated with their service 
have their records tarnished over an episode of 
that may be related to the trauma that they are 
suffering from. 
So my question to you, sir, is can I get your 
that this law will be executed as intended under your 
leadership, if confirmed, and that I can get your 
to keeping Congress informed of the law’s 
Dr. Esper: Yes, sir. As you described it, it 
make eminent sense. From my time in uniform, of 
spent my time in war. I know the impacts. I think 
like that go a long way to signaling that we 
these things happen. Damage, harm is not just 
can be mental. And it also goes a long way to us
any stigmatization with regard to mental health

Senator Peters: Well, I appreciate that
And I am hearing from some of my constituents
wait times of over 12 months for a decision to appeal occurring, and I would certainly like you to look into the Department needs, including support from Congress, expedite these decisions of status upgrades and hope your commitment.

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

Senator Peters: Great. I appreciate that.

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

And in his resignation letter, he emphasized the of alliances and the true value to the United States the international order. And let me quote again from
letter. He said, it must be conducive to our
prosperity, and values, and we are strengthened in
effort by the solidarity of our alliances. End of

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

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

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

The international rules-based order in the wake
World War II is the order that has ensured prosperity
security now for 75 years, and I am fully committed to
I think that is the one thing that is certainly under
from Russia and certainly China. China wants to
global order. They want to do everything from replace
institutions to replace the dollar. And so I am fully
committed to that. I see the big picture, if you
that is how I commit to these problems. It is how I
addressing these problems, if you will.

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

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

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

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

Senator Peters: And you would be willing to do

Dr. Esper: Absolutely.

Senator Peters: Thank you.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Rounds?

Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Esper, first of all, I want to thank you for
service to our country, to your family who recognize this is one of those challenging times in which you tried to fill a couple of different positions all at same time. But your work and your background makes eminently qualified for the position that we are today.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On the offensive side, I think we have a lot of
capabilities, but policy had not caught until, as you the passage of NSPM-13. Probably more needs to be need to remain vigilant on that front.

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

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

Senator Rounds: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Heinrich?

Senator Heinrich: Thank you, Chairman.

Secretary, I want to start and just say I your focus on technologies like artificial hypersonics, directed energy. These are our path to offset advantages over our adversaries, and said way, these are the path to effective deterrence. So I
appreciate that and look forward to working with you those issues.

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

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

Dr. Esper: I will, yes.

Senator Heinrich: Thank you.

I want to return to an issue that Senator Shaheen brought up. Unfortunately, New Mexico has also from some quite severe impacts, environmental impacts, caused by hazardous chemical runoff at our military installations. And I want to make clear. We are very of our military bases in New Mexico. But PFAS at well as Holloman, and jet fuel at Kirtland have had adverse impacts on local communities and, in
the water tables that they rely on. In a dry
like New Mexico, water is everything with regard to
community and economic development. For example, a
dairy farmer outside of Cannon Air Force Base lost the
entirety of his family business because of PFAS
contamination in the water table.

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

Dr. Esper: I do, Senator.

Senator Heinrich: I want to ask one more
here. According to the report on effects of a
climate to the DOD published in January of this year
will quote this -- climate effects lead to increased
maintenance and repair requirements for training and
lands and associated infrastructure and equipment.
quote. And I would simply ask if you concur with that
statement.
Dr. Esper: I am sorry. Can you repeat that last again?

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

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

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

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

Senator Heinrich: Last week during his
meeting, General Milley mentioned the importance of artificial intelligence to DOD modernization. I several technologies. Can you just share your about the importance of technologies like AI, directed energy, as well as hypersonics in maintaining the that we have historically had?

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

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

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

Senator Heinrich: Thank you, Chairman.
Chairman Inhofe: Senator Perdue?

Senator Perdue: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

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

Today, China spends, if you adjust it for power parity, almost on parity with the United States,
that much different. And they are really focused on naval forces. Their Belt and Road Initiative -- they got 36 ports in Africa, 51 ports in South America that have made these proprietary loans to.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Look, I was in the Senate here in 2000-2001 where
debated China’s entry into the World Trade we granted the authority. And the argument that we into at the time was if we let them into these they will democratize. They will become more benign. will become a normal actor on the world stage. They us wrong.

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

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

Do you agree with that?

Dr. Esper: Yes, sir.

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

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

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

Senator Perdue: Thank you, sir.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Chairman Inhofe: Senator King?

Senator King: Welcome, Mr. Secretary. Thank you your service and your willingness to continue to You made a point in your opening statement that jumped out at me that I had not really thought about explicitly before. Our adversaries do not have have allies. That is one of our asymmetrical that we should maintain it seems to me. You concur, I assume.

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

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

Dr. Esper: Not just maintain. We should keep
it. We should expand our networks.

Senator King: In his non-introduction, Senator mentioned Barbara Tuchman’s “Guns of August.” And the strongest message of that book is mistakes and miscalculation leading to war.

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

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

Dr. Esper: Yes, Senator. In fact, the same to mind when he mentioned Barbara Tuchman’s book.

Miscalculation in Syria led to how many years of war many millions of people died on both sides.

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

No better way was that most demonstrated recently an IRGC watercraft approached a British-owned vessel carrying oil, and they likely would have either
or brought it into the Iranian shore and created an international incident were it not for a British intervening. And just the simple thing of appearing scene and the warship putting itself in between the boats and the merchant vessel was enough to deter that could have escalated out of control. That is the of concept we are trying to envision in DOD throughout strait so we do not get into a military fight. We into the diplomatic realm.

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

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

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

Dr. Esper: I believe transparency and always good in these types of situations so that, there is no misunderstanding about one’s intentions.
Senator King: Changing the subject, we have a lot today about China, a lot about Russia. I am and I am seeing signs of connections between China and Russia cooperation. Is this a concern, and do you see as sort of a national strategy 2.0 dealing with a adversary?

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

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

[Laughter.]

Dr. Esper: Shocking.

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

[Laughter.]

Senator King: I am sorry. Go ahead.

Dr. Esper: Fehrenbach.

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

Senator King: China recently declared itself a Arctic nation.
Dr. Esper: I guess 900 miles constitutes near.

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

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

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

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

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

Senator King: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Tillis?

Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Secretary Esper, thank you for being here. I thank you and your wife for spending time down at Fort taking a look at the military housing situation. So will start there.

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

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

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

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

Senator Tillis: Thank you.

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

Can you talk a little bit about that briefly? I
got a couple other questions I hope to get in.

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

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

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

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

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

Dr. Esper: Yes, sir.

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

Senator Tillis: Thank you.

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

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

Dr. Esper: Yes, sir.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Kaine?

Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

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

Senator Kaine: It is something that I like to
myself to not focus on smaller order problems and
bigger ones to get worse. That is one of the reasons
was very happy to hear you testify earlier with
Iran that diplomacy should be our preferred position.
I am deeply worried about the escalating tensions
Iran for a number of reasons, including I believe an objective view would place the beginning of these escalations with the U.S. backing out of a diplomatic And I do not want to be in a position where we would have to look our troops in the face and say we had a diplomatic deal. We tore it up, and now we are going have to send you into a war. I think that would be difficult.

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

Dr. Esper: I -- I am sorry.

Senator Kaine: No. Go ahead.

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

Senator Kaine: I very much worry that another against a smaller, weaker, faraway nation would take our focus on China. And China is a full-spectrum
competitor. General Milley was talking about -- and talked in this hearing -- it could be air, sea, land, space. But outside of the military realm, economic, diplomacy, it is a full-spectrum competitor and we focus on it.

Let me ask you a question about sort of your about this. As we focused in an earlier generation on Soviet Union as a key threat, one of our strong assets the network of allies, beginning with Truman and NATO article 5 and joint defense. We had partners and a degree that the Soviet Union did not. They had nations, but they did not have the same network of Extract the lesson and let us move over into Asia now. My view of China is they do a lot of deals, but do not have allies to the same degree we do. And even we are in nations where they are doing a lot of deals, is a skepticism about China’s intent.

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

But talk a little bit long term from the if you were Secretary, what would your thinking be sort of the alliances in the INDOPACOM and how we
those to advance our common interests.

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

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

But the bigger issue you mentioned -- it is what
concerns me -- is we eventually won in the Cold War
Russia did not have the economic might to win at the
and they were using force. They were compelling
be in their orbit, to be part of the Warsaw Pact.
great economic power and potential, and they are using
They are using it in the region to influence others,
overtly or covertly, if you will. They are taking
of small countries who need capital, and they are
them into debt in a way that they are able to capture
strategic ports, critical minerals and resources, you
it. But one of the biggest concerns is simply that,
they will use their economic might that is only
mean, it is just a matter of time before they match us
possibly surpass us, that they will use that in a way will pull even likely partners, if not our current away from us. That is the big challenge that I think face with China, that we did not face with Russia.

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

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

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

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

But the policy that I have communicated to my counterpart, if confirmed, defense minister is that either have the S-400 or you can have the F-35. You
have both. Acquisition of the S-400 fundamentally undermines the capabilities of the F-35 and our retain that overmatch in skies going forward.

Senator Kaine: Thank you.

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Hawley?

Senator Hawley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

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

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

Clearly what it does is it signals, contrary to the Chinese like to say, that they are willing to use
to get their way. That is something they promised.

Obviously, they consider Taiwan a part of China.

historical ties there, if you will, that they say and cultural ones. But I think that would really change dynamics of the Pacific, and it would really cause to all their neighbors and partners for the reasons were discussing earlier. By the way, I think that is of what you see playing out in the streets of Hong these days is a lot of concern about what has happened China assumed control of Hong Kong in 1997.

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

So let me just ask you in your opinion what would take to defeat a Chinese fait accompli in the way that
limits the cost and the danger to Americans?

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

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

Dr. Esper: I believe in Ronald Reagan’s dictum, through strength. So we have to have really capable
as I said in my opening remarks, whether it is in the space, and your conventional domains of air, land. subsurface, by the way is important in that theater -- have such a capable military that we deter any whatsoever. That is number one.

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

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

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

Dr. Esper: Yes, sir, in principle. I would want understand where the money is coming from to pay for
and all that. We have to, again, approach these holistically.

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

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

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

Senator Hawley: Thank you, Dr. Esper.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Warren?

Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Esper, prior to becoming Army were the top lobbyist for Raytheon which, of course, nation’s third largest defense contractor. Now, under current ethics rules, you are prohibited from
in any decisions involving Raytheon for 2 years after appointment as Army Secretary. But because you have been in government for 20 months, that recusal period to expire in November, which means you will soon be participate personally and substantially in matters involving your former employer. That is a conflict of interest given that Raytheon does billions of dollars of business every year with the Defense Department.

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

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

Senator Warren: Yes, we did.

Dr. Esper: We had this discussion a couple years You know, on the advice of my ethics folks at the Pentagon, the career professionals, no, the is not to. The belief is that the screening process I in place, all the rules and regulations and law that I

Senator Warren: So let us just cut to it. You going to do what Acting Secretary Shanahan agreed to
that is agree not to be involved in decisions
former employer where you were head lobbyist for the
duration of your time as Secretary of Defense.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But there is a catch. In a recent memo, you
an exception to your ethics obligations by writing
can get a waiver to participate in matters that
predictably affect Raytheon’s financial interest if it
quote, so important that it cannot be referred to
official. End quote. This smacks of corruption,
simple.

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

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

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

Dr. Esper: If I can answer the question.

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

I have other ethics issues I would like to cover.

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

Senator Warren: No. I am not trying to have a
I want to know if you will agree not to seek such a
Dr. Esper: So let me just read to you. This is letter from the Director Standards of Conduct Office. Senator Warren: Is that a yes or a no? Dr. Esper: -- it says -- Senator Warren: I will take it then as a no, you not agree not to seek such a waiver. Dr. Esper: Mr. Chairman, I would like to submit for the record. Senator Warren: I have a third question to ask ethics. I think I am entitled to ask these questions. Dr. Esper: But I just want to answer your Senator Warren: The question is a yes or no. Chairman Inhofe: I am going to interrupt for a here. I think that Dr. Esper has the opportunity, have the opportunity to answer the questions that you asking. You have asked several questions. He is answer a question. We would like to recognize him to that question. Senator Warren: I presume, Mr. Chairman, I will extra time then? Chairman Inhofe: Yes, you can have extra time. Dr. Esper: I would just like to submit this for record. It is a statement from the Director of the Standards of Conduct Office. I will not read the thing in the interest of time, but it says, quote, at
time while serving as the Secretary of the Army or the Acting Secretary of Defense did you -- he is writing -- request, seek, or receive a waiver or authorization related to your ethics agreement and ethics. Unquote.

Chairman Inhofe: Okay.

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

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

Senator Warren: Thank you. I have a third

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

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

If confirmed, will you commit not to work for or
paid by any defense contractor for at least 4 years your government service?

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

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

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

Dr. Esper: Senator, if I may answer your the age of 18, I went to West Point, and I swore an defend this Constitution. And I embraced a motto duty and honor and country. And I have lived my life accordance with those values ever since then. I went for this country. I served overseas for this country. stepped down from jobs that paid me well more than
was working anywhere else. And each time, it was to
the public good and to serve the young men and women
in our armed services.

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

Senator Warren: So I am asking the question --
Chairman Inhofe: Okay. That is it.

Senator Warren: No. This is not right, Mr.
Chairman Inhofe: Senator Sullivan is recognized.

Senator Warren: I did not ask a question at the
Chairman Inhofe: You have gone 2 minutes over
time.

Senator Warren: No. I have not gone over. He
gone over, and he is not willing --
Chairman Inhofe: Senator Sullivan?

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

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Sullivan?

Senator Warren: This is outrageous.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I want to thank Secretary Esper for your
our country. I want to thank the family members here.

have three children myself, and it is not always easy.
Families are in public service as well. So I want to you for all that you have done for your dad and your
Mr. Secretary, I am going to ask you. Let us back to this issue. Will you commit to abide by all
and ethics requirements regarding your prior regard to Raytheon unequivocally?

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

Senator Sullivan: You may.

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

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

Senator Sullivan: Let me --

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

Senator Sullivan: Let me raise another issue. I bunch of questions, but this is important. You saw
Rounds, Senator Cotton raise this issue as well.

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

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

Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

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

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

Dr. Esper: Yes, sir, because I think it is consistent with the National Defense Strategy, which I am committed to do.
Senator Sullivan: Let me talk to the issue of Arctic. I do not want to disappoint Senator King by raising these issues, so I will.

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

[The information follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]
Senator Sullivan: You and I have talked about
lot. Let me just give you one example.

The Russians are doing all kinds of things, new
new airfields, new military commands in the Arctic.

is talking about the Arctic as the new Suez Canal that
are going to control. And we had a provision in this
NDAA that just said America should have a port, which
does not have right now, that could handle resupplying
destroyer, not even an aircraft carrier in the Arctic.
Pentagon opposed this. Fortunately, this committee
the Pentagon’s bad advice.

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

Dr. Esper: Yes, Senator, I do.

Senator Sullivan: Let me talk a little bit about
Alaska. Mr. Secretary, you had the opportunity to
Alaska as Secretary of the Army. I would like to say
constitutes three pillars of America’s military might.
are the cornerstone of missile defense. We are a
for expeditionary forces like the 425 and the 1st
Brigade, which is getting ready to go to Iraq. And we
the hub of air combat power for the Arctic and the
Pacific. As a matter of fact, by the end of next
will have over 100 fifth generation combat-coded
based in Alaska because of our strategic location,
of the fact, as Billy Mitchell did say -- again, I do
want to disappoint Senator King -- that Alaska was the
strategic place in the world, given its strategic
The Air Force is evaluating its OCONUS locations
deployments of KC-46’s. Alaska has 50-year-old
there.

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

Dr. Esper: I will, Senator.

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

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

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

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

Senator Jones?

Senator Jones: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

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

Dr. Esper: I think strategy should be reviewed constantly and certainly referred to constantly. And events change, you need to adapt your strategy to the that you live in. So I think it is a continuous, process. There is nothing in the world right now that
out to me that says we need to change. While the NDS about Russia and China as strategic competitors in of great power competition, it also explicitly cites fact that we have to deal in the meantime with challenges such as Iran and North Korea and others.

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

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

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

Senator Jones: All right. Thank you.

I want to get back to also the discussion we have about alliances. Everybody understands the alliances
how important it is. But it is easier to say and talk in a hearing than to do. And clearly Russia, China, everyone is trying to threaten our alliances, to break our alliances. That is pretty obvious whether it is China is doing in the Belt and Road Initiative to what is doing particularly in Turkey.

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

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

Dr. Esper: Well, I think, first of all, from a perspective, we need to keep doing now what we are well. I have had the chance on many occasions in the years as Secretary of the Army to visit our Joint Center at Hohenfels, Germany where we train all of our allies together fighting against a notional Russian if you will. So we need to sustain those things. And
the way, that was a big change from when I last served Italy in the early 1990s. So we need to sustain those things.

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

And so the alliance is really looking forward. I they have a great leader -- we have -- in Jens Senator Jones: Mr. Secretary, let me just ask question, though. When the President does some you willing to stand up and say, Mr. President, your may be undermining our ability to strengthen these alliances? Can you do that?

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

Senator Jones: And I believe your commitment,
appreciate your time and effort, and I look forward to confirmation. Thank you, sir.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Cramer?

Senator Cramer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

One of the things I really appreciated that you
mentioned multiple times, and that is the importance
understanding the long game, being committed to a
plan, commitment to the NDS. Can you speak just a
further about the importance of specifically that one
of the triad, that ground-based strategic deterrent,
sticking to the time frame is important?

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

Senator Cramer: Thank you.

Another issue that you have raised a fair bit --
have talked about the new domain of space, as well as
As you know, the Defense Authorization Act that came
this committee and then the Senate includes standing Space Force. The House similarly. They call it a Corps. But we have had some serious consideration and discussion and some disagreement on what the ought to look like for that. And I know there have multiple options that have been presented, proposals administration, DOD. The one we settled on was a the most recent, and that is something that would be to the Marine relationship to the Navy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Senator Manchin?

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

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

I am sure there are people in the private sector would like for all of us to sign a 4-year deal, no speaking engagements, no income enhancement after we
public service. I am sure they are out there.

So with that being said, thank you for your

your stellar career.

I want to get to the thing you and I have talked

and you were kind enough to come and we sat down. The

defense industrial base has long been targeted by

espionage, as we know. The Chinese are the greatest

proliferators of that. And to show the public a

here is the Javelin, the United States FGM-148 Javelin

tank missile, and it shows the H-12 Red Arrow anti-

missile from the Chinese. Here we have the General

MQ-9 Reaper UAV, and if you look below, you have the

Rainbow UAV from China. If you look also at Northrop

Grumman MQ-8 Fire Scout unmanned helo and look down

Mr. Secretary, the Chinese SVU-200 Flying Tiger

helo. And then at the top of the food chain, the

Martin F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, and you look at the

Shenyang J-31 fighter. Now, there is no way this

been -- absolutely no way any of this could have been

accomplished in the record time that they did it if it

not for the espionage.

So you and I spoke about this before. So I would

you how are you planning to hold those services in the

total food chain, not just at the top -- and we have

about this. How can we do this, sir, and hold
accountable? Because right now there is no
whatsoever. If they have been stolen and espionage is
happening at the lower food chain, which is going to
subcontractor, a subcontractor to a subcontractor,
at the top of the food chain has to be held
you might want to answer that.

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

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

Senator Manchin: I think quickly, Mr. Secretary,
could just ask you. Would you be receptive to holding the primary contractor responsible for the food chain of the product they have been awarded?

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

Senator Manchin: I understand.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Senator Manchin: Well, they will pass it down if
can. I understand that.

   Dr. Esper: And I understand that too.

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

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

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

   Senator Manchin: Thank you, Secretary. I look
to voting for you.

Dr. Esper: Thank you, sir.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you.

Senator Scott?

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

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

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

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

But to the broader point, you are right. We have
illegal Maduro regime down there that is killing its
suppressing their rights. They have driven that
into the ground, and they are spreading that -- the
that that would spread throughout the region. And you right. It has invited in all the spoilers who want to either enable the illegal Maduro regime or kind of finger in our eye. And you named them all. And so it something we need to pay attention to, and I know the admiral down there, Admiral Faller, is focused on it is something that I am going to continue to pay attention to, as has the White House, by the way.

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

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

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

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

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Hirono?

Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Nice to see you, Dr. Esper.

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

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

Dr. Esper: No, Senator.

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

Dr. Esper: No, Senator.

Senator Hirono: You have testified that you resign if you were asked to do anything illegal, unethical. And certainly the country cannot afford to a yes-man leading the DOD.
So I just want to ask you. There was a time when President did not acknowledge the importance of NATO, Secretary Mattis tried to convince him otherwise. have taken the same position as Secretary Mattis?

Dr. Esper: Senator, if I understand your have taken that position. I think I said my second 

Acting --

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

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

Senator Hirono: Yes.

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

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

Dr. Esper: I take the position I have taken with everybody I have worked for, even Members here in and that is I owe the principal, in this case, the President, my honest, candid advice in terms of what I is the right course forward.
Senator Hirono: Yes, and also to uphold the
Constitution and the interests of our country.

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

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

Let me point to a group of people that I wanted
mention to you that would be, I would say, similarly
situated. There was a recent report by NPR about the
of veterans who have fought for this country, but
a lot of incidence of PTSD, et cetera have been
And these veterans joined the military believing that
the benefits would be expedited citizenship --
citizenship. For one thing, a lot of the men do not
know that they actually have to apply for citizenship,
this is not automatically conferred to them because
have served. And apparently that is also an issue.
are sent back. And we are talking about probably
of former service members who have been deported in
way. They go back to the countries of their birth
know nothing about, having to leave, in instances,
children, et cetera.
So can you make sure that the naturalization for eligible service members is clarified so they all understand? Because one of the inducements to serving country that they know -- our country is the only one know -- they actually have to apply, and they should under a mistaken impression that this is automatic.

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

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

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

Senator Hirono: And of course, the people who doing the deporting would be Homeland Security. So you pledge that you will not expend any DOD resources help the Department of Homeland Security identify and these veterans?
Dr. Esper: In fact, ma’am, what I would like to confirmed, is reach out to DHS regardless and just what is going on with this and kind of come back to Dr. Esper: Yes, I would like to have that. And one of the other things that the President is that he has eliminated a program called parole in which says that family members of those who are in cannot be deported. And he has stopped that. And so would like to have your commitment that you would for the reinstatement of the parole in place program the service member’s family members are not deported he or she is in service to our country.

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

Senator Hirono: You have been asked a lot about I could, just one short question. A lot of discussion the importance of our alliances. And you noted that the first things you did as the Secretary of the Army to Brussels to indicate the importance of NATO. So I like to ask for your commitment that one of the first you would do, knowing the importance of the Indo- Command, the biggest physical AOR, that you would go Secretary of Defense to visit Japan, South Korea particularly, but that is something that General when we became Secretary. Would you commit to that?
Dr. Esper: Yes, ma'am, I do absolutely. It is important. And by the way, I will visit INDOPACOM headquarters as well. I did that as Army Secretary. a fantastic trip.

Senator Hirono: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you.

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

Senator McSally: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Secretary Esper, it is good to see you again.

Congratulations. Your nomination was tweeted out the before you were supposed to come visit Arizona. And you are confirmed, I look forward to hosting you back Arizona not just for your mission related to your Secretary of the Army but also Secretary of Defense. just wanted to extend that invitation.

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

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

I appreciated working with you on many issues in
past.

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

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

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

Senator McSally: Great. Thank you. I
that.

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

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

Senator McSally: Potential.

Dr. Esper: Absolutely.

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

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

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

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

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

Senator McSally: Great. Thanks.

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

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

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

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

Senator McSally: Exactly. Thanks, Secretary appreciate it.

Senator Ernst [presiding]: Senator Duckworth?
Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

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

As we are focused on great power competition, as
outlined in the NDS -- we talked about this -- our
logistical tail -- it needs to be robust enough to
our shipping priorities. Would you commit to me that,

you are confirmed, you will pay closer attention to

logistical needs, to include funding for sealift,

and other aspects of our logistics infrastructure,

also includes amphibious shipping for the Marine

Dr. Esper: Absolutely, Senator. Just to share

you for the broader audience, look, the Army gets to

fight through sealift. 90 percent of its equipment

sea, and if it cannot get there, it will not be in the

fight. It will not be relevant. And I have had his

conversation as Secretary of the Army with Secretary

Navy Spencer, and he agrees. We need to modernize and

capacity into our sealift.

And second, with regard to the Marines,

They need to have the requisite number of amphibs to

their missions. They are short now. And that is

that I am committed to seeing through.
Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

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

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

Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

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

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

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

Senator Duckworth: But Article 2 is aside from AUMF.

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

Senator Duckworth: But that is under Article 2. speaking specifically of the 2001 and 2002 AUMFs.

either one of those authorize you to --

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

Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

Again, I want to touch a little bit on the issue sexual assault and harassment. We have had civilian military representatives from DOD come in for years to take the problem seriously and effect real change.

Disappointingly, estimated prevalence rates are

Will you commit to working on a major effort to reform prevention efforts, not through changes in regulation, an actual cultural change that needs to happen?
Dr. Esper: Absolutely, Senator. This is intolerable what we see is happening out there. The should be zero. And we need to continue to jump on problem, take care of the survivors, the victims, and also hold the perpetrators accountable.

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

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

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

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

Dr. Esper: Thank you, Senator.

Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

I yield back.

Senator Ernst: Thank you very much, Senator I want you to see, Mr. Secretary, that it is the logisticians that are left cleaning up the battlefield

[Laughter.]

Dr. Esper: I recall you were a logistician.

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

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

I would like to build upon the sexual assault,
harassment issue that Senator Duckworth and Senator
have mentioned. Senator Hirono always mentions it as

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

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

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

    I am not familiar with the legislation, but I
is fair to say how people conduct themselves at home
they conduct themselves in the workplace eventually.
not change personalities and behaviors in between the
Eventually it comes out. So I think the more ways we
after it and address this problem and change the
one of the things we were looking at doing in the Army
is not just starting when they get to their first unit
even basic training. You work all the way back to
come to the recruiting station and start signing
to make sure they know up front that we are going to
you to a higher standard. You are going to live the
values, and you are going to treat everybody with
and respect. Start the training, the inculcation, the
development of those values then from literally day
continue that training and education throughout the
of their career in the service.

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

We have talked a lot about some of the major
our near-peer adversaries, as we have focused very
the National Defense Strategy. The National Defense
Strategy, of course, outlined three main lines of
the readiness, which we have addressed in a number of
readiness and lethality; building up of alliances.
thank you very much for your commitment to work in a
of-government approach and working with our allies on
And then as well, our modernization of our forces and platforms and equipment.

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

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

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

Serving as a former soldier and as a spouse of a enlisted soldier, just understanding some of the that our families face when they are far from home and
need to support those families is very, very clear to us. We hope that we can project that to the broader States as well.

But thank you for that great commitment.

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

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

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

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

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

This closes today’s hearing.

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