HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON

NAVY AND MARINE CORPS READINESS

Wednesday, December 2, 2020

U.S. Senate
Subcommittee on Readiness and
Management Support
Committee on Armed Services
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:18 a.m.
in Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Dan
Sullivan, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

Subcommittee Members Present: Senators Sullivan,
Fischer, Ernst, Blackburn, Kaine, Shaheen, Hirono,
Duckworth, and Jones.
OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. DAN SULLIVAN, U.S. SENATOR

FROM ALASKA

Senator Sullivan: Good morning. This hearing of the Subcommittee on Readiness and Management will come to order. The subcommittee meets today to receive testimony on the current readiness of the United States Navy and the United States Marine Corps. I want to welcome our three distinguished witnesses: the Honorable Kenneth Braithwaite, Secretary of the Navy; General David H. Berger, Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps; and Admiral Michael Gilday, Chief of Naval Operations for the United States Navy.

I would also like to thank Diana Maurer, Director of Defense Capabilities and Management, and her team at the Government Accountability Office for submitting the requested statement for the record for this hearing. GAO is an invaluable resource to our work on the committee.

Some of the issues that I would like to address and cover today are COVID-19 and its impacts on the readiness of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps; the Navy and Marine Corps’ pivotal role in countering great power competition, as highlighted in the National Defense Strategy; the Commandant of the Marine Corps’ bold, new Force Design and planning guidance; a recent provocation of Russian military exercises, massive Russian military exercises, in the Arctic, and related to that, the role of the Navy and Marine
Corps as they play an increasingly important role in protecting our strategic interests in the Arctic. Let me touch on these briefly.

First, the impact of COVID-19 on Navy and Marine Corps readiness. Over the last few months, this committee has received frequent and productive briefings on COVID-19 and on its impact on military readiness. As you are all aware, COVID-19 reduced operations at Navy and Marine Corps depots, canceled or postponed vital exercises such as RIMPAC 2020, and changed the way in which we train our sailors and marines. I am looking forward to an update on these critical issues as it relates to the readiness of our Marine Corps and Navy team.

Second, I would like to address the 2018 National Defense Strategy and the Navy’s and Marine Corps’ role in responding to the return of great power competition. Released in 2018, the National Defense Strategy I believe is still very much a bipartisan document and strategy which prioritizes the return of great power competition particularly with Russia and China, with China as the pacing threat. Thus far, in responding to the NDS’ directives, the U.S. Navy and this committee have advocated for building a 355-ship Navy and has heavily and rightfully in my view focused these investments on improving and expanding our nation’s submarine fleet, a key area of American strategic
Third, as part of the Navy team’s response to great power competition, the Marine Corps, under the Commandant’s new planning guidance and his Force Design 2030 construct, has keenly focused on how to address the NDS’ pacing threat: China. Specifically, General Berger has zeroed in on transforming our Marine Corps into a slightly leaner but more agile force. The Commandant’s planning guidance calls for revolutionary change to the Marine Corps, at least in the Department of Defense terms, and I commend him for his efforts on being one of the services’ leading in terms of trying to implement the NDS. But the Commandant’s strategy is not without its critics, and I would like to give the Secretary and General Berger the opportunity respond to some of those in this hearing.

I would like to also address a recent incident. I was with the Secretary in Alaska where we saw a peer exercise of great power competition, the recent very large military exercises which took place inside the U.S. exclusive economic zone off the coast of the great State of Alaska. As some of you may already know, in late August the Russians conducted a major war game near Alaska. Over 50 Russian warships, about 40 Russian aircraft took part in these exercises in the Bering Sea. It involved multiple practice missile launches, submarines. The “New York Times” reported
last month in an article I would like to submit for the record, a headline and byline, “Are We Getting Invaded?”

U.S. boats face Russian aggression near Alaska. Russia has accelerated its provocative encounters in the North Pacific harassing American fishing vessels in U.S. waters, sending bombers towards Alaska’s shores. I would like to enter this into the record. Without objection.

[The information follows:]

[SUBCOMMITTEE INSERT]
Senator Sullivan: But I would like, Mr. Secretary, Admiral, an update on that, particularly the coordination that we need to improve between the Coast Guard, the Navy, and the Alaskan fishing fleets that were impacted by this.

Finally, I would like to have a broader discussion today on the Arctic, as it has become an emerging area of great power competition, and to better understand the Navy and Marine Corps’ role in protecting the Arctic homeland, safeguarding the Arctic region’s global commons, and as the Navy and Marine Corps do across every part of the world. In this regard, I am hopeful to hear some positive news about a new Navy Arctic strategy, which this committee has been encouraging all the services to produce Arctic strategies.

And I am hopeful that we could also have a discussion on not only the support for building six polar class icebreakers that our nation needs but the discussion that the President started a couple months ago with his memo to senior national defense officials on where and how we should be basing polar class security cutters in America’s Arctic. And, Mr. Secretary, you and I have had a lot of discussion on that.

Finally and perhaps most importantly in this committee, I would like a prediction of who is going to win the Army-Navy football game that takes place in a couple weeks. That is going to be very important, gentlemen.
Thank you very much. I am looking forward to this hearing.

And I would now like to hear from my friend and colleague, Senator Kaine.
STATEMENT OF HON. TIM Kaine, U.S. SENATOR FROM VIRGINIA

Senator Kaine: Well, thank you, Chairman Sullivan. We find ourselves in very, very challenging times, and it is good that this committee’s work has continued and will. I want to welcome the distinguished witnesses. Thank you for your service. We are looking forward to the testimony and opportunities to exchange questions today.

And I echo the comments from Chairman Sullivan and offer thanks to Diana Maurer for her work at the GAO.

I also want to do one other set of thank yous. This is probably the last opportunity that we will meet either as a subcommittee or even as a full committee prior to some changes, and we are losing two colleagues, Senator McSally and Senator Jones, who have served on the committee in a wonderful way and on the subcommittee as well. They were great public servants before they got here. They were great public servants while they were here, and I am sure they have great public service ahead of them. But I just wanted to acknowledge each of them.

The chairman has done a really good job of putting the issues kind of up on the board that we need to discuss today: impacts on readiness from the ongoing pandemic, and lessons learned along the way that will help us going forward. What role will the DOD play in vaccine
distribution and what plans are being made within the Navy family -- Navy and Marine Corps -- over vaccines and how they will be deployed. Shipyard modernization plan and the looming threats that our bases face from the effects of climate change. I will not delve further into those now, and I will save those topics for my questions. We want to help the Department address what we need to do to be ready to operate in this challenging environment and respond and execute the full range of DOD responsibilities and missions.

I look forward to your testimony today and thank you.

Senator Sullivan: And I would like to begin the testimony. Each of you will have 5 minutes to give an oral testimony. Your longer statements can be submitted for the record, if you so choose. Mr. Secretary, I would like to begin with you, sir.
STATEMENT OF HON. KENNETH J. BRAITHWAITE, SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

Mr. Braithwaite: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And before I begin, I would like to offer the Department of the Navy’s condolences to you, sir, for the loss of your father, a great veteran of the United States Navy, and our thoughts and our prayers are with you, sir.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

Mr. Braithwaite: In May of 1943, American troops, aircraft, and ships were sent to the Aleutian Island of Attu to dislodge the imperial Japanese troops occupying our American soil. These young Americans were dedicated and brave, but unprepared and under-equipped. The only thing that prevented the operation from ending in total catastrophe was the fact that that landing was unopposed. In short, we, the United States military, got lucky.

But that should never be accepted as good enough for our fleets, our force, or for our nation. As Secretary of the Navy, I am determined to ensure that our sailors and marines are never again sent into a situation without the right training, the right equipment, and the right leadership.

Chairman Sullivan, Ranking Member Kaine, distinguished members of the committee, we appreciate your efforts to ensure funding stability over the past several years. This
stability has enabled a greater focus on readiness across both services from the Navy’s investments in shipyards and aviation maintenance to the Marine Corps’ modernization initiatives within the Commandant’s Force Design 2030. These efforts are increasing our expeditionary deployment capabilities and fleet readiness even in the face of this COVID-19 and other global challenges. More importantly, we are investing in the training, education, and resilience of our personnel. They and their families will always be our greatest resource.

As I discussed during my confirmation hearing, I was concerned about the morale of the force and its underlying effects on culture across the entire Department. Thankfully, I found many efforts underway to address these concerns, and in consistent engagements with our sailors and marines around the globe, I have discovered our morale is better than I thought it might be. But it can get better as we direct the resources to make it better.

We must prepare today for tomorrow, and we must continually adjust to the threat. Our existing fleet structure operates on the premise that we still live in a post-9/11 state where NATO’s flanks are secure, the Russian fleet is tied to the pier, and terrorism is our biggest problem. That is not the world of today. And so as the world changes, we must be bold, evolve, and change with it.
Instead of perpetuating a structured design to support yesterday’s joint forces command, we are aligning to today’s threat to meet the unique maritime challenges of the Atlantic theater, we will rename Fleet Forces Command as the U.S. Atlantic Fleet and we will refocus our naval forces in this important region on their original mission, controlling the maritime approaches to the United States and to those of our allies. The Atlantic Fleet will confront the re-assertive Russian navy, which has been deploying closer and closer to our east coast, with a tailored maritime presence capability and lethality.

Also, in order to improve our posture in the Indo-Pacific, we will reconstitute the first fleet assigning it primary responsibility for the Indo and South Asian region as an expeditionary fleet back to the capabilities and unpredictability of an agile, mobile, at-sea command. This will reassure our allies and partners of our presence and commitment to this region while ensuring any potential adversary knows we are committed to global presence to ensure rule of law and freedom of the seas.

We are determined today to make the bold changes required to ensure that our forces are prepared to dominate any potential battlespace and return home safely tomorrow. As the great navalist, the 26th President of the United States, Teddy Roosevelt, once said, a strong Navy is not a
provocation to war but the surest guarantor of peace.

We look to you, our Congress, for the strong oversight partnership that has enabled our maritime strength ever since Congress authorized the construction of our first six ships, the mighty American frigates of 1794. So I would like to take this moment to announce that the next constellation class frigate will be named for one of those original six, a name selected by our first President, George Washington. The ship will be USS Congress to honor and recognize the work that you and your staff do every day to support our sailors, our marines, and the people of the United States of America.

On behalf of the Department of the Navy, our marines, our sailors, our civilian workforce, and their families that serve at their side, thank you for what you do to enhance our readiness.

I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Braithwaite follows:]
Senator Sullivan: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

Admiral, would you care to make an opening statement, sir?
STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL MICHAEL M. GILDAY, USN, CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

Admiral Gilday: Yes, sir, I would.

Chairman Sullivan, again my condolences on your family’s loss. Your dad was not only a sailor but a great friend of the Navy.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

Admiral Gilday: Ranking Member Kaine, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity appear before you this morning with the Secretary of the Navy, as well as Commandant Berger. My wife Linda behind me joins me this morning.

To be effective, the United States Navy has to be able to carry out two critical functions. The first is sea control and the second is power projection. And both of those missions are timeless. The Navy does not need to reinvent itself. The manner by which we carry out those functions and the equipment that we use to do it do change over time, but as Admiral Nimitz said in front of a joint session of Congress in October of 1945 at the dawn of the nuclear age, he called those missions timeless. President John F. Kennedy, in the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis, said the same thing. So for me, sea control and the capability to control the seas and to dominate the oceans is my primary focus.
With respect to readiness, that covers two areas: readiness today, which I believe is the focus of this hearing, as well as our readiness tomorrow. And the budget decisions that the Navy presents to the Secretary of Defense really balance across three big areas that are aimed at those two functions. That would be readiness, readiness today and readiness to the future. That would be lethal capabilities in order to control the seas and to project power. And the last is capacity, the size of the United States Navy.

Today in the midst of a global pandemic, we have about 100 ships deployed, and we have about 40,000 sailors at sea. That ranges from the Arctic Circle to the Cape of Good Hope, from the Black Sea in the Baltics to the Arabian Sea, the Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific. Our cyber warriors are standing vigilant watch right now as we speak. They are joined by our silent service under the seas that continue their constant patrols.

I would be remiss if I did not talk about the civilian sailors who support us every single day so that we can control the seas. Those are our shipyard workers. Those are folks that work in production lines that keep our spare parts rolling to the waterfront, to our aviation squadrons, to our submarines, and to our ships. They are people that provide the Naval Academy, our academic institutions like
the Naval Academy, the Naval War College, and the Naval Post-Graduate School that continue to churn out the best and the brightest that this nation has, and our boot camp which is operating at double its capacity.

That said, the investments that keep that machine going every single day are also balanced against investments of the future. Think about hypersonics and laser energy. We just shot down a UAV with laser energy at sea just last months. We shot down an ICBM from a destroyer with a standard missile just 2 weeks ago. So we are focused on the future and what we need to do to get there.

Members of the committee, we are grateful for the support you provide the United States Navy, our sailors, and our families.

Again, I thank you for this opportunity this morning, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Gilday follows:]
Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Admiral.

General Berger?
STATEMENT OF GENERAL DAVID H. BERGER, USMC, COMMANDANT
OF THE MARINE CORPS

General Berger: Chairman, thanks for the opportunity
for us to appear this morning.

And from one marine to another, as we talked last
night, just know that if one marine hurts, all of us hurt.
So we are all thinking about you and your family.

And for the Ranking Member Kaine and the rest of the
members, this is a good opportunity and timely for us to be
here this morning to talk about readiness.

I am in the same spot as the CNO. I think readiness is
job one for a service secretary. But it is also a balance,
as he highlighted, of today’s readiness, what we have to
provide combatant commanders now, this afternoon, balanced
against the force that we have to prepare for the future.
And the cold, hard truth of it is if you are a service chief
that every dollar you spend on a legacy piece of equipment
or on trying to prepare something for this afternoon is a
dollar that you have to consider for the future. This is
the tension that every service chief has always been
challenged with.

That said, I think you should be very confident -- this
subcommittee should be very confident that all your Navy and
Marine units that are deployed around the world are ready
this afternoon. They are ready for any crisis, any
contingency, and we are working very hard to make sure that we are going to stay in front. There is no adversary that is going to overtake us.

The readiness. I will just offer you I probably will break precedent in my view of readiness, how I view it. I do not view readiness as availability only. It is more than just having a platform, a ship, an aircraft, a piece of equipment available. I think you expect us to be ready in terms of are you manned, are you trained, are you equipped, are you ready for the threat. So when we think of readiness, we are talking about readiness in terms of ready for what, ready when.

I am also grateful for all the support this committee has given us because 5, 6 years ago, we were in a tough spot readiness-wise. We had rode the force hard and we needed the resources to build our readiness back. And we are back where we need to be thanks to the support of the members on this subcommittee and the Congress writ large. So I am very grateful for that.

Lastly, I would just touch on the same thing I think that Admiral Gilday mentioned, which is our readiness in a sort of unconventional way, and that is cyber readiness. Of course, that is offensive and defensive. And I would just highlight that because those threats clearly are not going down. In fact, they are increasing. But you would be very
proud of the cyber mission force that every day is tackling
the challenges that you wanted to tackle. And on the
defensive side, I think we have all the means, the resources
in terms of the training and the people and the equipment to
prepare all our networks for the challenges that another
adversary is going to pose. So in both cases, I think we
are very focused on it, and that is going to be an enduring
task for all of us.

Chairman, I would yield the rest of my time to the
topics that you want to focus on, sir.

[The prepared statement of General Berger follows:]
Senator Sullivan: Well, thank you, General.

I will just begin. I appreciate the comments about my dad. You know, I come from a family with a long tradition of naval service. My dad accomplished a lot in his life, but his proudest accomplishment, no doubt, was his service in the U.S. Navy. His cousin, Bruce Wilhelm -- he was a naval aviator, an academy grad who won the distinguished Flying Cross during the Cuban Missile Crisis. You can read about that. He was actually highlighted in a movie. He was later killed in a training accident. And finally, my dad’s uncle, Tom Sullivan, was a lieutenant in the Navy. He did three Murmansk runs during World War II, some of the most dangerous service in the U.S. Navy during the war.

And I mention the Murmansk runs. And, General, as you know, it is the 70th anniversary of the Chosin Reservoir battle right now. A lot of Americans do not know a lot about that battle. But I mention that because those are very important cold weather operations that our Navy and Marine Corps did quite well at a critical moment in history.

So, Mr. Secretary, perhaps you can begin by talking about the Navy’s upcoming Arctic strategy to get back to the roots whether Murmansk operations or Chosin Reservoir type operations were -- we have a Navy and Marine Corps that can operate well and protect America’s strategic interests in some of the coldest places in the world that are now
increasingly becoming the places where great power
competition are going to be taking place in the future.

Mr. Braithwaite: Mr. Chairman, I would be happy to.

As you know, I am a student of the Arctic, an advocate
for the Arctic. I first went to your great State as a U.S.
Navy pilot stationed in Adak, Alaska at the Naval Air
Station and flew ASW missions throughout the Arctic Circle.

Most recently, I was the U.S. Ambassador at the Kingdom
of Norway, and I spent most of my time above the Arctic
Circle right near Murmansk.

And I have seen with my own eyes how the Arctic has
changed in those 35 years. Today it is navigable 365, and
there are other nations in the world that have recognized
its importance to us. And it should be an alarm to all of
Americans as an Arctic nation that we should have a more
formidable presence to ensure rule of law and freedom of the
seas in that part of the world.

Most recently the USS John McCain was doing just that,
a freedom of navigation exercise, near the Bay of Peter the
Great and was engaged by a more assertive Russian navy.

The United States Navy, the United States Marine Corps
has had a recommitment to the Arctic. We operate in the
Arctic today much more than we have historically although,
as you know, the Navy has operated consistently in the
Arctic since the inception of our submarine force. It is
just that you cannot see our vessels. Today we need that visible presence. As the Chief of Naval Operations talked about just a few moments ago, power projection, sea control, and the ability to ensure to our partners and allies and to our own people that we, the United States Navy, have that first and foremost in our minds.

We are about to release an Arctic strategy that you and I talked about during our recent trip to Alaska and the importance of how that blueprint will recommit ourselves in a much more visible way to activities in the Arctic.

But we must recognize that if we do not step forward quickly, those who have challenged us on the stage of great power competition are there. I have seen it. Russia has re-militarized the Arctic. China has recommitted itself to build icebreakers to be able to move its product from its homeland to Western markets in half the amount of time that it has historically had to.

So the United States Navy, the United States Marine Corps, Senator, is committed to being present in the Arctic in a much more visible way than we have historically been.

Senator Sullivan: Can I ask just two quick follow-ups maybe for you and Admiral Gilday? The Russian exercise that I mentioned -- it did catch our fishing fleet by surprise. I know that there has been an after-action. But you know, our fishing fleet was ordered out of the EEZ, which of
course is our EEZ where they fish. They should not be
ordered out of that by Russians. They were buzzed. They
were harassed.

What are we doing in terms of an after-action to make
sure that that does not happen again? Our fishing fleet --
you know, my State is what I call the super power of
seafood. Actually over 60 percent of all seafood harvested
in America comes from Alaska’s waters. What are we doing to
make sure that that does not happen again?

Mr. Secretary, do you have any follow-up on the
President’s memorandum on icebreakers and home-porting those
in different parts of the Arctic?

Mr. Braithwaite: Well, again, as I mentioned, the USS
John McCain was just recently in the Arctic to ensure
freedom of navigation, and I would invite the Chief of Naval
Operations to go into a little more detail.

Some of it, of course, is classified as you and I have
discussed, and the CNO and I would be happy to talk with you
privately at any time that would be convenient to you, Mr.
Chairman.

You may know that I recently went to Finland to see the
icebreakers in question that the President has directed us
to purchase. We are looking within the Department of the
Navy of how we can facilitate that. Part of commissioning
those ships means that they become U.S. naval vessels, and
there are requirements that we have to U.S. naval personnel in command of those vessels. So I have asked the CNO to look into the process by which we can facilitate that.

You and I agree we need to build icebreakers. We cannot build them as quickly as we need them. Today the Coast Guard maintains two icebreakers, and that is all that we have.

Senator Sullivan: And one is broken.

Mr. Braithwaite: Yes, sir. One is broken. So we do need icebreakers, and the Navy recognizes -- it is not a mission that is central to the United States Navy, but it is one that we rely on the Coast Guard to provide. And in this instance, per the executive order, we are looking at ways to procure those.

CNO, do you have any thoughts you would like to offer?

Admiral Gilday: Thanks, Mr. Secretary.

Sir, in terms of the Navy’s presence in the Arctic -- the Navy and the Marine Corps -- I would say that over the past year, we have done some 20 exercises in the high north. And so that ranges from unilateral, joint exercises that the U.S. conducts alone, some of it in the training range in Alaska, to bilateral exercises with some of our closest allies and partners to multilateral exercises. And so now our operations above -- in the high north are not extraordinary, but they are beginning to become part of our
day-to-day business. And I think that is directly tied to the National Defense Strategy, the Chairman’s role as the global integrator to posture the globe against those primary competitors, namely in this case, China and Russia that would include the Arctic.

With respect to the incident that happened in late August, I share your concern, Senator. I actually meet with the NORTHCOM Commander later on this week. I know they are looking at what potentially happened with communication breakdowns potentially to our fishermen, perhaps miscommunication between agencies in the U.S. Government. But U.S. fishermen should not feel threatened by another nation in our own EEZ in terms of fishing. I think our continued presence up there will have some blunting effect to that, but I think perhaps more needs to be done, including through the Arctic Council, to have honest discussions about it.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Admiral.

Senator Kaine?

Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Secretary Braithwaite, I want to talk to you about the announcements you have made today about the 1st Fleet and the Atlantic Fleet. I will spend 1 minute on the 1st Fleet and then minutes on the Atlantic Fleet.

So the 1st Fleet, as I understand your announcement --
it will take the sizable real estate that is now covered by the Seventh Fleet out of Japan and divide it into two fleets because of increased activity at the seam between the Pacific and the Indian Oceans. Do I understand that correctly?

Mr. Braithwaite: Yes, sir. That is exactly right.

Senator Kaine: And so this is something that you have worked out with PACOM, with the 7th Fleet, and you are still making decisions about manpower, but it will likely be an expeditionary fleet without, at least at the start, a land-based HQ. Is that correct?

Mr. Braithwaite: That is correct. Yes, Senator.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you. And that is to emphasize the growing importance of this region and the strategic alliances that the United States has with nations like India and others in the Quad in that part of the world.

Mr. Braithwaite: That is exactly right, Senator.

As you know -- and you have traveled in that region -- it is vast. And for the 7th Fleet, which is home-ported in Japan, although it is also a sea base, it has formidable challenges to move all the way through the Western Pacific down through the approaches of the Indian Ocean all the way over to the Northern Arabian Gulf.

Senator Kaine: Let me move to the Atlantic Fleet question, which affects Virginia significantly.
So the Atlantic Fleet was the fleet headquartered in Norfolk until I believe Secretary Rumsfeld during the war on terror reconstituted the Atlantic Fleet as the Fleet Forces Command. And it was not just a name change. There were some different areas of focus.

Right before I came to the Senate in 2011, the 2nd Fleet, which was based in Norfolk and provided coverage in the Atlantic, was decommissioned because the United States perceived that Russia would no longer be a naval threat.

Well, not so fast. In 2018, during my service on the committee, the Navy recommissioned the 2nd Fleet in Norfolk because of the increased Russian threat in the Atlantic.

And so your proposal today to reconstitute the Fleet Forces Command, which was focused on the war on terror to the Atlantic Fleet, as I understand it, is to recognize the reality of this increased Russian presence and the fact that the great power competition is now sort of the dominant concern of the National Defense Strategy. Is that correct?

Mr. Braithwaite: That is correct, Senator.

Senator Kaine: Let me ask this. My folks in Hampton Roads will wonder whether reconstituting Fleet Forces Command as the Atlantic Fleet will cause them either to lose jobs or personnel or investment levels in that region.

Should they be worried about that?

Mr. Braithwaite: No, Senator. There are no loss of
jobs. There is no loss of revenue to the Tidewater region.

    Senator Kaine: And I understand that you will be going
to the region to have discussions with folks in the area
about this proposal that you have announced today.

    Mr. Braithwaite: I will. That is correct, Senator.

    Senator Kaine: That is very helpful.

    So if I understand now with the structure that you are
putting on the table, the Pacific Fleet would have the 1st,
3rd, and 7th Fleets reporting through it. Correct?

    Mr. Braithwaite: That is correct. Yes, sir.

    Senator Kaine: You are contemplating that the 5th
Fleet would still report through CENTCOM?

    Mr. Braithwaite: That is correct.

    Senator Kaine: The Atlantic Fleet would have the 2nd
and 4th Fleets reporting through it. Is that correct?

    Mr. Braithwaite: That is correct, although we still
have --

    Senator Kaine: You would suggest the 6th Fleet would
be reporting through U.S. Forces Europe?

    Mr. Braithwaite: That is correct. Yes, Senator.

    Senator Kaine: Because that fleet does so much in
tandem with NATO allies in that theater.

    Mr. Braithwaite: That is correct.

    Senator Kaine: Okay.

    Let me ask now -- I will move to one other topic and I
will save the others for a second round. Vaccine deployment.

Mr. Braithwaite: Yes.

Senator Kaine: So we are grappling with a lot of vaccine deployment issues nationally, but also it is very, very critical that vaccine -- thank goodness it is being developed rapidly -- that the vaccine be deployed rapidly in a way that will keep our military forces active and healthy.

Talk a little bit about the DOD discussions about vaccine deployment issues and how you are approaching it. And did you learn things with respect to how you did testing, wide testing, through the DOD family that have given you lessons about how to do vaccine deployment and how to phase the deployment of vaccines throughout the Navy and Marines?

Mr. Braithwaite: Yes, sir, Senator. So I am extremely proud of the Department of the Navy. Both the Marine Corps and our Navy have done a phenomenal job in the aftermath of the lessons we learned from USS Teddy Roosevelt. And we are applying some of those lessons in the testing, as you mentioned, to what our rollout strategy will be around the vaccine. Of course, some of those discussions are still going on with the OSD team as we determine how quickly we will get those vaccines, how quickly we will roll those out. I know the CNO is in discussions with our Surgeon General to
how we will do that for the Navy, as well as the Commandant for the Marine Corps.

I would invite the CNO if he had any thoughts on this specifically to comment.

Admiral Gilday: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Sir, there are two related but separate plans that are in development right now very closely with the CDC. And the first one deals with the distribution of vaccines. And so there are two that DOD is looking at. One is Moderna and the other is Pfizer. And as you probably know, the Pfizer requires -- Pfizer’s are going to be shipped in GPS-tracked coolers --

Senator Kaine: Separate refrigeration, yes.

Admiral Gilday: Right. And once it is thawed, it is good for about 5 days.

And so the Pfizer medicine will be distributed here in CONUS at 10 different locations across the DOD. Every medical treatment facility in the military will receive that vaccine. And then we will also have three or four out-CONUS overseas locations that will receive the Moderna vaccine, which is allowed to be refrigerated for up to 30 days. And so you have a little bit more flexibility.

So the second piece of this is the vaccination plan itself. And it is kind of tied to lessons learned from testing. We actually developed a prioritization for
testing. We were building the airplane as we were flying it, as we were trying to get testing capability out.

This time we have a better sense of what that prioritization structure ought to look like. And at the top are health care workers and then emergency and safety personnel at our installations, those people who are likely to come in contact with people that are infected. And then our strategic forces. So I think maybe your cyber mission forces, the crews on strategic missile submarines, and then the forces that will deploy within the next 3 months.

And so we have a good count of what those numbers are, and if there is anything we are really good at, it is mass immunization in the U.S. military. And so we feel pretty confident, sir, that once we get the vaccine distributed, that the vaccination piece, now that we have the prioritization well thought out, will happen pretty quickly.

Senator Kaine: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator Sullivan: Senator Shaheen?

Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you to each of you for being here this morning and for your service.

Secretary Braithwaite, I want to follow up on the conversation you and Senator Sullivan were having about the importance of being able to operate in cold climates and the
importance of the Arctic going forward because in New Hampshire, we have the U.S. Army’s Cold Regions Research and Engineering Lab. They do amazing research. And I wondered to what extent you share that kind of research across branches. Do you get information from the Army about research that is being done at CRREL that would be helpful to the Navy?

Mr. Braithwaite: We do. Of course, under a new joint approach, the service secretaries and I -- we talk. The service chiefs talk all the time. And our respective research arms have exchange and interplay as well.

Senator Shaheen: Admiral Gilday, I appreciated your comments on the importance of our civilian workers especially at our shipyards. We have had the opportunity to visit the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, and everyone appreciated that.

I am very interested in ensuring that the shipyard optimization plan goes forward as envisioned. Are you comfortable that the resources are going to be there to keep that plan on time? And what has been the impact, if any, of COVID-19?

Admiral Gilday: With respect to the plan, ma’am, it has been a priority of the Department and certainly the Secretary since he has been in the seat.

I will tell you, in terms of putting our money where
our mouth is, right now across the four public yards, we have nine MILCON projects that are underway. So four of those are up at Portsmouth. There is a couple in Puget Sound and a couple more in Hawaii and so forth. But those are progressing on track and funded.

Across the FYDP, we have outlaid $3.5 billion, which is not a trivial amount given the fact that -- this is for SIOP -- given the fact that our typical MILCON budget a year is about a billion. So $3.5 billion over the FYDP. And that is progressing pretty well with respect to the work and the planning associated with it. There is a big project in Hawaii that we just made congressional notification on a week ago. So I am confident that we are heading in the right direction, that is, the right degree of prioritization and resources against the plan, ma’am.

With respect to workforce itself, so the workforce, as you know, is an older workforce. And so we were very conservative, particularly in the spring, and we wanted to make sure that safety was our number one priority. And so we did see probably with respect to production -- we saw a dip in our production capability at the public yards with respect to the work that was being done. It went down to the 70s with respect to 70 percent of the workforce on the job every day. That is now back at 90 percent.

When we look at lost man-days with respect to that time
period, it is about 2 percent of the man-days across the four yards that we would expect to complete a year.

So we have mitigation efforts in place. That includes overtime, which buys us back 2 or 3 percent. Contracting. So going to local contractors outside of those public yards that can do some of that work for us. And also, we have mobilized about 1,300 reservists that have unique skill sets that we could bring into the yard.

So the mitigation plan, again safety first. And right now we are watching it very closely. But I think that we are stable right now. I would describe our repair efforts in the public yards as stable. I am very comfortable with where we are.

Senator Shaheen: And so do you expect to be delayed in terms of where we had hoped to be with the optimization plan as the result of COVID?

Admiral Gilday: I have not seen any delays to MILCON projects as a result of COVID. I am sure there have been some slight delays but nothing that has popped a red flag at my level to raise significant concern.

Senator Shaheen: Good. Thank you.

Also, this is I think both for you, Admiral, and for the Secretary. One of the challenges that we have is our shrinking industrial base as we look at the needs going forward. And I assume that COVID is going to have an impact
on that. I know we have small businesses in New Hampshire that are part of our defense industrial base in the State that are facing real challenges as the result of this pandemic.

Are you concerned about the impact of the pandemic on more of those businesses that we are going to rely on for our industrial base? And do you have any thoughts about how we can do more to ensure that we have the support that we need through the industrial base?

Mr. Braithwaite: So, Senator, as I mentioned to you, you know, I am a product of Philadelphia and the shipyard closure there and what a negative impact that it has had not just on the greater Philadelphia region but on our industrial base writ large across our country. We need to protect every shipyard we have. The Chinese, ma’am, have 25 shipyards to our one. And I am a student of history. When you go back and you see the element that kept the United States capable during World War II, it was our industrial might. It was our ability to build back the ships that we were losing. We need to maintain the sacred industrial base that we have today.

I would give kudos to our Assistant Secretary of Defense, Jim Geurts, who has done an incredible job of crafting a plan to look to those second and third tier suppliers to ensure that there is consistency in getting the
product into the yards. As the CNO has indicated, our shipyard workers, both in our public yards and in our private yards, have done an amazing job of continuing to be there engaged through the fact that they are dealing with antiquated systems, they are dealing with older ships that require more work, and especially in the midst of a global pandemic. They have done a phenomenal job. As the CNO has indicated, we really have not missed a beat. We will have some slowdowns I am sure, and the CNO can go into some more detail on that. But overall I believe that the Department of the Navy has a great record under the leadership of Jim Geurts of doing the work to ensure that we have consistency to those yards.

Admiral Gilday: Thank you, sir.

Just a couple of comments to amplify some things that the Secretary said.

I think that the apprenticeship programs that we have that are associated with each of our shipyards and local community colleges, whether it is Hawaii or Washington or New Hampshire or Virginia, have been phenomenal. And so those 4-year programs that produce some of the best and brightest in the yards that hopefully we can keep around for 30 years, because it is a family business in many cases -- it is eye-watering to meet those young people. Actually they are not just young people. They are people from all
walks of life, and some of them are middle-aged that just have decided that they want to give more back to the country.

But that program collectively produces about 1,000 workers a year, and over the past 3 years, we have increased the number of shipyard workers from about 33,000 to almost 37,000. So we have been on the increase. And we are changing that demographic. As you know, there are either young people in the shipyard or there is older people in the shipyard, but we missed a generation, and so we are trying to rebuild.

I am very optimistic about where we are headed with the workforce. And when you visit those shipyards -- and I know that you do -- it is an uplifting experience when you meet those people, salt of the earth, and they love what they are doing.

With respect to the supply chain, that remains a concern for us. Senator Kaine mentioned this during his opening remarks. With respect to opportunities that we have seen during COVID, the relationship that we have, the opaqueness that has dissolved with vendors during COVID, has been something that I have not seen in my career. Again, as the Secretary said, Assistant Secretary Geurts can speak to this in more detail. But we have our eye on more than a quarter of a million parts, and you know, it only takes one
to take down a ship or an aircraft or a submarine. But we have our eye on those vendors that are struggling and other vendors that have stepped up to fill the gap in places. And so we have seen a bit of both. We have seen some failures that have been troubling. We have also seen some great innovation.

Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you. Certainly ensuring that those businesses get paid as expeditiously as possible is really important right now. And I know that that has been a focus of DOD. So thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Sullivan: Gentlemen, I am going to have to step out for a brief minute. Senator Kaine will be taking over, but I am sure we are going to have a number of additional questions. We have a number of Senators on the line as well. So I am going to next call on Senator Hirono.

Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and before you leave, I would like to also extend my condolences to you for the loss of your dad.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

Senator Hirono: Mr. Secretary, you were talking a bit about the Arctic. This will be a yes or no question. Is it time for the United States to ratify or the Senate to ratify UNCLOS, Mr. Secretary?

Mr. Braithwaite: Senator, I think we need to do some
more work to make sure that it is the right time, to be very
honest with you.

Senator Hirono: UNCLOS has been hanging around for
decades. And I would say it is the right time, especially
as I think our country is disadvantaged by not being part of
UNCLOS especially as the Arctic is seeing a lot more
activity, shall we say. And I think one of the reasons that
the Arctic has become navigable is because of global
warming.

For General Berger, I would like to offer my
condolences, General, for the eight marines and one sailor
who tragically perished in an AAV accident at the end of
July. And I realize that the investigation is occurring.
Can you tell me when the investigation into this accident
will be completed?

General Berger: The initial portion of the
investigation is done, ma’am. And I think probably within
30 days the endorsement chain will be complete.

Senator Hirono: So since the initial phase has been
done, can you tell us what led to this accident very
briefly?

General Berger: I cannot, ma’am, because I have not
seen the investigation. As long as it remains in the
endorsement chain, in respect of the due process, I do not
poke into that.
As you are well aware, ma’am, we took initial measures within the first 30 days, but as far as the final recommendations, the final opinions and recommendations, I have not seen them yet.

Senator Hirono: So I know the vehicle that was involved in the accident is to be replaced by the ACV. So we probably would need to get some kind of an update on how all of that is going.

Mr. Secretary, I do not want to get into a long discussion with you, but it came as news to me that I thought I heard you say that you are taking some ships from the 7th Fleet based in Japan to be located in the Indian Ocean. Is that what you said? This is a proposal or is it already being implemented?

Mr. Braithwaite: No, Senator. That is not what I said.

We are going to re-commission the 1st Fleet, which like the 7th Fleet would operate in the greater Pacific region under the command and control of the United States Pacific Fleet headquartered in Hawaii. It would not necessarily take ships from the 7th Fleet or from the 3rd Fleet. It would be a sharing. That is how our numbered fleets operate predicated on the demand and the threat that emanates in the part of the ocean in which those respective fleets operate.

The 1st Fleet would be expeditionary. We are still
determining from where that fleet would operate from. But its major focus would be on the Western Pacific and the Eastern Indian Ocean.

Senator Hirono: So, Mr. Secretary, is this the proposal or has the decision already been made to do this?

Mr. Braithwaite: The decision has been made, yes, under my Title --

Senator Hirono: Did I hear you say that this was in consultation with INDOPACOM people?

Mr. Braithwaite: It is in consultation with INDOPACOM through the Chairman’s office and the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Senator Hirono: Thank you.

Now, you were asked some questions about the importance of the continuation of the modernization program at the shipyards, and so I just want to reiterate my support of the importance of going ahead with those plans even though I know with COVID we have had delays, et cetera because of manpower issues relating to COVID.

Let me turn to you once again. You visited Palau which was I think -- I think that was very important. You were the first, I believe, Secretary of the Navy to visit Palau in October. And you emphasized the importance of U.S. military presence in the Indo-Pacific as, of course, China continues its destabilizing activities in the area. So the
recent activation of the Marine Corps’ Camp Blaz in Guam is also an important part of the military’s force laydown in this region.

I wanted to ask you, can you provide some insight into how the U.S. and Palau can build on our partnership with Palau through joint use facilities in the Pacific? Because I believe the new President of Palau has written to us saying that he would welcome that kind of effort.

Mr. Braithwaite: Yes, Senator. Thank you for the question.

I had never been to Palau before.

Senator Hirono: Oh, I am sorry.

Mr. Braithwaite: No, no. I went as Secretary of the Navy. It is a beautiful country. I had never been there before. I was a Navy pilot and I flew extensively throughout the Western Pacific, but I had never been to the beautiful islands of Palau. And what a gorgeous country it is.

The thing that struck me -- I went in the wake of Secretary Esper. He and I had discussed the opportunity to not only reassure those who are partners and allies like Palau, who is on the cutting edge, the tip of the spear of Chinese aggression in that part of the world --

Senator Hirono: Yes.

Mr. Braithwaite: -- that we are with them.
I personally went with members of my team to look at the infrastructure there to see how we could support U.S. naval vessels operating periodically from there.

During my trip, I also visited Guam, Senator, and the same reasons to see how we could ensure a more forward presence of naval forces and enhance our presence there.

That process is ongoing. Palau continues, as you have said, to be receptive to receiving more U.S. naval vessels. While I was there, we had some operating in the region. I was able to interact with them, and the support that they received was again indicative of Pacific island nations.

Also, as I think through the uniqueness of Palau, they are COVID-free, Senator, and one of the things that we are dealing with now is our sailors, our marines have been deployed on ships without any port visits. You know, it was kind of one of those additional bonuses of my trip by Palau where we have forces operating at sea who are COVID-free.

It would be almost bubble to bubble to be able to see our ships go into Palau.

So all of those things indicate that Palau is a nation that we need to continue to support and recognize their partnerships, their friendships with us and how we can enhance that.

Senator Hirono: Yes. I hope that we can do more with all of our compact nations. That would include Palau, the
Marshall Islands, and the Commonwealth of Micronesia.

So yes? Is my time being called?

Senator Kaine [presiding]: I need to move to Senator Duckworth, Senator.

Senator Hirono: Okay. Thank you so much.

Senator Kaine: Thank you, Senator Hirono.

Senator Hirono: I will submit other questions for the record.

Senator Kaine: Senator Duckworth I believe is with us via Webex.

Senator Duckworth: Yes. Thank you so much, Senator Kaine.

I want to open by acknowledging the Department of the Navy’s leadership in removing the Confederate flag from Navy and Marine Corps installations. Commandant Berger, you specifically led the way for other military services in a move that I felt displayed great concern for all of your marines and sailors and great personal moral courage. Your expectation that the marines and sailors assist you in rooting out symbols that cause division in the ranks sets a clear standard of leadership, and this is a readiness issue and I think you have made that very clear.

Additionally, your recognition that the Confederate arm’s battle flag can cause feelings of -- and I quote -- pain and rejection clearly states a truth that other senior
leaders have failed to acknowledge for so long. The Confederate flag was carried by those who took up arms against the United States to keep black Americans in chains. It is imperative that all of our service members feel welcomed and valued. Banning displays of the Confederate flag shows respect for black service members who already face well documented barriers to service in the military and inclusion in the ranks.

Commandant, your actions represent one of the many important steps that our armed services can take to improve the inclusion of all service members, as well as discipline and unit cohesion. I applaud your leadership.

And I also applaud you, Admiral Gilday, for your subsequent call for a Navy order banning the display of the Confederate flag from public spaces aboard Navy installations.

Now that we get into my question, I actually want to focus on a region that is personally important to me, Southeast Asia in particular. The National Defense Strategy, the NDS, focuses significant attention on countering the rise of China and our own readiness to operate in this large, geographically diverse, distributed and maritime region is absolutely key to executing the vision that is laid out in the NDS.

General Berger, I was pleased to see your
acknowledgement in your written statement that our operational logistics system, both ground and aviation, is insufficient to meet the challenges posed by peer and near-peer conflict especially in the Indo-Pacific. I am very concerned about our ability to sustain our troops while they execute the vision of warfighting that is laid out in the NDS, but the logistics function of warfighting receives far less attention than fires and maneuver. Your admission that the Marine Corps has work to do when it comes to logistics gives me greater confidence that you are thinking realistically about this problem set.

I think that your recognition of readiness, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, implies more than simply maintaining legacy equipment is a really important one. Our services plan to operate in smaller and more distributed formation across a large and geopolitically complex region, perhaps with limited COMs, it is clear that the military services will have to rethink the way they sustain warfighters in theater.

General Berger, from your perspective what are the biggest challenges to reforming the Marine Corps’ current operational logistics [inaudible] to meet the needs of distributed [inaudible]? Sorry for the long [inaudible].

General Berger: I think I understand the question, Senator.
We have a big challenge because of two factors I think. One is the distances, which you highlighted. The second is that we have enjoyed a protected back side in terms of our logistics chains for 70 years. We have not been challenged. We are now. We have to assume that any adversary is going to contest our logistics supply chains.

So in terms of what do we have to do about it, I will offer just two or three thoughts.

First of all, we got to be able to distribute laterally at the tactical to operational level, sustainment, supplies, equipment, people in a way we have not been challenged to do in the past, and we got to do it, again, in a contested environment. And by contested, I mean in a region where an adversary can see us and can interdict you. So we have to have everything from the surface craft to the aircraft and probably in the future I would suspect a fair portion of that would be in unmanned. We have to have better distribution mechanisms than we have right now.

From the operational to strategic, we have enjoyed a secure line all the way back to CONUS, as you pointed out for years. It has not been challenged. That is now becoming a problem. From the strategic to the operational, we got to push the supplies forward, and then operationally at the tactical laterally, we are going to need different means to move supplies and equipment and people laterally.
within the second or first island chain or within Europe or within CENTCOM.

Senator Duckworth: Well, thank you.

So are there policies or programs that my colleagues and I should be considering at our level to address these challenges and better adapt to an environment and style of warfighting that is very different from what we have seen in Afghanistan and Iraq? So what can we do here at our level here in the Senate in terms of particular programs that will help you basically bring your readiness level in those logistical networks, especially when you are talking about doing it horizontally in a contested environment? What can we do to support you? Are there particular programs that you would emphasize?

General Berger: There are, ma’am. I think the combination of oversight and resourcing for our unmanned surface and aerial systems is probably the biggest area. I am sure there are others. But you asked me here, I would say that one comes to mind. We have to move very quickly to develop and field the unmanned surface vessels and unmanned aerial systems that will move those supplies because we will never get there if we rely only on manned systems.

We have a lot of learning to do there. We have a lot of experimentation to do there. But if there is one area I would ask for support there, that would be it.
Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

Admiral Gilday: As the CNO, can I add --

Senator Kaine: Admiral Gilday, do you want to weigh in? Admiral Gilday, you can weigh in and then I will move to Senator Jones, if that is okay, Senator Duckworth.

Senator Duckworth: Yes. My next question was actually going to be to ask Admiral Gilday for his input. Thank you.

Admiral Gilday: Thank you, ma’am. I appreciate the opportunity to amplify on what General Berger so eloquently spoke to.

We have a legislative proposal right now in consideration by -- in conference with the NDAA that would allow the Navy to buy used sealift vessels instead of investing in new sealift vessels to increase the number of used vessels that we can buy. As you know, that is a growing capability gap for us, as you highlighted, and we need to close it quickly. We can do so at a tenth of the cost by -- we have already done the market analysis. We know which ships we would go after at a tenth of the cost of buying new. So for $30 million instead of $300 million with a minor upgrade in a U.S. shipyard, we will have the sealift that we need to move ground forces where they need to be in order to bring effects to bear.

The other thing I would mention is the Future Naval Force Study Assessment that was completed recently and will
be briefed to staff up here on the Hill tomorrow. One of the big takeaways I think are logistics vessels, and the numbers increase significantly with respect to the requirement. And I think it is noteworthy and something that we at the Department need to put a higher priority on with respect to procurement.

Thank you, ma’am.

Senator Duckworth: Thank you. [Inaudible] we do not have enough hulls in the water nor heavy lift capabilities. And that is it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Kaine: Senator Jones?

Senator Jones: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me first -- I want to echo Senator Duckworth’s comments about the removal of the Confederate battle flag and those symbols. In my career, I have seen, especially coming from a State like Alabama, words matter. Symbols matter. And they can have deadly consequences on occasion. So I appreciate your efforts without an act of Congress to remove those symbols.

I want to talk just a moment about readiness in a different way, not from adversaries attacking or whatever, but from security on our own installations here in the United States on our soil. 1 year ago this coming Sunday, there was a shooter, a terrorist attack at the Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Florida. I met a few months ago with
Ben Watson and his son Adam to talk about their terrorist attack.

Ben’s son, Ensign Kaleb Watson, was the officer on deck that morning and was one of the first people the shooter encountered. And though he had been a captain of the rifle team at the Naval Academy, per installation rules Kaleb did not have a weapon that day. He and two other young men, Airman Mo Haitham from Florida and Airman Apprentice Cameron Walters of Georgia, died that day. Ben and his wife Sheila wanted to be here today but were unable to because of COVID restrictions, but they are watching in Alabama. And I believe and Kaleb’s family believes that things could have been different that day in December of 2019. Things should have been different.

Secretary Braithwaite, you and I have talked about this some. For one thing, the law enforcement officer who drove Kaleb to the hospital with his injuries got lost on the base. That just should not happen.

Now, my office has been asking the Navy since April 6th about its investigation report. We finally got that last week, a week and a half ago, a redacted version. And one of the things that was clear, even before the report came out, is this has happened too many times on our military installations. Too many American troops have lost their lives to shooters on U.S. military bases on U.S. soil. As
someone in the Senate like Senator Kaine and others who send
folks to the academies and they are going to be on these
bases, as someone who encourages our young men and women to
join the armed forces to serve their country, that is
disturbing that we are putting them in harm’s way at a place
where they should be most secure.

There have been investigation reports about all of
those instances and shootings, and there have been
recommendations. What we see from the Pensacola report is
that many of those are just not being followed, especially
with regard to planning, training, and assessment of
response plans for situations just like this. And I for one
believe that is inexcusable.

Ben and Sheila Watson are watching today from Alabama,
and they have made it their mission to do everything they
can to prevent losing more of our sons and daughters. I
tried to help in my time here on the Armed Services
Committee.

So I asked for the committee to include in the Senate
version of the NDAA language that would require the
Secretary of Defense to implement within 90 days of all
applicable security -- emergency response recommendations to
protect military installations and language requiring the
Secretary of Defense to ensure that each installation
conducts or develops a plan to conduct live emergency
response training with first responders. I very much hope that those requirements make it into the final bill that we are going to see shortly.

I am going to ask each of you today -- and this is just brief answers because I have got a couple more I would like to ask -- can you tell me that it is currently a priority -- currently a priority -- to make absolutely certain that on every Navy and Marine Corps installation, that all applicable security recommendations and regulations have or will be implemented and followed? And if that is not a priority, would you commit to making one? Secretary Braithwaite?

Mr. Braithwaite: Senator, first and foremost, Kaleb is a hero. I was in Pensacola 2 weeks ago with the leadership there, and I was in the very place where Kaleb was shot. I cannot imagine the anguish that his family, being a father myself, must feel.

In 31 years in uniform of our country as a naval officer, every time I went aboard a base, I always felt safer because I presented my ID card. And although there is no easy answer to this, we are committed to ensuring that we get to the root problem of all of these. In some instances, it is because people do have guns on our installations. In other instances, it is because people do not have weapons on our installations.
So we are working diligently to figure out the right approach to this so a hero like Kaleb Watson never loses his life.

Senator Jones: I will come back to the other two real quick, but I want to follow up on the comment about the weapons.

One of the recommendations is that there be a uniform policy with regard to weapons on there. Is that something that you intend to try to follow to develop a uniform policy of weapons on base?

Mr. Braithwaite: Well, the uniform policy -- I mean, we are one Department of the Navy, and it should be uniform. But remember, the shooting in Pearl Harbor was just the opposite. It is because the individual who was on duty had a weapon and used that weapon to attack others with it. So again, there is not an easy answer to say one or the other.

What we are committed to is ensuring that those people who are armed are appropriately trained, that there is the cross-integration both on base and off base so what happened in Escambia County does not happen again on any other base. That is what we are committed to do.

Senator Jones: Mr. Chairman, if you could bear with me, I would like to just get a quick answer from Admiral Gilday and General Berger on the question about a commitment to the security of those installations and following those
recommendations. Admiral?

Senator Sullivan [presiding]: Sure.

Admiral Gilday: First of all, Senator, I completely agree with you that the incident was inexcusable.

Secondly, taking a deeper look at this, besides as you mentioned the MOUs that we are looking at and the training that we are doing with first responders at all our installations now that we had not been doing to the degree we should have been doing is underway regardless of whether any legislation comes out.

And the third thing is I commit to you, sir, that this is a priority for the Navy.

Senator Jones: Thank you.

General Berger?

General Berger: Senator, I can affirm the same. It is a priority right now. It will remain a priority.

Senator Jones: Thank you all.

Mr. Chairman, let me say, first of all, it has been an honor serving on this committee for the last 2 years with both of you and all the other members of this subcommittee, as well as the general committee. I will miss it, but I know the work is in good hands.

And, Mr. Chairman, let me say to you specifically, let me also offer my condolences. I lost my dad about 11 months ago. He was also a Navy guy. So I feel the pain and I feel
the loss, and it can never be replaced.

So thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Senator Jones. Thanks
for your kind words.

And thanks for your great service on this committee.

You know, I think the witnesses know there are certain
Senators who dig into these issues, really care. The issues
of civilian oversight for our military are critical, and you
certainly have been one of those and we appreciate your
service. We know that you have a lot left in terms of
giving to your country and your State. So thanks very much
for your great service on this committee.

Gentlemen, I would like to continue with a second round
of questioning. And, General Berger, I would like to dive
in a little bit more with regard to the Force Design 2030
plans that you have put forward that I highlighted in my
opening remarks. And to be respectful and also to give you
an opportunity, as you know -- and I think this happens
anytime someone is trying to break glass in terms of a
broad-based strategy that recognizes challenges that are new
and very significant. I happen to agree wholeheartedly with
the National Defense Strategy and the National Security
Strategy of this administration. I think one of the
unwritten stories in the media is how bipartisan the support
is for that strategy. But then the services now have to
start implementing it, and I think that is always a
difficult challenge.

I think the Marine Corps, under your leadership, has
really taken that to heart, and I happen to appreciate it.
But it is not, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, without
its critics. I am going to read just a couple lines from a
detailed piece in “The National Interest” from former
Secretary of the Navy Jim Webb, who has a lot of respect in
the Marine Corps, of course, as a combat veteran from
Vietnam. But he says a couple things in his piece. Quote:
After the centuries it took to establish the Marine Corps as
a fully separate military service, this new strategy could
reduce its present role by making it again subordinate to
the funding and operational requirements of the U.S. Navy.
That is one criticism.

Another, he talks about the plan to dramatically alter
the entire force structure of the Corps to focus on China,
ignores the unpredictability of war. And he also says there
is no greater danger in military strategy than shaping a
nation’s force structure to respond to one specific set of
contingencies, giving an adversary the ability to adjust and
adapt beforehand.

Do you want to comment on those comments? I know there
are some other former commandants who have also been
critical, and I want to offer this as an opportunity for you
to make the case of what you are trying to do with the 2030 Force Design.

Mr. Braithwaite: Mr. Chairman, if I may --

Senator Sullivan: Sure, Mr. Secretary. As the Secretary of the Navy, you certainly -- both of you -- I would welcome really all three of you. Former Secretary Webb obviously incorporates the Navy in general. So I would welcome -- actually it is a good point, Mr. Secretary -- all three of you to respond.

Mr. Braithwaite: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to say first and foremost, Secretary Webb is an incredible patriot and a great American.

Senator Sullivan: He is, no doubt.

Mr. Braithwaite: -- and an individual I hold in extremely high regard.

Senator Sullivan: He is a former member of this committee.

Mr. Braithwaite: Yes, sir, and an incredible accomplished marine, a graduate from the U.S. Naval Academy where I was fortunate to follow in his wake, and a gentleman who I consider a friend and somebody that I have had discussions with.

But I would say that General Berger is a visionary. And I could not say this during my confirmation hearing because I was told to throttle back a little bit. But I
generally do not throttle back, Senator. I lean in pretty heavy when I know and believe in my heart and in my head something is right. Dave Berger is the visionary that the Department of the Navy needs today. It is his vision and his humble leadership of going up against all of the challenges that he has now encountered to see something come to fruition that is long overdue.

The world has changed in the last 20, 40, 60 years, but what has been proven is the concept that a combined Navy/Marine Corps team, not one subordinate to the other. The Marine Corps and the Navy in the Commandant’s vision are one equal paired together. His vision gives a combatant commander another tool in the toolbox in order to fight the fight if you have to do that, that takes the Marine Corps from being land-centric to being a capable amphibious force again. His vision is predicated on those of Commandant Russell and Commandant Fuller who, through the fleet marine force concepts of the 1930s, created the success of the amphibious marine oriented combat capabilities, coupled with the United States Navy, and being able to take the fight to the Japanese and win World War II.

So I wanted to be on record to say as the Secretary of the Navy, I am proud to be with our Commandant whose vision is the one that we need for the challenges that we see emerging in great power competition.
Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Senator Kaine, if you are okay with it, I am going to go a little long for General Berger and Admiral Gilday to be able to respond and add to what the Secretary said.

You know the criticisms, General. If you can take this opportunity to address what former Secretary Webb and others have been saying and how you, Admiral, view this new force design for the Marine Corps.

General Berger: Chairman, I think the feedback -- my view -- the feedback from Secretary Webb and others is helpful. This is elevating the discussion. This is an ongoing debate that will continue for years. So it is not hurtful. It is actually helpful.

I met with Secretary Webb, as I have with the others who want to provide feedback. So I met with him in Arlington, and we talked for probably 2 hours. I did not know him that well, but it was a great discussion. I know him now, did not know him that well before.

We talked in three broad areas. First of all, does the Marine Corps need to change? Second, if it does, does it need to change now? And the third part was the changes that we are considering right now, the direction we are headed -- are those the right changes? So in basic order kind of marine-like, we broke it down into three categories.

I did not see any daylight between us on do we need to
change. To the point you made earlier, we have to change.

Now, do we need to change now or can we wait to change in a year or 2 when things are a bit clearer? This is as much a judgment call as anything, but my assessment is we cannot wait. We have adversaries that are moving quickly. If we wait a year or 2 for a clear, 90 percent picture, we will not catch up. In my opinion, we cannot wait.

So then it came down to the changes themselves, which you highlighted. Here there are going to be differences of opinion. But what I emphasized to him is this is just -- where we are right now is on the front end not the back end. We have a lot of experimentation, a lot of learning to do. We cannot wait to move out.

We had a great, healthy discussion, and I take all the input from everybody else not in a negative sense but in a positive sense. It elevates the discussion. But in my assessment, my professional opinion, we have to change. We have to move out now, and we have to preserve enough to learn in the future over the coming years to make sure we get it right.


Admiral, would you care to comment?

Admiral Gilday: Thank you, Senator.

I go back to what I said in my opening statement, sea control and power projection. And so Nimitz said it was
timeless. President Kennedy said it is timeless. If you look at the missions of the NDS today, they require those functions from the Navy and Marine Corps team.

What General Berger is doing is giving us another, as the Secretary said, tool in the toolkit so what changes today is not only what we fight with but how we are going to fight. And we have to look at that fight in every domain from the seabed to space. The Marine Corps brings a terrestrial capability to the problem of sea control, a function that we still value.

If the nation believes that we need a United States Navy and a United States Marine Corps forward so that the fight stays forward and not in this country, then that is an investment that you want to double down on because what General Berger is bringing is an asymmetric advantage to that particular function, something that the enemy is going to be -- it is going to be difficult to find, difficult to pin down, and difficult to take on. It gives us many more options. It presents more options, as the Secretary said, to a combatant commander to confuse an enemy and to come at him with multiple vectors, with multiple tools in the toolkit.

So it goes without saying, Senator, I am a huge supporter. I think we are headed in the right direction. That is not to say that there still will not be friction
within the Department of the Navy in terms of where we put
our next dollar with respect to capabilities, and you will
be asking the same question on whether a capability for the
Marine Corps with respect to sea control is worth it or
whether you get more flexibility, more maneuverability,
better effects through another investment. So I think we
have to be open-minded about that, and I think we have to
look at, at the end of day, the capability gaps you have to
close in order to give you sea control.

Senator Sullivan: Great. And your point, General, I
think is a really good one, that all of this, whether it is
from former Secretary Webb, former Senator Webb as well, and
former commandants, it does elevate the discussion. I think
the discussion also needs to be here which is why I have
highlighted it in terms of the Armed Services Committee’s
civilian oversight responsibilities, and I think it is going
to continue. So I appreciate -- this really is kind of the
beginning of an important discussion at the highest levels
of our government because it is a really important
undertaking that the Navy and Marine Corps are advancing
right now as part of our National Defense Strategy, and I
commend all three of you for the seriousness with which you
have undertaken this at this moment.

Senator Kaine?

Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I am glad
you took extra time on this question because I think it is a
very, very important one.

General Berger, I want to echo comments made by
Senators Duckworth and Jones about your courage in taking
the stance you took last spring with respect to display of
the Confederate battle flag on Marine installations. And
because you have such family ties to Virginia, this was not
a decision taken by an outsider or imposed by somebody who
does not deeply understand the dimensions of this issue.
And frankly, your ties to Virginia I think are such that the
decision that you made and the way you articulated it
maximized the acceptability of it within your ranks. And so
I want to echo those comments.

Your willingness to take courageous stands when you
need to bears upon this last question as well. Change is
needed. Should change happen now or can we wait on it? I
think the answers to those first two questions -- I think
you have answered them correctly. Exactly the dimensions of
all the change that is needed, that is a profitable area for
a lot of discussion now and in the future. But your
willingness to take big steps forward is one of the reasons
that you are in the position that you are in and that we
have confidence in your leadership.

A few questions. The Navy has developed a shipyard
infrastructure optimization plan, and that was to deal with
this lack of capacity at shipyards. The original plan was estimated as a $21 billion investment over 20 years. The GAO suggests that is likely an underestimate because a number of costs were probably not included in the original estimate.

So I guess, Admiral Gilday, what I would like to ask you, is the SIOP still on track with respect to both time and funding? And if so, why are we not seeing it in budgetary requests to Congress?

Admiral Gilday: Sir, I would argue that we are. I mean, as I talked about the investments in nine MILCON projects underway right now, $3.5 billion in MILCON at the four shipyards themselves invested over the FYDP, typically we are spending a billion a year on MILCON. And so I think relatively speaking we are, sir, making it a high priority.

And we understand the importance of it. These dry docks on average, as you know, are over 100 years old, and we have neglected them for too long. And this is a strategic decision by the Department to make this a priority and put the money where we need to or we cannot sustain the fleet of the future. As you know, we are challenged to sustain the fleet that we have now.

Senator Kaine: Thank you, Admiral.

Mr. Secretary, the fiscal year 2020 NDAA required the Department to submit military installation resilience plans
to help our bases prepare for extreme weather events, whether it is sea level rise in Hampton Roads or whether it is drought or wildfire conditions in other parts of the country. In the wake of destruction observed over the last several years at Camp Lejeune, China Lake, and elsewhere, has the Department completed any military installation resilience plans, and when can we on the committee expect to see them?

Mr. Braithwaite: Senator, thank you for that question. You and I spoke about this in detail both during my confirmation hearing and in meetings between now and then.

Our Department has looked into this. I mean, the devastating destruction of Hurricane Florence on Camp Lejeune or the earthquake at Naval Air Station China Lake -- you all have been wonderful to help offset our losses there so that we can rebuild some of those structures. As you know, Senator, a lot of those structures on our military bases are old. They are antiquated. They were built before there were codes in place to ensure that our buildings could withstand a hurricane of a certain severity or an earthquake.

So we are in the process of developing the plans. Our installations are working on those. I do not know if the CNO has any specific thoughts on this or the Commandant, but it is important to us as we look forward because we cannot
be a ready force unless we ensure that we are operating from bases that are resilient and those homes on those bases where our dependents live, which of course have a personal impact on our readiness, have the ability to sustain damage as well.

Senator Kaine: Can I ask either Admiral Gilday or General Berger? Do you know when any of these plans are likely to be done so that we can review them on the committee?

Admiral Gilday: Sir, I do not. I am not satisfied right now, where we are, the pace that we are acting on these plans. There are discrete projects that we have ongoing, one down in Norfolk Naval Shipyard right now in terms of dealing with the rising water tables in the vicinity of the dry docks as an example, others at the Naval Academy where we are seeing rising water levels. So we are reactive and not proactive.

And I owe you a better answer for the Navy, and I owe the Secretary a better answer as well in terms of when we can present those plans to both him and you.

Senator Kaine: General Berger?

General Berger: Sir, some of them are complete, not all. And we prioritized the ones that we had to do first, which is Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, where we had to rebuild. So every contract in the last 18 months that you
all have resourced to rebuild Camp Lejeune is to the new regulations for resiliency. They are prioritized. We will provide you the detailed breakdown, sir.

Senator Kaine: That would be helpful. I think this is a serious matter for the committee because the resilience plans will enable us not just to exercise oversight on are you trying to be resilient, but it will help us prioritize investments. We would hate to rebuild something in a way that is substandard and does not really meet the conditions that are likely to be there in 10 or 20 years. Rebuilding one off or being reactive one off to dangers or emergencies is not the same as having a forward-looking plan that is likely to involve a more efficient use of the dollars that are so competitively sought. So I would like follow-up on that from both the Navy and the Marines.

Here is the last question I would like to ask. I am over, Mr. Chair, but with an indulgence. And I would like each of you to address it. It is sort of like a lessons learned during COVID question.

COVID and the pandemic has been horrible. The death toll, the economic effect -- it has been horrible.

Nevertheless, even in a horrible time you learn some lessons. Americans are doing much more telehealth than they did before, and that has actually had some significant benefits for people who might have a hard time accessing
health care institutions because they live so far away. We have been able to do some committee work virtually. So there have been some lessons learned that we would not want to just snap back to the status quo ante when this public health emergency is over.

In each of your spaces, I would love you to talk about maybe some lessons learned since the beginning of March as we have dealt with COVID that you think could be -- that could lead to sort of continuous improvement or changes you have had to make that you will not want to undo when we are over this public health emergency. And if you could each address that question, that is the last question that I have.

Mr. Braithwaite: Senator, thank you. I will answer the question first because I will tell you that I believe the Department of the Navy, both the Marine Corps and the United States Navy, have done an incredible job. You know, this caught the Department off guard, as it did the entire world. And the Navy, in particular, struggled through some of the early weeks of this because the close proximity in which our sailors live aboard ship made this a real threat to our ability to operate at sea. And that was even more important aboard -- or more challenging aboard our submarines.

Admiral Gilday has done an incredible job to lead the
effort to not only identify ways to mitigate the risk but to keep our ships operating. We have over 100 ships today that are at sea deployed, and there are cases of COVID aboard some of those ships. But he and the leadership of the Navy have done an incredible job. It is an amazing story of resiliency to be able to address the issue, to isolate the issue through contact tracing, through all of the protocols that the CDC and NIH have put out through social distancing, masks. When I go aboard a ship, everybody is masked up. I will let the CNO talk to more of the details. But we are today a better force prepared for nuclear, biological, chemical warfare in the future because of the lessons we have learned from this pandemic.

And as you and I talked about, you know, carbon footprints and the ability to have our workforce telework, that is another great -- we have finally busted through the fact, as a former military guy, you got to form up in front of the flagpole every morning to get credit for actually being on the job. I think we have thought beyond that now to a point where we are more realistic in the fact that we can do work from afar, we can be productive.

But I would invite the CNO who, believe me, is an incredible leader who has done an incredible job on this. And I am very proud to be his wingman.

Admiral Gilday: Thanks, sir.
Sir, a couple things. One of the things that strikes me the most aboard ship right now is just the change in behaviors. It is almost like cultural change onboard ships because, as the Secretary said, you are operating in such close quarters, and your success or failure comes down to individual responsibility. So that means that every sailor now understands that as a leader at whatever level they are at on a ship, that they have a responsibility to their shipmates that is tangible. And they also have a responsibility to hold other people accountable if they are not following the protocols and the standards that they should be. So with respect to the culture of excellence that we want to have in the Navy and the kind of leadership that we want people to exhibit, I think that has been a positive.

There have been a lot of second order effects to telecommuting. So excess capacity with respect to leased spaces where we can recoup over $100 million a year in spaces that we just do not need. So another byproduct has been a realization of -- I think a better realization of what is core and what is non-core in terms of what we really need to be focused on and working on and how we use that teleworking force.

Another is an acceleration of IT capabilities. I do not want to say the specific company, but capabilities that
would have taken us -- you can imagine -- years to field
that have been accelerated by the Secretary of Defense to
weeks and months that have put us in a much better place.

And I will also mention real briefly training at sea.
Because now we operate in COVID bubbles, we have said, well,
gee, why are we just in kind of a single production line
with ships to get ships trained and qualified. Why can I
not do that with six ships at once, get a lot more out of
the trainers, become a lot more efficient, and actually
increase the numbers of ships that I am generating for the
Secretary to present to the Secretary of Defense to use out
there at sea? And so I think overall it has caused
everybody to think a little bit more innovatively and to be
a little bit more efficient in terms of how they think about
using their time.

Senator Kaine: General Berger?

General Berger: Sir, I will be pretty short.

This is a virus, not the first virus that your military
has operated in. The pandemic is once every 100 years, but
this is not an operating environment that is new. You would
expect us, in other words, not to take a knee but to operate
through it, and that is what has happened.

A couple of things to highlight. You asked for lessons
learned. There is not an exercise or training event that we
do in the military we do not take away nine days to Sunday
afterwards. We do after-action reports like nobody else, and we have a long list. I will just mention one or two.

Recruit training. We had to continue recruit training, but we cannot be taken to our knees. So what we learned that we were going to continue, to your question, Senator, is spread out the racks in the squad base, put washstands outside the chow hall, take specific measures that we are going to keep in place afterwards because normally, typically every officer candidate class, every recruit training class gets some kind of crud in the first 2 weeks and it shuts them down. We have not had that problem. Why? Because we are basically quarantining them for 2 weeks before the first day of training. Why would we not consider continuing that later on so that when training starts, everybody can train instead of half the squad being sick? So to your point, some of these measures we need to keep in place afterwards.

And I will just finish with I would echo the same as Admiral Gilday. This committee, this subcommittee would be very proud of the small unit leaders. This is where discipline matters. We have not had large outbreaks because we are a disciplined force. We follow orders. We very much trust our leaders, and they have not let us down.

Senator Kaine: Mr. Chair, I am so glad I asked that question.
Senator Sullivan: Yes, a great question.

Senator Kaine: That is really important.

One of the first visits that I did when we were in our kind of initial months of COVID and when we were home during April and the Senate was closed was I went to the VA hospital in Richmond, the McGuire VA, which is dealing with a lot of these issues. And it did not really strike me until I walked into that massive facility that there was not a single thing that they did that they did not have to rethink. I mean, touching an elevator button, the arrangement of tables in the cafeteria, how do you check in if you are a patient coming in. Every last thing that is done in that facility, which is tens of thousands of square feet -- it is massive -- they have had to rethink. And onboard a ship or a sub, close quarters, people working in such close proximity to each other, that is even magnified.

But I just think it is really important for us in this committee and across the board that we do the lessons learned. It would be foolish if we went back to the status quo ante. One of the things we did, for example, is we used to, as a Federal Government, reimburse telehealth visits at a lower reimbursement rate than office visits. We made an emergency change to allow an equalization of reimbursement rates for such visits, and that has dramatically advanced telehealth. It would be foolish to go back to the status quo ante.
quo ante when this is done because then we would sacrifice all that learning and slide back to a second best.

So there is going to be a lot of need for us to look at the changes that have been forced upon us and say, hey, this needs to be the going-forward norm. There are some things we will be glad to let go, but there is also, as you point out, General Berger, why would you not have a 14-day quarantine period now forever to avoid just the common kinds of infectious viruses or whatever that can take down a recruiting class early in their time in. So we are going to really need to do this, and you guys have offered some great examples that can, I think, inspire that work. So I really appreciate it. Thank you.

Senator Sullivan: Yes, a great question and great answers.

General Berger, I mentioned I did see I think it was a “New York Times” article or something that talked about the changes to Marine Corps recruit training, how it is still working, and in my view some of the best recruit training anywhere in the world. So kudos to the Marine Corps and the rest of the Department of the Navy for doing such great work.

I am going to end here with just a couple additional questions. I appreciate the patience of the three of you gentlemen.
General, I wanted just one additional question on the Force Design. You speak in your testimony of modernizing Marine Corps infantry and recon units. And as an infantry and recon officer myself and I am a MARSOC marine officer currently, I am interested in what you stated in your testimony that we are modernizing our infantry battalions and traditional reconnaissance units to create a more distributable formation with much greater organic lethality in accordance with units traditionally associated with special forces and commando units.

Can you unpack that a little bit more in terms of, again, your Force Design and what Marine infantry and recon units can anticipate in MARSOC as well?

General Berger: Senator, like you, I have the same background.

Senator Sullivan: Yours is a little bit more distinguished actually -- a hell of a lot more distinguished.

General Berger: We have common ground.

I believe if we are going to compete and we are going to deter, first of all, then much of who has an advantage is decided in the reconnaissance/counter-reconnaissance sort of effort that both sides in any competition are going to do. I think we were relying more and more and more on your forward expeditionary forces to paint a picture of what is
happening in front of them because deterrence is really the foundational element of the strategy. To do that effectively, you have got to have good reconnaissance forward to understand what is happening in front of you to give decision-makers the space, the situational awareness to make good calls.

As we reshape the Marine Corps, we will reshape our reconnaissance effort and our reconnaissance units and infantry units as well. Infantry training will be longer. The product of infantry training on the enlisted side will be at a higher level than we are producing right now. Right now, in other words, you complete basic training and you go through infantry training. You join your first unit. The rest of the way is on the backs of the platoon sergeant in that first platoon. We need to take that marine to a higher level so that the whole platoon, the whole battalion can get to a higher level. And we need to get to that higher level because they are going to be more distributed. We are going to rely on them to make higher level decisions.

As you know, sir, from your service, we ask captains to make decisions now that lieutenant colonels, battalion commanders made a decade ago. Why? Because they have the capabilities now. We have to get them to a higher training level now.

So infantry training both on the officer and enlisted
side, more extensive, longer. Reconnaissance forces, better
capabilities, a deeper reach, and the ability to commit to
communicate, to sense, and to distribute what they are
sensing back and laterally to the rest of the force. I
think you are going to see a lot of our investments in
ground, aerial, and surface reconnaissance so that we can
give the combatant commander, the fleet commander a better
picture of what is in front of us.

Senator Sullivan: Great. Thank you for that.

Mr. Secretary, we talked briefly on the Arctic and
icebreakers. I wanted to dive in a little bit more.

You know, I authored language in the NDAA a couple of
years ago that Congress put forward the authorization to
build six polar class icebreakers between the Coast Guard
and the Navy. And as I mentioned, the President put forward
a memo a couple months ago on how we operationalize that,
what ways we look at that, and then importantly from my
perspective, where you would want to home-port some of these
polar class icebreakers that in my view should have much
more than just icebreaking capability, should have
intelligence capability, should have weapons capability, the
way the Russians are certainly viewing their massive
icebreaking fleet. I think the latest number is 56, and as
you mentioned, we have two. One is broken. So we have a
long way to catch up.
But on this issue, to me it is a no-brainer that you would at least home-port some of these icebreakers that we are building in the Arctic of America.

And you and I had a great visit when you came up to Alaska. I really, really appreciated that. I know my fellow Alaskans certainly enjoyed meeting you in Ketchikan and Adak and Kodiak and Anchorage.

But do you have a view on this? The President has actually asked his national security team. I have talked to you, the SECDEF, National Security Advisor, the Commandant of the Marine Corps -- or I am sorry -- Commandant of the Coast Guard. I am a little bit biased, but I think it makes strategic sense for America. If you are going to have icebreakers, you need to base them in the place where the action is and that is the Arctic not in Florida or other places where there is no ice. Do you have a view on where we should be basing these? I know the President has asked that in the memo.

Mr. Braithwaite: Mr. Chairman, I always have an opinion. You know that.

Senator Sullivan: Good. Love to hear it especially if it is the right answer.

[Laughter.]

Mr. Braithwaite: However, as you and I also discussed, the United States Coast Guard does not fall under the
command and control of the Department of the Navy.

Senator Sullivan: I am asking you in your personal opinion.

Mr. Braithwaite: Of course, we could change that. You could change that and I would be happy to incorporate the Coast Guard as part of the Department of the Navy --

Senator Sullivan: I am not committing to that right now.

Mr. Braithwaite: -- as a sister maritime service. I think that would be wonderful. It does not take anything away from Homeland Security, but I love the Coast Guard. They are incredible partners, and we would like to see them get all the resources they need.

I have seen some of the efforts in the shipbuilding when I have been down to Huntington-Ingalls and building a new national security cutter.

You know, as far as home-porting those ships, if they fell under the control of the United States Navy, of course, we would home-port them closer to where they would be required to fulfill their mission. But I am not in a position, Mr. Chairman, to make a determination for the Coast Guard on where they should put those icebreakers.

If we are the ones who end up operating those icebreakers, I think as the executive order has indicated, that is something that we, the Department of the Navy, would
come back and work with you, Mr. Chairman, on figuring out the best placement where we would have the kind of support -- I know going into Kodiak, I was extremely impressed with the Coast Guard facility there, meeting with the station commander, again a phenomenal base with the infrastructure to support additional ships being home-ported there.

So, again, there are a lot of options here, but there is a lot of work to be done. And unfortunately, it is not an A to Z quick answer.

Senator Sullivan: I am going to press you a little bit. Do you have a personal opinion on this issue of where you would home-port icebreakers --

Mr. Braithwaite: So, Mr. Chairman --

Senator Sullivan: -- to defend America’s interest in the Arctic?

Mr. Braithwaite: You and I both served. You still serve in the uniform of our nation. So for 31 years, I wore the cloth of the U.S. naval officer very proudly. And in my role as now the Secretary of the Navy, I still fall under the command and control of the President of the United States and I have to follow the lawful orders of those appointed over me. So, again, as the Secretary of the Navy, I have personal opinions and I have professional requirements of how I conduct myself each and every day.

So in this case, the Coast Guard has the authority to
operate those vessels, and I think they are the ones who would have to determine where they wanted to home-port them.

Senator Sullivan: Let me turn to -- Senator Kaine, I just have a couple more questions.

Mr. Secretary, on the USS Bonhomme Richard, I guess the Navy made the decision just a few days ago that this is going to be a ship that is decommissioned. Can you just give us a little quick understanding of what actually happened -- it is obviously an issue that this committee has a lot of interest in -- and then why you made that decision recently on the decommissioning and what that does to our capability both from a Navy and Marine Corps perspective?

That is quite an important ship.

Mr. Braithwaite: Absolutely, Senator. So, first of all, the investigation is ongoing, and our NCIS have done a remarkable job in working through all the details of something that is not straightforward. There was such extensive damage on that ship. Both the Chief of Naval Operations and I went out to visit the ship shortly after the incident. And the amazing performance of the crew to save that ship -- what they did is just remarkable and a testament to the training that they receive in damage control and firefighting.

I am a businessman, Mr. Chairman, and at the end of the day, there is a return on investment, and the return on
investment of what it would have taken to rebuild that ship, working very closely with the Secretary of Defense, Dr. Esper wanted to see that ship come back and for all the right reasons to send the right message to say, you know, we do not give up our ships very easily. We have a battle flag that hangs in Memorial Hall at the Naval Academy that says don’t give up the ship. But using logic and looking at what it would have required to put that ship back together, it would have been a foolish investment of our American taxpayer dollars to invest in a ship that was over 20 years old instead of looking at the options of building another ship in the future that would have more relative capabilities embracing the technologies that are emerging. So I would invite the CNO to go into some of the particulars of what we have determined. The ship was not to deploy until 2022. So talking with the Commandant about how we can ensure that we have the right assets to come in in the deployment plan and to offset the loss of the ship, we are working all those now. But, CNO, do you have any thoughts about the Bonhomme Richard?

Admiral Gilday: Thanks, sir. Just a couple. So, sir, the ship is 22 years old. About 60 percent of it was so heavily damaged it would have to be replaced. If we try to rebuild the ship into an LHD, return it to its original state, it would take 5 to 7 years. It would be
straining the industrial base. We think there is one
shipyard on the Gulf coast who could do that kind of work,
and it would cost almost as much as a brand new ship.

If we took a look at other options like repurposing it,
could it be a command and control ship, could it be a
hospital ship, could it be a sealift vessel, it costs us
less money to buy one new than it would be to restore or to
repurpose Bonhomme Richard to another function.

And so for those reasons, sir, the $30 million to
decommission was the best decision I think. And the
Secretary has all the consequential decisions come to his
desk. And I supported that recommendation that we decom
her.

In terms of near-term impacts operationally, we have
mitigated those. I think longer term -- let us say out to 3
to 5 years -- we are taking a look at what those other
options could be. Do we accelerate the production of a big
deck vessel? What would that mean with respect to the
amphibious force that we are building for the future? You
know, what are the priorities that we want to take a look at
within the Department? What is the demand signal from the
Secretary of Defense and the combatant commanders for those
vessels. So that is work to be done that is ongoing right
now, but in the near term, there will not be any operational
impact. We have mitigated that with moving some other
deployment schedules around.

Senator Sullivan: Great. Thank you for that answer. And we are going to look forward to the report when it is done, both if it is classified or unclassified, on what happened and some of the actions. I know there were a lot of sailors that undertook very heroic actions to save that -- tried to save that ship.

Let me ask another for all three of you gentlemen. As you know, here in the Senate we have got a number of important bills that we are trying to finish up prior to the end of this Congress, both the COVID relief bill and the NDAA and a final appropriations bill. Importantly, that is going to have military appropriations, but it is not for sure we are going to be able to get there. There is a lot of work that is being done to try to get a compromised bipartisan bill. If we do not get there and we have to settle for a continuing resolution, which is certainly not ideal -- it is better than a government shutdown, but it is not ideal -- I would like the three of you to weigh in on what you think the impacts of a CR would be on Navy and Marine Corps operations. I think sometimes it is not well understood that even though it is continued funding, it is very, very disruptive for our military operations and readiness, which is the whole point of the oversight of this subcommittee.
Mr. Secretary, we will start with you.

Mr. Braithwaite: Absolutely, Mr. Chairman. And really, thank you for this question.

When I worked on the Hill, we rarely ever had a CR. I worked for Senator Arlen Specter. And passing our appropriations bills, our authorizing bills is extremely important especially to an organization like the Department of the Navy. So this does impact us.

And we are looking at ways now that if in fact we do have a CR, how we minimize the impact. But it will affect readiness. We asked for an anomaly, and it appears that we have received that to continue to build the Columbia class, our follow-on SSBN, to replace the Ohio class. Without that anomaly, we would not be able to replace the Ohios, which are 35-40 years old. So on behalf of the Department, we would like to thank Congress very much for that relief.

But the particulars of this -- I mean, the way that we operate our fleet, steaming hours, flying hours, all that will be impacted. Pay to our sailors, to our marines -- there will be significant impact, you know, in the hazardous and special pay spaces.

I would invite the Commandant or the CNO to talk to some of the more specifics of what they see is the operational leads for their respective services.

Senator Sullivan: Admiral?
Admiral Gilday: Yes, sir. So as the Secretary mentioned, across a number of accounts, you begin to see the effects accumulate over time. So with a 72-day CR, it is about $1 billion. It primarily affects our operations and maintenance accounts. So think steaming hours, flying hours. You want to keep these people, in the era of great power competition, on the cutting edge and the best that they can be, and you cannot when you are dealing with fiscal year 2020 levels of spending.

You see that begin to manifest itself more acutely at the 6-month point where we have decisions to make with respect to moving money around with the next steps with the USS Gerald R. Ford, an aircraft carrier that we want to get operational in fiscal year 2022, as fast as we can, or with the ongoing overhaul on George Washington, a refueling overhaul, or a new start overhaul on the John C. Stennis, a carrier that is waiting to go into maintenance. MILPERS. You begin to see the effects more acutely in those accounts as well where you cannot hire the people you want to hire in numbers to get to where you want to be at the end of the fiscal year.

A 12-month CR -- the impact of that is in the order of about $18 billion for the United States Navy across a number of accounts. So over time you begin to see significant impact with respect to both near-term readiness and
investments that we are trying to make in the future.

Senator Sullivan: General, do you have anything to add to that? That is a really staggering number you mentioned, $18 billion.

General Berger: Chairman, I think if you asked any leader who has anything to do with executing the budget if you could have one thing, what would you ask for, they would say stable, predictable funding. They would not ask for a dollar amount. They would just say some predictability, some stable, predictable funding.

I would boil it down in the same two buckets as the CNO: readiness and modernization. We will get by. We have gotten by so far on this CR on readiness without any negative impacts. It will begin to impact going into the next few months. And the CNO just really accurately highlighted those areas. They are similar to ours.

My bigger concern, frankly, or my major concern is modernization. We are turning our ship to make a Marine Corps that we will need 10 years from now. That involves new starts. If we do not have the appropriations bill on time, you are going to delay the modernization in the Marine Corps and to the detriment of our readiness. It is going to be for us sort of a double whammy. Not a good picture.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you. I appreciate it.

I have one final question, gentlemen. And again, I
appreciate the comments about my father. One of the
favorite things I got to do with him every year was go to
the Army-Navy game. And as a member of the Board of
Visitors of the Naval Academy, I was honored to be appointed
by that former chairman of this committee, Senator
McCain. So it looks like the game is going to continue,
which is great, and I would appreciate a prediction. If you
cannot make it in your professional capacity, Mr. Secretary,
maybe your personal view on who is going to win that game.
It is a very important question for the nation. And if the
other two uniformed leaders, the Admiral and General, also
have a view, I would welcome that.

Mr. Braithwaite: So, Mr. Chairman, as a proud member
of the United States Naval Academy class of 1984, my
personal and professional opinion on this one converge. We
will beat Army at West Point. We have a record of playing
there three times. The first Army game in 1890, the Navy
won, and we played it at West Point. We went back to Army
during World War II when we were under some of the same
pressures as we are today with COVID.

And when Secretary Ryan McCarthy and I talked about
where we should play the game, we were committed to ensuring
that every cadet and every midshipman would get to attend
that game. Being a Philadelphian, I live about an hour
outside the city, it is always great to go back to
Philadelphia, but Philadelphia would not allow us to go beyond 7,500, which does not cover all of the corps cadets or the brigade of midshipmen. So Secretary McCarthy and I, working with the CNO and the Army Chief of Staff and the respective superintendents of both the United States Military Academy and the United States Naval Academy, determined that we will play the game even if we have to play it in a parking lot outside the Meadowlands. This is an uninterrupted tradition that has gone on since 1890 in the midst of the Spanish influenza, World War I, World War II, and we are not stopping now.

So Navy will beat Army on December 12th once again for the fourth time that we play at West Point, Army’s home team. That is why we went to West Point. Go Navy. Beat Army.

Senator Sullivan: Are there any dissenting opinions from the Admiral and General on that view?

Admiral Gilday: No, sir.

Senator Sullivan: I did not think so.

Well, listen, gentlemen, I appreciate very much your time and your professionalism and your service to our nation. This has been a very, very informative hearing. I know that there will be additional questions for the record. We will keep the record of this hearing open for 2 more weeks for additional questions, and the committee asks
respectfully if you get QFRs, if you could try to get them back to the committee in short order, again we appreciate it. And thank you for your service.

This hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:17 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]