

Stenographic Transcript  
Before the

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

**UNITED STATES SENATE**

HEARING TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATION OF  
HONORABLE KATHLEEN H. HICKS  
TO BE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Tuesday, February 2, 2021

Washington, D.C.

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4

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7                   U.S. Senate

8                   Committee on Armed Services  
9                   Washington, D.C.

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11                  The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:33 a.m. in  
12                  Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. James M.  
13                  Inhofe, chairman of the committee, presiding.

14                  Committee Members Present: Senators Inhofe  
15                  [presiding], Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis,  
16                  Sullivan, Cramer, Blackburn, Hawley, Reed, Shaheen,  
17                  Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Heinrich,  
18                  Warren, Peters, Manchin, and Duckworth.

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1           Chairman Inhofe: The committee will come to order.  
2       The committee meets today to consider the expected  
3       nomination of Dr. Kathleen Hicks to be Deputy Secretary of  
4       Defense. Thank you all for being here today. Dr. Hicks,  
5       welcome. A warm welcome to your husband, Thomas Hicks. We  
6       are glad to have you both with us today. And I would like  
7       to acknowledge your children, who I know to be a source of  
8       great joy and support to you both.

9           Dr. Hicks, you will be introduced by former Secretary  
10      of Defense Robert Gates, who joins us virtually. Secretary  
11      Gates, are you on there? There he is. All right, Secretary  
12      Gates, do you hear me?

13       Mr. Gates: Yes, I do, Mr. Chairman.

14       Chairman Inhofe: You are recognized.

15       Mr. Gates: Thank you, Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member  
16      Reed, distinguished members of the Armed Services Committee.  
17      It gives me great pleasure to introduce my friend and former  
18      colleague, Dr. Kathleen Hicks, as the President's nominee to  
19      be Deputy Secretary of Defense.

20       When I was asked to remain as Secretary of Defense by  
21      newly elected President Obama, in early 2009, I welcomed Dr.  
22      Hicks into the Office of the Secretary as Deputy Under  
23      Secretary for Strategy, Plans, and Forces. At that point,  
24      she had already spent more than a dozen years in OSD as a  
25      career civil servant, rising remarkably fast from

1 presidential management intern to the senior executive  
2 service. As a result of that experience, she hit the ground  
3 running in 2009.

4 Among other monumental assignments she led the 2010  
5 Quadrennial Defense Review, a huge and complex task  
6 involving statutory requirements, service equities,  
7 mountains of analysis, and innumerable organizational  
8 interests. Preparing the QDR requires the bureaucratic  
9 skill to herd countless defense officials, both military and  
10 civilian, into one place, getting them all to agree to a  
11 document with significant future strategic and budgetary  
12 implications. She did the same with the National Defense  
13 Strategy, another consequential intellectual and  
14 bureaucratic achievement.

15 In addition, while I was Secretary, Dr. Hicks  
16 spearheaded our work in thinking through the long-term  
17 challenge from China, and she was in charge of reviewing and  
18 preparing for my approval of the military plans of the  
19 combatant commanders.

20 One of Dr. Hicks' most significant achievements as  
21 Deputy Under Secretary began on my watch in 2011. That  
22 spring, President Obama asked me to reduce the defense  
23 budget by \$400 billion, on top of the \$400 billion we had  
24 already cut in 2009 and 2010. I told the President I  
25 thought that was a mistake, but of course we would do as he

1 directed. I did persuade him, though, that prior to any  
2 such reduction we should have a strategic review to  
3 determine just what the implications of such a cut would be  
4 for our military strength and what changes in military  
5 strategy would be required. I turned to the one person I  
6 thought had the skill to lead such a high-stakes endeavor,  
7 and that was Dr. Hicks.

8 Subsequent to my retirement as Secretary in mid-summer  
9 2011, Congress passed sequestration legislation that cut  
10 another \$600 billion from defense. Thus, the strategic  
11 review I had assigned to Dr. Hicks took on even greater  
12 importance. The resulting defense strategic guidance issued  
13 in January 2012 reserved a sensible military strategy while  
14 meeting congressional intent, an extraordinary and rare  
15 feat.

16 At a time of significant challenges internationally and  
17 great uncertainty surrounding defense budgets and programs,  
18 Dr. Kath Hicks is exceptionally well qualified to assist  
19 Secretary Austin in realistically ensuring that budgetary  
20 decisions and military strategy are integrated in order to  
21 fully protect our country. She also has the long experience  
22 within and deep knowledge of the Department of Defense, as  
23 well as the personal leadership talent to bring together the  
24 military and civilian leadership in common purpose.

25 In sum, Dr. Hicks is a superb manager of complex

1 processes and large numbers of people and organizations with  
2 competing interests. For her remarkable contributions to  
3 the Department while I was Secretary, I presented Kath with  
4 the Distinguished Civilian Service Award, the highest award  
5 for civilians in the Department of Defense. In the citation  
6 I wrote, "Dr. Hicks strengthened the civilian role in the  
7 early phase of strategy and force development, contingency  
8 planning, and the promulgation of key Department guidance.  
9 She skillfully worked with the leadership and staff of the  
10 combatant commands, the services, the Joint Staff, and the  
11 Office of the Secretary of Defense to provide superior and  
12 timely support to the Secretary on the full range of  
13 strategic and programmatic challenges confronting the  
14 Department."

15 It is with pride in Dr. Hicks and confidence in her  
16 tough-mindedness, her experience in defense issues and  
17 strategy, and her mastery of bureaucratic black arts in the  
18 Pentagon that I introduce her to you today.

19 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you very much, Secretary Gates.  
20 That was an excellent introduction.

21 And to further introduce in participation in the  
22 introduction we ask Senator Shaheen to make remarks.

23 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you very much, Mr.  
24 Chairman and Senator Reed, and members of the committee. I  
25 am really honored to be here alongside Secretary Gates to

1 introduce President Biden's nominee to be the first woman to  
2 serve as the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Dr. Kathleen  
3 Hicks. This nomination truly is historic, and if approved,  
4 Dr. Hicks would be the highest ranking civilian woman to be  
5 confirmed to serve at the Department of Defense.

6 Now as we meet today we face complex and challenging  
7 national security threats around the world, and Dr. Hicks'  
8 extensive career in national security and at the Department  
9 of Defense makes her well qualified not only to confront  
10 these challenges but also to handle the day-to-day  
11 responsibilities of running the largest Federal bureaucracy.

12 As I was talking to folks about Dr. Hicks, she was  
13 described to me as someone who grew up at the Pentagon, and  
14 given that she began there as a civil servant in 1993, I  
15 think that is a pretty accurate description. From 2009 to  
16 2012, she served as the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense  
17 for Strategy, Plans, and Forces, and as Principal Deputy  
18 Under Secretary of Defense for Policy from 2012 to 2013,  
19 during the Obama administration. And as we heard from  
20 Secretary Gates, he gave, I think, about as glowing an  
21 introduction as I have heard on this committee for anyone he  
22 has served with.

23 Before taking a lead role on the Biden transition team,  
24 Dr. Hicks served as the Senior Vice President at the Center  
25 for Strategic and International Studies. I had an

1 opportunity to see her management experience and the  
2 knowledge and her breadth of national security experience  
3 first-hand when we participated in several panels together  
4 at the Reagan National Defense Forum, and we discussed  
5 topics ranging from everything about assessing our footprint  
6 in the Middle East to nuclear weapons.

7 I also had a chance to see very directly her leadership  
8 capacity at CSIS, when she played an instrumental role in  
9 signing into law the legislation that I worked on, the Syria  
10 Study Group, which ultimately produced recommendations and a  
11 real comprehensive strategy to address the conflict in  
12 Syria. Sadly, our position on Syria changed before many of  
13 those recommendations could get implemented.

14 But not only is Dr. Hicks an expert on many of these  
15 issues, she also understands the need for more civilian  
16 engagement at the Department of Defense. It is one of the  
17 topics that we had the opportunity to talk about several  
18 weeks ago, when we are able to speak about some of the  
19 challenges she will face at DoD if she is confirmed. I am  
20 confident that Dr. Hicks will be able to work alongside  
21 Secretary Austin to address this challenge and to improve  
22 civilian-military relations within the Pentagon.

23 Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I believe  
24 that Dr. Hicks is the right person for this job right now.  
25 Her extensive Pentagon experience, her command of the most

1 challenging national security threats make her a fantastic  
2 choice for this role, and I am so pleased to be able to be  
3 here to introduce her this morning, and I urge the committee  
4 to swiftly confirm her and let's get her back to the  
5 Pentagon where she can do the work that needs to be done.  
6 Thank you very much.

7 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you. Thank you, Senator  
8 Shaheen. Excellent introduction and I agree with it all.

9 And, Dr. Hicks, it is standard for this committee,  
10 there are some required questions that we must ask you, and  
11 we ask that you reply in an audible yes or no to each of  
12 these questions. Okay?

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

15 Ms. Hicks: Yes.

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

20 Ms. Hicks: Yes.

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

24 Ms. Hicks: Yes.

25 Chairman Inhofe: Will those witnesses be protected

1 from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

2 Ms. Hicks: Yes.

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

5 Ms. Hicks: Yes.

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

12 Ms. Hicks: Yes.

13 Chairman Inhofe: And lastly, have you assumed any  
14 duties or undertaken any actions which would appear to  
15 presume the outcome of the confirmation process?

16 Ms. Hicks: No.

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1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES M. INHOFE, U.S.

2 SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA

3 Chairman Inhofe: Dr. Hicks, I do not have to tell you  
4 that I believe that we are in the most dangerous time,  
5 arguably, in our lifetime. The greatest threat to national  
6 security comes from China and Russia. That will not change  
7 just because we have got a new administration.

8 The 2018 National Defense Strategy -- and I think of  
9 all the things that qualify you for this, I think the fact  
10 that you were one of the 12 authors of this is most  
11 significant, because these 12, 6 Democrats, 6 Republicans,  
12 all experts in the field, drafted this document that we have  
13 used since 2018. If we are serious about the security of  
14 our nation, and I believe that you, we must ensure a strong  
15 national defense that will deter China and Russia.

16 Our other top order of business must be making sure our  
17 troops have the resources they need to achieve this  
18 strategy. Over the past decade, as a result of the Budget  
19 Control Act and sequestration, the U.S. military has lost  
20 \$550 billion of planned spending, readiness plummeted,  
21 short-sighted cuts across the Pentagon drove talented  
22 servicemembers to leave, and rendered Pentagon civilians  
23 unable to conduct critical oversight activities.

24 As you pointed out, when you helped put together the  
25 National Defense Committee report, and I am quoting from it

1 now, "Civilian voices have been relatively muted on issues  
2 at the center of the U.S. defense and the national security  
3 policy, undermining the concept of civilian control.  
4 Modernization was put on hold while our adversaries rapidly  
5 jumped out ahead of us in developing technologies like  
6 hypersonics and artificial intelligence, to exploit our  
7 vulnerabilities." I think I may be the only one old enough  
8 to remember, but ever since World War II we have been in a  
9 position to say that we really had essentially the best of  
10 everything, and that ceased to be true. And we know that  
11 what happened during the Obama administration, because I  
12 know you were active there, but we actually dropped our  
13 military funding by 25 percent during the last five years of  
14 that administration, which would have been from 2010 to  
15 2015. So that modernization was on hold.

16 For decades we starved investments in our nuclear  
17 weapons and infrastructure. In stark contrast, China and  
18 Russia expanded their stockpiles, building thousands of  
19 additional missiles to threaten the United States and our  
20 allies. In fact, during that time, the five-year period  
21 that I referred to, China actually increased their activity  
22 by some 83 percent, while we dropped ours 25 percent.

23 The 2018 NDS, and several years of stable funding, we  
24 were on the course correction we needed. Our military  
25 started to recover but still a long ways to go. President

1 Biden must replace the \$550 billion of defense funding cut  
2 by sequestration and Congress will need to work with him to  
3 do so. This investment is the down payment required to  
4 maintain our position against China and Russia over the next  
5 several decades. It will give our military leaders the  
6 predictability and certainty that they have asked for time  
7 and time again in this very room. Working with the soon-to-  
8 be Chairman, I will continue to fight for this.

9           And look, Dr. Hicks, our nation needs strong civilian  
10 leadership at the Pentagon. You and Secretary Austin must  
11 tackle these problems head-on and build to preserve and  
12 defend our way of life. We cannot afford to backslide.

13           This will be my last meeting to actually chair, and the  
14 chairmanship will go to Senator Reed after this. Senator  
15 Reed.

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

3 Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman,  
4 and I join you in welcoming Dr. Hicks to this morning's  
5 hearing, and I want to thank her for her willingness to  
6 serve again. She has served her entire life, it seems, in  
7 the defense of the nation. Thank you again for that.

8 Let me welcome your husband, Tom. I know your children  
9 are watching this avidly from afar, and are very proud of  
10 their mother.

11 Finally, I want to recognize and thank former Secretary  
12 of Defense Bob Gates for his introduction, but more than  
13 that for his extraordinary work as Secretary of Defense  
14 under two Presidents. He is certainly an example of the  
15 very best in public service. And let me also recognize and  
16 thank my colleague, Senator Shaheen, for that wonderful  
17 introduction. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

18 Dr. Hicks is a highly regarded national security and  
19 defense policy expert with extensive experience in  
20 government and the private sector. She has served in senior  
21 level positions in the Department of Defense, as well as  
22 with public policy research organizations, including her  
23 recent tenure as a Senior Advisor at the Center for  
24 Strategic and International Studies.

25 This committee has also relied on Dr. Hicks' expertise

1 to shape defense policy and conduct oversight. Her  
2 testimony before the committee helped inform the Goldwater-  
3 Nichols reforms included in the FY2017 National Defense Act,  
4 and she has also testified on civil-military relations.  
5 Most recently, Dr. Hicks served as a member of the National  
6 Defense Strategy Commission, which provided valuable  
7 analysis for this committee's consideration as we conducted  
8 oversight on NDS implementation.

9 If confirmed, Dr. Hicks would be the first woman  
10 confirmed by the Senate to serve as the Deputy Secretary of  
11 Defense. She is exceptionally qualified for this position  
12 and her background and expertise should serve her well.

13 The Deputy Secretary of Defense position is  
14 complementary to the Secretary of Defense, and equally  
15 critical. The Deputy is focused on the internal management  
16 of the Department, and it takes considerable skill to  
17 administer a large and diverse bureaucracy like the  
18 Department of Defense. If done effectively, it can enable  
19 the Secretary to focus primarily on establishing defense  
20 policy and maintaining alliances and partnership while  
21 developing strategies to counter our competitors.

22 And one of the most consequential decisions for the  
23 Deputy Secretary of Defense is how to allocate budget  
24 resources for the development of weapons platforms and  
25 cutting-edge technologies. This year will be an inflection

1 point in how the Department prioritizes the resources it  
2 needs to accomplish its missions, given that the Fiscal Year  
3 2022 budget will not be constrained by the Budget Control  
4 Act. Dr. Hicks, as we discussed during our office call, one  
5 of the primary challenges you will face is how to transform  
6 how the Department operates. Transformation includes  
7 ensuring the Department is postured to face future threats,  
8 which means harnessing cutting-edge technologies like  
9 artificial intelligence, quantum computing, biotechnology,  
10 and cybersecurity while also divesting of legacy systems  
11 that are not optimized for future combat. But  
12 transformation also includes becoming more efficient in  
13 managing the "back office" of literally one of the largest  
14 bureaucracies in the world.

15 Transformation of the Defense Department is not new and  
16 it has been tried before, but it inevitably faces obstacles.  
17 One complication can be service parochialism, as each  
18 military service is responsible for the platforms that are  
19 needed to meet mission requirements, and each service has  
20 their favorites. Such parochialism can also extend to the  
21 civilian components of the OSD staff, making efficiency  
22 initiatives difficult. Also, the interests of individual  
23 members of Congress can also hinder change, particularly in  
24 the retirement of legacy system. Dr. Hicks, I hope you will  
25 share with this committee your thoughts on how you intend to

1 manage this process, if you are confirmed.

2       The other issue you will need to immediately address is  
3 filing the civilian vacancies in the Department and  
4 revitalizing civil-military relations. There are always  
5 multiple positions that need to be filled at the start of  
6 any new administration. However, I am concerned about the  
7 morale in the Department given that the previous  
8 administration made a concerted effort to leave multiple  
9 senior-level civilian offices unfilled, necessitating the  
10 installment of career or mid-level officials into senior  
11 positions in an acting capacity. Furthermore, large numbers  
12 of experienced, career civilians left the Department during  
13 the past four years, leaving a dearth of expertise and  
14 increasing the workload on those who remained. Secretary  
15 Austin has pledged his commitment to repairing civil-  
16 military relations and empowering civilians at all echelons  
17 of the Department, and if you are confirmed, you will be  
18 integral to this effort.

19       Finally, every member of this committee wants to ensure  
20 that high-caliber candidates serve in the Department, and we  
21 will continue to fully evaluate, and expeditiously consider,  
22 nominees for these positions. Filling these vacancies  
23 quickly and with capable and talented individuals will  
24 ensure the Department is operating effectively. I want to  
25 thank Chairman Inhofe for working to schedule a prompt

1 confirmation hearing for Dr. Hicks, and Dr. Hicks, if you  
2 are confirmed, I hope you will work closely with Secretary  
3 Austin to fill these positions and provide steady leadership  
4 for the Department.

5 Dr. Hicks, we face many challenges that will require  
6 strong leadership and the ability to make tough decisions.  
7 Thank you again for your willingness to serve our country.  
8 Thank you.

9 Chairman Inhofe: Well, thank you, Senator Reed.

10 With some Senators attending remotely I want to let  
11 everyone know how we are going to run things. Since it is  
12 not possible to know exactly when our colleagues who will be  
13 joining us via computer, when they arrive, we will not be  
14 following our standard Early Bird timing rule. Instead, we  
15 will handle the order of questions by seniority, alternating  
16 side-to-side until we have gone through everyone. We will  
17 do the standard five-minute rounds. I ask my colleagues on  
18 the computers to please keep an eye on the clock, which you  
19 should have on your screen. And finally, to allow for  
20 everyone to be heard, whether in the room or on the  
21 computer, I ask all colleagues to please mute your  
22 microphones when you are not speaking.

23 Dr. Hicks, we will begin with your opening statement.  
24 You are recognized.  
25

1 STATEMENT OF HONORABLE KATHLEEN H. HICKS, TO BE DEPUTY  
2 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

3 Ms. Hicks: Well good morning, Chairman Inhofe, Ranking  
4 Member Reed, and committee members. I am honored to come  
5 before you today as President Biden's nominee for Deputy  
6 Secretary of Defense. I am grateful to the committee for  
7 your stewardship of the National Defense Authorization Act  
8 over the past 60 years. Your effective, bipartisan  
9 governance is a ballast for American national security.

10 I want to thank you, Senator Shaheen, for your words of  
11 support. As the first woman elected to the Senate from the  
12 state of New Hampshire and the first woman to become that  
13 state's governor, you are a model to all those who aim to  
14 break barriers. And Secretary Gates, thank you for your  
15 generosity in introducing me today. It was an honor to work  
16 for you when you served as Secretary, and if confirmed, I  
17 hope to follow your example of principled leadership.

18 My deepest thanks go to my husband, Tom, whose love and  
19 support have been my anchor for 27 years. Our greatest joy  
20 is our three children, who teach me patience and humility  
21 routinely. I am also grateful for my large and formidable  
22 Irish-American family. My parents' lifetime of service to  
23 the United States Navy set a standard of selflessness for  
24 all of us.

25 I am honored to sit before you today in the hopes of

1 carrying on that family legacy of service. If confirmed, I  
2 would be returning to a department where over much of the  
3 three decades I worked alongside dedicated women and men,  
4 civilian and military. I could not be prouder at the  
5 prospect of serving with them once more.

6 The overriding mission of the Defense Department is to  
7 deter adversaries and defend the United States and her  
8 citizens. Challengers who seek to undermine America's  
9 interests by force should never doubt our resolve or  
10 readiness to thwart their aims. The Department is most  
11 effective when it is working in concert with other tools of  
12 national power. Our military strength bolsters the work of  
13 our diplomats, reinforces our alliances and partnerships,  
14 and strengthens our prosperity.

15 If confirmed, foremost among my charges would be to  
16 help translate the rhetoric of strategic competition into  
17 the reality of execution. China is the pacing challenge of  
18 our time. Armed conflict between the United States and  
19 China is not desirable, and it is not inevitable. The U.S.  
20 military plays a critical role in preventing that outcome.  
21 We must stand ready today, and we must modernize if  
22 deterrence is to endure. If confirmed, I would seek to  
23 increase the speed and scale of innovation in our force.  
24 The Defense Department cannot do this alone. It must engage  
25 Congress, expand public-private partnerships, and work with

1 America's allies and partners.

2 Our greatest military strength is America's Total  
3 Force, supported by its military families. We must not  
4 forget that the Defense Department's workforce is America's  
5 workforce. The pandemic has tested the U.S. military just  
6 as it has tested all Americans. The Defense Department has  
7 a vested interest in leaning into COVID response efforts, as  
8 President Biden has directed, and Secretary Austin has  
9 committed.

10 But most challenges facing the force and military  
11 families did not begin with COVID and they will not  
12 disappear at its end. If confirmed, I will assist Secretary  
13 Austin in bringing enduring, consistent focus to Total Force  
14 health and quality. We must address suicide and mental  
15 health, housing, child care, and food insecurity. We must  
16 root out violent extremism, systemic racism, sexual assault  
17 and harassment, and other inhibitors to readiness. And this  
18 is a matter of readiness. We will not be able to attract  
19 and retain the world's finest force, one that represents our  
20 democracy, if we cannot hold accountable those who threaten  
21 its viability from within.

22 The Department must also manage its business operations  
23 efficiently and in line with performance goals. If  
24 confirmed, I would build on existing efforts to make clear  
25 and accountable progress toward a clean audit. I would also

1 immediately assess the disposition of responsibilities  
2 previously assigned to the Chief Management Officer and make  
3 any adjustments needed.

4 Our success in meeting these goals requires a regular  
5 and constructive dialogue between the Department and  
6 Congress. If confirmed, I will help Secretary Austin  
7 facilitate communication and exchange with you and your  
8 staff. The nation needs us to work together.

9 Members of the committee, if confirmed, I would bring  
10 to these challenges a professional life spent committed to  
11 improving the nation's defense. I would bring an insider's  
12 knowledge of the levers for action and an outsider's drive  
13 for reform. I would bring a commitment to restoring healthy  
14 civil-military dynamics and establishing regular order. And  
15 I would be proud to put another crack in the glass ceiling  
16 of the Department I have spent most of my adult life  
17 serving.

18 Senators, I look forward to your questions and am  
19 grateful for this time with you today.

20 [The prepared statement of Ms. Hicks follows:]

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1           Chairman Inhofe: Well, thank you very much, Dr. Hicks.  
2           I am going to cover four questions real quickly, to  
3 kind of set this thing off. First of all, on the document  
4 that we referred to, the National Defense Strategy  
5 Commission, to me that tells the whole world the  
6 significance of the 12 people who put this document  
7 together, that we have adhered to. Some people are saying  
8 that it is maybe already outdated, since that was put  
9 together back in 2018. I would ask the question, does it --  
10 well, first of all, there are a lot of things that people  
11 keep talking about on the floor, about climate change, and  
12 yet nowhere in the commission's analysis can I find that  
13 phrase. So in your view, and given your experience as a  
14 member of the NDS Commission, does the 2018 NDS accurately  
15 assess the current strategic threat that we are faced with?

16           Ms. Hicks: Senator, the 2018 NDS, I think, was a  
17 remarkable reflection of strong bipartisan consensus around  
18 the growing challenges presented by China, in particular,  
19 and also the opportunistic challenges presented by Russia,  
20 and I think those factors continue to endure. The job of  
21 the National Defense Strategy Commission was to evaluate  
22 that NDS 2018, and Congress has established a requirement  
23 every four years for a new National Defense Strategy. I  
24 would imagine the Biden administration will be moving  
25 quickly to undertaking a full assessment, not only of the

1       2018 document, and hopefully the commission's  
2       recommendations, but also the current threat environment and  
3       other challenges we face.

4           An example, in addition to climate, might be COVID,  
5       which did not appear in the 2018 document. The world  
6       changes and we need to always be assessing our forces  
7       against --

8           Chairman Inhofe: Yeah. Thank you. Well, one of the  
9       document statements in this document is we would need to  
10      establish a real growth of 3 to 5 percent. Do you still  
11      think that is a good goal?

12          Ms. Hicks: Senator, I think that was an accurate  
13       reflection of what it would take, in a ballpark way, to meet  
14       the requirements of the 2018 NDS as it was laid out. So I  
15       stand by that as the general rule of thumb for that  
16       document.

17          Chairman Inhofe: Okay. And I want to cover two other  
18       areas real quickly here. One, I am going to quote from this  
19       NDS. "Civilian voices have been relatively muted on issues  
20       at the center of the U.S. defense and national security  
21       policy, undermining the concept of civilian control," and we  
22       talked to General Austin about this also. Would you give  
23       kind of what concrete steps would you recommend to correct  
24       this, if you agree with this statement?

25          Ms. Hicks: I do agree with that statement, and

1 Secretary Austin, Senator, has laid out already, in his  
2 confirmation hearing, and my understanding is in the steps  
3 he is implementing in the Department several concrete  
4 approaches. One is about who is in the room, who has a seat  
5 at the table, and whose voices are engaged in major issues  
6 of force deployment and force operations as well as policy.  
7 And he has been very clear that, if confirmed, that would  
8 include me as the Deputy Secretary of Defense. His Under  
9 Secretary of Defense for Policy, when confirmed, would also  
10 be an important figure in that, alongside other civilian  
11 officials.

12 Chairman Inhofe: Very good. And lastly I want to  
13 mention the nuclear triad. This is something that most  
14 people, many people, agree is the most significant problem  
15 that we are faced with right now. We have both Russia and  
16 China. They are modernizing and expanding their nuclear  
17 forces, as well as North Korea and some others that are  
18 moving in that direction also.

19 Secretary Austin has recused himself, potentially for  
20 the entirety of his term as Secretary of Defense, from any  
21 matter involving Raytheon Technologies, so I understand that  
22 you will be making the decisions for DoD about the long-  
23 range, stand-off weapons, the ground-based support. I would  
24 like to get you on the record right now. Do you agree with  
25 the assessment of the past Secretaries of Defense, and I

1 believe Secretary Austin as well, that the modernizing of  
2 the nation's nuclear forces is the most critical national  
3 security priority, including we are talking about the triad  
4 of land, air, and sea. Critics, quite often, talk about  
5 that as if you can get by with two out of three, and I do  
6 not think you can. What is your thought?

7 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I think first that nuclear  
8 deterrence is the cornerstone of American national security,  
9 as long as there are nuclear threats out there, and there  
10 certainly are those. I also think the triad has been, as  
11 Secretary Austin has put it, the bedrock of our nuclear  
12 deterrent, and I think it must be modernized in order to be  
13 safe, secure, credible.

14 And I would just add that I am worried about the state  
15 of the readiness of the nuclear triad, and, if confirmed,  
16 that is an area I would want to get my team in place and  
17 start to look at right away.

18 Chairman Inhofe: That is excellent. Thank you.  
19 Senator Reed.

20 Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman,  
21 and thank you, Dr. Hicks. As I mentioned, transformation is  
22 going to be one of the key challenges you face, and I  
23 alluded to some of the obstacles: services have favorite  
24 programs, there is a risk aversion to gaps in capabilities,  
25 and then there is also congressional unwillingness to

1 sacrifice platforms that might be beneficial to their  
2 localities. So can you give us an idea of what specific  
3 actions you might take to accelerate this transformation the  
4 challenges you anticipate facing?

5 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I think one of the major areas to  
6 look at are what are the incentives for the services --  
7 obviously, Members of Congress, industry, other stakeholders  
8 -- and how do we work on improving the alignment of those  
9 incentives to get the kinds of outcomes we need for the  
10 joint warfighter.

11 One major area that I would like to explore, if  
12 confirmed, is on concepts and joint concepts. The Vice  
13 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has an effort underway  
14 already in that area. I think we can create more incentives  
15 to ensure that what we are pursuing in terms of capabilities  
16 actually line up to theories of victory for how we are  
17 trying to pace challenges from China and Russia.

18 Senator Reed: And alluding to China and Russia in the  
19 National Defense Strategy, as you indicated it will be  
20 revised shortly by the Biden administration. Are there any  
21 assumptions that you feel might have changed since the last  
22 version, and also, operational concepts? This is not a  
23 static situation. Much has happened in the last several  
24 years on both sides, or all sides, I should say. Are there  
25 any, again, assumptions that you might sort of question, or

1 operational concepts that have changed so that it has an  
2 impact on the next force statement?

3 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I think I would, if confirmed,  
4 need to get in and really look at the threat assessments in  
5 terms of what we are seeing from China, Russia, and others,  
6 as well as how the advancement of U.S. capabilities is  
7 going. There are obviously programs that I am not privy to  
8 in my current capacity, that I would want to understand  
9 better how they are being integrated into the Department's  
10 thinking about operational concepts.

11 I would say, in general terms, areas that concern me  
12 are quantum computing advances, hypersonic missile  
13 capabilities and technology, and challenges perhaps to the  
14 U.S. asymmetric advantages in the undersea domain.

15 Senator Reed: That is very sensible, and I think  
16 focusing on threats as a driver of policy is probably the  
17 best way to begin, or not only policy but operational  
18 disposition and force structure. All of those will be  
19 affected by what the threat is, and I think, again, any  
20 analysis has to begin with the assumptions, to make sure we  
21 have them right.

22 One of the other aspects of our national security  
23 response is a whole-of-government response. I think the  
24 National Defense Strategy report is very much focused on the  
25 Department of Defense and the military response, but we have

1 to, I believe, have a much stronger whole-of-government  
2 effort. Can you comment on that?

3 Ms. Hicks: Yes, Senator. If we look at the challenges  
4 being presented today, the good news is that our strategic  
5 deterrent, in the case of nuclear weapons, appears to be  
6 holding. The conventional deterrent appears to largely be  
7 holding. The results of that strength, which is good for  
8 the American people, is that adversaries have to look below  
9 the threshold of conventional conflict, and we are seeing  
10 that, through different terms. People use maligned  
11 influence, Gray Zone threats. But certainly China and  
12 Russia, in their ways, have been pursuing these.

13 Many of the solutions to those Gray Zone challenges,  
14 which come in the form of economic coercion, cyber threats,  
15 as we have seen very recently from Russia, threats even in  
16 space, a lot of the answers to those start in the civil  
17 society side. They start with the strength of American  
18 democracy. They start with our tools of state craft and how  
19 we build alliances and partnerships to counter them, and the  
20 Defense Department is typically in support for many of those  
21 challenges.

22 Senator Reed: Well, Doctor, I am glad you alluded to  
23 your Irish roots. Since we are both Irish, we understand  
24 that our favorite hobby is worrying, and after you worry  
25 about your children I am sure you are going to devote most

1 of the day to worrying about the Department of Defense, so I  
2 am very confident you will do a good job.

3 Ms. Hicks: Thank you.

4 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed. Senator  
5 Wicker.

6 Senator Wicker: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and  
7 I am glad there is more than one person worried in this room  
8 today. Thank you for your willingness to serve, and thank  
9 you for the conversation that we had earlier. I very much  
10 appreciate that.

11 I enjoyed your testimony, and let me quote, "China's  
12 military modernization is the pacing challenge of our time.  
13 Armed conflict between the United States and China is not  
14 desirable, and it is not inevitable." Would you also agree  
15 that it is not inconceivable?

16 Ms. Hicks: Oh, I would agree with that, Senator.

17 Senator Wicker: Yes. So let's worry about China, and  
18 particularly the Pacific, but also I want to ask you to be  
19 mindful of Russia and the Black Sea, and that area of threat  
20 also. How do you view the growing imbalance of naval forces  
21 and missile systems between the United States and China?

22 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I first believe the United States  
23 must have capable sea power. It must have a qualitative  
24 advantage over adversaries in order to achieve -- protect  
25 its interests, advance its interests. I do want to just

1 say, as an aside, that I thank this committee and the House  
2 Armed Services Committee for supporting the Pacific  
3 Deterrence Initiative. I think it is confirmed that is a  
4 tool that will be very helpful in building out some  
5 initiatives and capabilities in this area.

6 My understanding, from the outside -- I am not privy,  
7 again, to the information that is available, were I to be  
8 confirmed -- is that the Chinese have, of course, grown out  
9 the capacity of their navy and their missile capability,  
10 based in different domains, land-based and sea-based, and  
11 that is a very worrisome trendline. I am concerned about  
12 the survivability of our naval forces, and I am concerned  
13 about making sure we have them positioned and have a concept  
14 for operating them that can be a war-winning strategy.

15 Senator Wicker: Okay. The Chairman had a conversation  
16 with you about the National Defense Strategy. That is now  
17 three years old and will be reviewed next year, or perhaps  
18 earlier, by the new administration. We have an FY2022 30-  
19 year shipbuilding plan that was just released in December,  
20 so it is only two months old, and it calls for 405 manned  
21 ships by the year 2051. It would add 82 new ships between  
22 2022 and 2026, at a cost of \$147 billion.

23 By comparison, the Navy's FY2021 budget request  
24 projected to add only 44 ships, as compared to 82, at a cost  
25 of \$102 billion in the same time frame. In other words, the

1 Navy's FY2022 30-year shipbuilding plan shows an 86 percent  
2 increase in the number of ships the service would buy in the  
3 next five years, and a 44 percent increase in funding over  
4 the same time frame.

5 Now I think you told me that you have seen the non-  
6 classified part of this plan but not the classified. You  
7 will soon be confirmed and see the classified. How  
8 controlling do you view this 30-year shipbuilding plan,  
9 which came from the previous administration, and what do you  
10 plan to prioritize with regard to shipbuilding in the  
11 Defense Department?

12 Ms. Hicks: Senator, let me first say, from the plan  
13 that was released by the Trump administration in December,  
14 there are some really interesting operational themes that I  
15 am attracted to. There is a focus on increasing use of  
16 autonomy, there is a focus on dispersal of forces, and there  
17 is a focus on growing a number of small surface combatants  
18 relative to today. But there are some things in that  
19 unclassified report, as I mentioned to you, that I saw as  
20 flags. There is an indication that the information in there  
21 would require further analysis to validate the numbers.

22 So, if confirmed, I would want to get in there, get my  
23 team together, certainly start to get our leadership for the  
24 Navy put in place on the civilian side and assess, in  
25 accordance with the requirements that Congress has

1 established for an FY2022 shipbuilding plan, assess that  
2 last document from the Trump administration and make any  
3 adjustments necessary.

4 I just wanted to add that I would absolutely welcome,  
5 if confirmed, the opportunity to work with members of this  
6 committee to talk through what we are seeing as we are  
7 thinking ahead to what that shipbuilding plan should be.

8 Senator Wicker: Okay. We will have further  
9 conversations about that and I appreciate it. I also  
10 appreciate the fact that in a foreign affairs piece you  
11 wrote you stressed that the U.S. will need to keep forces  
12 deployed overseas, especially in Asia and Europe. I agree  
13 with that. Much as we might like to have savings there, I  
14 think really the long-term savings and the long-term  
15 deterrence calls for that to continue.

16 I am going to ask you to briefly discuss, if you have  
17 looked at the two additional destroyers at Rota, Spain, that  
18 are in the works at this point.

19 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I have not looked at the decision-  
20 making around that deployment. I am aware that both of the  
21 value of Rota, and it is something that I would want to look  
22 into as part of a holistic look, not only at our maritime  
23 presence but our overall global posture, to make sure we  
24 have the right forces in the right places for the kinds of  
25 contingencies we anticipate.

1 Senator Wicker: Thank you, ma'am.

2 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Wicker. Senator  
3 Shaheen.

4 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. Again, welcome. We are  
5 delighted that you are here. We had the opportunity,  
6 several weeks ago, to talk about some of the challenges you  
7 will face, if confirmed, at DoD. And I was very parochial  
8 in that call, because I talked about the critical aspects of  
9 New Hampshire's economy and our contributions to our  
10 national security. One of those is the Portsmouth Naval  
11 Shipyard, which is between New Hampshire and Maine. And  
12 Senator Wicker talks about the importance of the  
13 shipbuilding plan, but that shipbuilding plan is only going  
14 to work as well as we have the capacity to make sure that  
15 our ships and subs are modernized and restored whenever  
16 something happens, and we can keep them sailing.

17 And I wonder if you can discuss the importance of the  
18 Navy Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Plan, which is so  
19 important right now. We are seeing a dramatic increase in  
20 drydock capacity because of that plan at Portsmouth.

21 Ms. Hicks: Thank you, Senator. I do think the  
22 sustainability -- it is not just the shipbuilding, it is the  
23 sustainability of our fleet, and both of those aspects are  
24 incredibly important. We need to have modernized depot  
25 capacity and capability to include in our naval shipyards.

1 So I agree that it is greatly important.

2 I would need to, if confirmed, understand better how  
3 well the optimization plan is working, but I do think it  
4 appears, from the outside, that it is a step in the right  
5 direction to make sure we have that sustainable capacity.

6 Senator Shaheen: Well, good. We would love to have  
7 you come up and see it first-hand, in Portsmouth, where we  
8 think it is working very well.

9 We also talked about the 157th Air Refueling Wing that  
10 is at Pease International Guard Base, which you pointed out  
11 your husband has spent some time in, at Pease, when it was  
12 the former SAT Command. And we are very proud that we were  
13 the first Guard base to get those KC-46 tankers now. As you  
14 know, because of a variety of challenges, including the most  
15 recent related to the remote vision system, we are still  
16 waiting on those tankers to be operational.

17 So will you commit to continuing to do everything you  
18 can to ensure that Boeing gets us those tankers operational  
19 as soon as possible?

20 Ms. Hicks: I will, Senator.

21 Senator Shaheen: Thank you very much.

22 We also talked about the role of women in defense, and  
23 I pointed out, as you already knew, the passage of the  
24 Women, Peace, and Security Act, which is designed to try and  
25 make better use of the role that women can play,

1 particularly in conflict zones around the world. Can you  
2 talk about why you think that is important?

3 Ms. Hicks: Absolutely. Senator Shaheen, first I want  
4 to thank you for your work on the Women, Peace, and Security  
5 legislation. The evidence that exists to date indicates  
6 that when women are engaged in peace and security matters  
7 that negotiated settlements and enduring -- viable and  
8 enduring negotiated settlements are more likely to come out.  
9 What I understand the Defense Department has done already to  
10 put into place the legislative requirements is to have  
11 senior advisors at each of the combatant commands and some  
12 additional staffing within the Office of the Secretary of  
13 Defense. I think those are important steps. If confirmed,  
14 I would want to be able to understand how well that is  
15 working and what kind of voice those advisors and the folks  
16 who are staffing the Secretary of Defense have in major  
17 considerations of peace and security.

18 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you. I look forward to  
19 working with you on that.

20 In response to, I think it was Senator Reed's question  
21 about how do we reduce -- how do we look at some of the big  
22 investments that we have made that may no longer be what we  
23 need to address the current times, you talked about changing  
24 the incentives that we have. Can you shed a little more  
25 light on -- give me some examples of how you think that

1 would work.

2 Ms. Hicks: Sure. Inside the Defense Department an  
3 example is that when a system, if you will, is reduced in  
4 number, or money is shifted, that the service that has, you  
5 know, given up the capacity or the capability often believes  
6 that they will lose out overall, and the incentive structure  
7 is built around budget share. I think, first of all, we  
8 should make clear, always, from a leadership perspective,  
9 that the incentive is about serving the joint warfighter,  
10 and we need to make sure we are hiring and promoting,  
11 particularly in the senior general officer and flag officer  
12 ranks in our career civilians, that perspective.

13 So the incentives start around promotion but they also  
14 include how we keep the money, if you will, oriented towards  
15 services who are putting forward good ideas, even if those  
16 good ideas seem to go against a vested interest.

17 I think when you are talking beyond the Defense  
18 Department, first the incentives and engagements between the  
19 Department and Congress have to do with having a dialogue  
20 and not the Department presenting its own fait accompli upon  
21 Congress. I think instead it is about a dialogue of how we  
22 move these joint capabilities forward and what kinds of  
23 approaches can be taken to help communities, to help  
24 different parts of the design base or manufacturing base.  
25 Sometimes those solutions might be internal to DoD and

1 sometimes they might be about other initiatives across the  
2 U.S. Government, and that is where DoD will need to work  
3 closely with its partners in the Department of Commerce and  
4 other State and local governments, small business  
5 initiatives, to make sure we are part of the Secretary --  
6 excuse me -- as President Biden puts it, the Build Back  
7 Better set of initiatives.

8 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Shaheen. Now via  
10 WebEx, Senator Fischer.

11 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Dr. Hicks,  
12 I appreciated our discussion of the importance of nuclear  
13 modernization yesterday, and I would like to revisit a few  
14 of the questions in order to confirm your support, for the  
15 record.

16 First, I do thank you for that support for maintaining  
17 an effective nuclear triad of land-, air-, and sea-based  
18 platforms. Do you also support modernizing this triad as  
19 well as the infrastructure at the Department of Energy and  
20 the command and control networks on which our nuclear forces  
21 depend?

22 Ms. Hicks: I do.

23 Senator Fischer: And do you believe the re-emergence  
24 of great power competition makes nuclear deterrence, and,  
25 therefore, nuclear modernization increasingly important

1 compared to previous eras?

2 Ms. Hicks: I think it remains the cornerstone.

3 Senator Fischer: Do you believe reductions in nuclear  
4 forces should be made pursuant to a negotiated, verifiable  
5 agreement, in other words, not unilaterally?

6 Ms. Hicks: I do, Senator.

7 Senator Fischer: And do you believe the cost of our  
8 nuclear forces, which, including modernization, sustainment,  
9 and operations, would consume less than 6.5 percent of the  
10 Department budget at their peak, and that is manageable?

11 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I think our decisions on nuclear  
12 weapons should be driven foremost by strategy.

13 Senator Fischer: Thank you. Dr. Hicks, with the  
14 change in the administration, opponents of nuclear weapons  
15 are renewing their arguments against elements of the triad  
16 and modernization programs, in particular, the ICBM leg and  
17 the associated modernization program known as the GBSD. In  
18 2012, when you were in the Department, this committee was  
19 considering your nomination to be Principal Deputy Under  
20 Secretary of Defense Policy. You stated, in a written  
21 response for the record, "Single warhead ICBMs contribute to  
22 stability," end quote. Is that still your view?

23 Ms. Hicks: Senator Fischer, may I ask you to repeat  
24 the statement? I could not hear the quote.

25 Senator Fischer: Okay. The quote was was, "Single

1 warhead ICBMs contribute to stability."

2 Ms. Hicks: I do agree with that statement.

3 Senator Fischer: Some advocates are calling on the  
4 President to put modernization programs on pause while they  
5 are reviewed. I find this especially concerning because  
6 what sounds like an innocent concept has the potential to  
7 break the recapitalization schedule. We have repeatedly  
8 heard from STRATCOM commanders that there is no additional  
9 margin in the schedule for further delay. Admiral Richard,  
10 the current STRATCOM commander, in his posture statement  
11 last year, testified, quote, "Many of the modernization and  
12 sustainment efforts necessary to ensure that deterrence  
13 viability have zero schedule margin and are late to need,"  
14 end quote. He went on to state, quote, "We cannot afford  
15 more delays and uncertainty in delivering capabilities, and  
16 we must maintain a focus on revitalizing our nuclear forces  
17 and associated infrastructure," end quote.

18 That has been the consistent message since the Obama  
19 administration. We have already delayed, and we have  
20 deferred these programs as much as possible, and if we do  
21 not proceed with urgency these capabilities will age out,  
22 and their replacements, they will not be available. That is  
23 something the last two administrations found completely  
24 unacceptable.

25 Do you agree that allowing these capabilities to age

1 into obsolescence is unacceptable?

2 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I was having a little trouble  
3 hearing you. I think the way I would respond to that is  
4 that I am concerned, again, about the modernization of the  
5 force. I very much respect Admiral Richard. I think  
6 STRATCOM has an important voice at this table and should be  
7 respected and listened to. If confirmed, I would need to  
8 get in and understand exactly what the status is, and to  
9 your point, the margin of error. I do not think we should  
10 be risking the modernization of our deterrent where that  
11 modernization actually challenges the quality of our  
12 strategic deterrent.

13 Senator Fischer: And, Dr. Hicks, on nuclear weapons  
14 production infrastructure, much of it dates back to World  
15 War II-era Manhattan Project. It has atrophied to the point  
16 where the United States is the only nuclear-armed country in  
17 the world without the ability to produce a new weapon. Do  
18 you believe that the United States must rebuild and maintain  
19 the basic capabilities to design, manufacture, and sustain  
20 and effective nuclear weapons stockpile to support our  
21 nation's deterrents?

22 Ms. Hicks: I do.

23 Senator Fischer: Thank you. I see my time is almost  
24 up. I appreciate your thoughtfulness, I appreciate your  
25 knowledge, and I look forward to you serving in the

1 capacity.

2 Ms. Hicks: Thank you, Senator.

3 Senator Fischer: Thank you very much.

4 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Fischer. Senator  
5 Blumenthal.

6 Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thank you  
7 for your service to our nation, Dr. Hicks. I want to join  
8 in thanking former Secretary Gates as well as my colleague,  
9 Senator Shaheen, for their excellent introduction, and  
10 welcome your husband, Tom, as well as possibly your two  
11 sisters in West Hartford and your brother in New Haven, if  
12 they are listening. If not, please convey my regards to  
13 them. They must be very proud of you, as is your whole  
14 family, for your very distinguished service.

15 I want to just begin with a comment, because I read  
16 your remarks on the issue of sexual assault, which are very  
17 general. I will just be very blunt. As you know, this  
18 committee is accustomed to hearing very general remarks on  
19 this issue. For as long as I have been in the Senate, which  
20 is now ten years, we have been hearing the same kind of  
21 generalities, and I do not mean to be rude but sometimes  
22 they sound like good intentions but a lot less action than  
23 there should be. So I am hoping that your commitment on  
24 that issue will be sincere, vigorous, and aggressive, as I  
25 expect it will be.

1           Likewise, on the issue of white supremacy, I am very  
2 heartened by the remarks made by Secretary Austin, as well  
3 as yourself, on this issue, because I think that extremist  
4 ideology in the military, as in any other phase of life, has  
5 to be fought and overcome.

6           I want to focus on the issue of the defense industrial  
7 base. As you and I discussed yesterday, the number of  
8 suppliers, for example, in the submarine program has  
9 diminished substantially over recent years, from about  
10 17,000 in the period of a couple of decades ago to now  
11 5,000, a 70 percent decrease. Those numbers come from a  
12 recent GAO report. I raised them yesterday in a call with  
13 Electric Boat. They are extremely alarming to me. Your  
14 remarks indicate your commitment to aiding the small  
15 suppliers who are now struggling as a result of the pandemic  
16 and the economic crisis, but also developing new suppliers,  
17 returning the numbers of small startups and medium-sized  
18 companies. And you remarked that efforts so far have,  
19 quote, "not yet led to the level of dynamism in the  
20 industrial base that we need," end quote.

21           So I am hoping that you will focus on the supply chain  
22 that is so vitally important to major contractors like  
23 Electric Boat or Raytheon or any of our major sources of  
24 supply.

25           Ms. Hicks: Yes, Senator. If I may step back to

1 address the first part of your comments on sexual assault, I  
2 can assure you, as a woman in modern American workplace and  
3 certainly in national security, I too get tired of hearing a  
4 lot of talk that does not convert into actual change. I am  
5 very heartened by the fact that President Biden moved out  
6 quickly on this issue, with his 90-day effort, and then  
7 Secretary Austin moved out himself inside the Department  
8 with his memo. I was absolutely appalled, and I think  
9 anyone who reads that Fort Hood report would feel the same  
10 as I do, at the failures we have experienced to date on  
11 sexual assault. And I think all good ideas should be on the  
12 table. We should not be taking things off the table while  
13 we are looking for the best solutions.

14 On your point about consolidation of the industrial  
15 base, yes, I am concerned. Some consolidation is probably  
16 inevitable. The Defense Department is not sized, if you  
17 will, in many areas to maintain a large base. But extreme  
18 consolidation does create challenges for innovation. My  
19 point on dynamism, you need to have a lot of different good  
20 ideas out there, that is our comparative advantage over  
21 authoritarian states like China and Russia.

22 And so if we move all competition out obviously that is  
23 a challenge for the taxpayer, but it is also a challenge in  
24 terms of the innovation piece. So I would be happy, if  
25 confirmed, Senator, to work with you and your team on ways

1 we can look at key parts of the industrial base and how we  
2 ensure there is a healthy supply chain.

3 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you very much. Just one  
4 last question on the issue of climate change and energy  
5 efficiency. You and I discussed this issue at some length.  
6 We do not have time today to continue that conversation but  
7 I do hope to continue it. And very excitingly, you  
8 mentioned the idea of our fleet going possibly to electric  
9 power, not surprising given that automobile manufacturers  
10 are moving, inexorably and quickly, in that direction. GM  
11 very shortly will have an all-electric fleet, and maybe the  
12 Department of Defense can pursue that initiative as well. I  
13 see no reason why the Department of Defense cannot have a  
14 fleet of vehicles that is all electric within the very  
15 foreseeable future. Would you agree?

16 Ms. Hicks: Yes. President Biden, in his Executive  
17 order last week, included a requirement on electric vehicle  
18 fleets, and, if confirmed, that would be something I would  
19 want to work on right away, to determine the viability of  
20 that, the timeline for that, for DoD.

21 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you so much. Thank you, Mr.  
22 Chairman.

23 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal. Now  
24 via WebEx, Senator Cotton.

25 Senator Cotton: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank

1 you, Mrs. Hicks, or Dr. Hicks, for your appearance today,  
2 and congratulations on your nomination. I guess I am  
3 heartened by what I have heard you say to Senator Inhofe and  
4 Senator Fischer about our nuclear triad and our nuclear  
5 deterrent, and with Senator Fischer, in particular, about  
6 the ground-based strategic deterrent replacement for the  
7 Minuteman-III. I do want to get a little more specific  
8 about that, because it is 50 years old and we have seen  
9 problems with structural fatigue and water intrusion and  
10 decayed wiring. The GAO has warned that we could lose  
11 confidence in the fleet by 2026, a mere five years from now.  
12 Congress has fully funded the GBSD, its replacement system,  
13 and both military and civilian leaders have consistently  
14 warned that the service life extension of the Minuteman-III  
15 is no longer an option.

16 Given that we have, until recent years, put off nuclear  
17 modernization for so long, with threats rising with China's  
18 crash nuclear buildup and Russia's unconstrained tactical  
19 weapon inventory, Dr. Hicks, I wanted to know if you will  
20 fully commit to deployment of the GBSD on its planned  
21 schedule.

22 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I will say again that I believe  
23 the triad has been as bedrock for American security, and I  
24 am a big believer in the value of the nuclear deterrent.  
25 What I cannot say today, until I have an opportunity, if I

1 am confirmed, to get in and understand the state, just as  
2 you describing, the state of the various legs of the triad,  
3 in this case the state of the land-based component, it is  
4 difficult for me to assess exactly what the timeline and the  
5 margin, if you will is, and also the technical feasibility  
6 issues, not just resource issues but technical feasibility  
7 issues.

8       But what I can promise is I am committed to a  
9 modernized, qualitatively effective deterrent, and if  
10 confirmed I would be happy to work with members here on a  
11 discussion around what we are seeing and what those  
12 timelines look like, and making sure that the FY2022 budget  
13 pushes forward the President's commitment to that nuclear  
14 deterrent at the same time that it is promoting America's  
15 nonproliferation agenda.

16       Senator Cotton: That commitment to the deterrent  
17 includes the ground-based leg deterrent. Correct?

18       Ms. Hicks: Yes, Senator. I believe our deterrent is  
19 strongest as a triad. I understand that there be a relook,  
20 as there is in every administration, at the various aspects  
21 of nuclear policy and modernization. I think that is  
22 appropriate. The Trump administration did that as well.  
23 But if you are asking my personal view, my view is that the  
24 triad has served us very well. It has created stability,  
25 and it has a value.

1 Senator Cotton: And I can understand your hesitation  
2 to make the commitment of the deployment on time, given the  
3 Pentagon's long history of many programs running over time  
4 and over budget. So let's divide the reasons in half why  
5 you would not make that commitment. What is the policy  
6 reason that some in the administration, some in the  
7 Democratic Party, do not want to modernize the missile leg  
8 of the triad, and then there are all the concerns about, as  
9 you say, the technical feasibility, where the program is,  
10 its financing, and so forth. Is it the second concern that  
11 you have that causes you to hesitate towards making a  
12 commitment towards on-time delivery as opposed to the first,  
13 the ideological or the policy one?

14 Ms. Hicks: Senator, as a nominee for Deputy Secretary  
15 of Defense I probably think of myself mostly in the former  
16 category. In general, yes, I would be very much focused on  
17 the viability of the programming element of this, and I  
18 would be in support of the Secretary, of course, on the  
19 major policy issues regarding nuclear posture, where he  
20 seeks my advice. But, as I said in my opening statement, I  
21 think my job is to make sure we can execute on the  
22 President's direction and on Secretary Austin's direction.

23 Senator Cotton: Okay. Well, if confirmed, I certainly  
24 hope that will be a very top priority, to make sure all  
25 those programmatic issues permit for the on-time deployment

1 of something critical to our international security.

2 Dr. Hicks, you suggested something in your answer that  
3 I want to touch on as well, about a posture review. Will  
4 Biden administration conduct a nuclear posture review, as  
5 has been the custom for the last several new presidential  
6 administrations?

7 Ms. Hicks: Senator Cotton, that is my understanding.

8 Because I am not inside the administration I do not know the  
9 status of that, but it is my understanding that there is an  
10 intention to review nuclear posture as well as, of course,  
11 overall defense strategy. The latter part is a  
12 congressionally mandated requirement.

13 Senator Cotton: Thank you. One final question. Like  
14 all administrations in the nuclear age, to include the Obama  
15 administration, will the Biden administration decline to  
16 adopt a no-first-use policy for nuclear weapons?

17 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I cannot speak to how the Biden  
18 administration might ultimately come through with policy  
19 assessments with regard to either nuclear declaratory policy  
20 or other issues. I have been on the record in the past as  
21 not being -- I do not believe no-first-use policy is  
22 necessarily in the best interest of the United States, but  
23 those will be decisions ultimately made, of course, by the  
24 President.

25 Senator Cotton: Well, thank you. I hope you will be a

1 vocal voice for that and that people will listen to you.

2 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Cotton. Now via  
3 WebEx, Senator Gillibrand.

4 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank  
5 you so much, Doctor, for being here. I want to continue  
6 along the line of argument that I listened to from Senator  
7 Blumenthal, and you did say that you reviewed the Fort Hood  
8 report. In that report there was a significant  
9 recommendation, and it said that commander negligence at  
10 Fort Hood fostered a culture of violent crime, sexual  
11 assault, and harassment. Investigators provided solution,  
12 quote, "To ensure objectivity and fairness the Sexual  
13 Harassment/Assault Response, or SHARP program, should  
14 operate independent from local commands and their legal  
15 advisors."

16 Dr. Hicks, do you think that if local commanders are  
17 not trusted to oversee SHARP that they should still get to  
18 decide which sexual assaults and complex criminal cases  
19 should go forward to be prosecuted?

20 Ms. Hicks: Senator Gillibrand, let me just first thank  
21 you for your leadership, in general, on this issue. As the  
22 Fort Hood report makes very clear, even just in the one  
23 excerpt you have given, this is a problem that does not  
24 appear to be getting any better, and we need to be really  
25 open, I think, on the solutions, the levers that will

1 actually make a difference.

2 I am not a legal expert. I cannot speak to the  
3 specifics of how the Department, at this point, you know,  
4 without being in the Department, how the Department ought to  
5 move forward on those recommendations, and in particular on  
6 the accountability side, prosecution and accountability  
7 side. But what I can say is that to the extent that  
8 Secretary Austin is involving me in decisions relating to  
9 encountering sexual assault and harassment in the military,  
10 that I am very open to ideas, even if they include removing  
11 the commander from that prosecution chain.

12 Senator Gillibrand: And the purpose of that would be  
13 to give the prosecution to trained military prosecutors who  
14 have had time to develop expertise in criminal law, because  
15 right now fewer cases are proceeding to trial and fewer cases  
16 are ending in conviction. And so as a result we have seen a  
17 lessening of people's faith in the system. And the one  
18 recommendation that survivors and legal experts and  
19 advocates have recommended is allowing the  
20 professionalization of the prosecution of major crimes that  
21 have jail time of more than a year.

22 And so that is why this is the recommendation, and for  
23 your benefit, we have put forward pretty much every other  
24 recommendation that the DoD has supported and turned it into  
25 law, and they have not changed these outcomes.

1           And the second thing that does not seem to matter is  
2 whether a Secretary of Defense takes this seriously or not,  
3 because every single one of them has said they have taken it  
4 seriously, from Dick Cheney on. And so promises, empty  
5 promises, are something that I hope the Biden administration  
6 does not tolerate, and I would like your commitment that you  
7 will really focus on this issue to make sure that we get to  
8 the right results, where we can have a military justice  
9 system that is worthy of the sacrifices that the men and the  
10 women in our services make every single day.

11           Ms. Hicks: Senator, you have that commitment.

12           Senator Gillibrand: Okay. I would like to address now  
13 issues of cybersecurity. Last month, it came to light that  
14 Russia had created a back door into computers of at least  
15 250 agencies, for 9 months, and possibly still they have  
16 been able to monitor computer activity and steal data that  
17 has come to our attention. A private company, FireEye,  
18 brought that to our attention, not the DoD. This comes only  
19 after two years that our cyber posture review found that we  
20 have had difficulties with DoD cyberspace operations'  
21 ability to prevent maligned activity from our adversaries.

22           Now we have had several hearings on this, and we have  
23 had lots of proposed changes. One proposal is to increase  
24 the role of the National Guard so that cybersecurity experts  
25 can maintain their day job while also serving the country.

1     Do you think this is a tool that could be useful for this  
2     problem?

3                 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I think the National Guard can  
4     bring specialized capabilities in exactly these types of  
5     areas where the commercial sector, to your point about  
6     FireEye, where the commercial sector is sometimes out in  
7     front of the Federal Government. So it does seem to be, at  
8     first glance, that the National Guard could be helpful in  
9     this area.

10                Senator Gillibrand: Last, I wanted to touch on  
11     diversity. Recently, the DoD released a 2017 survey that  
12     showed 24.4 percent of active duty minority servicemembers  
13     experienced harassment or discrimination, but only 26  
14     percent reported their experience to the Equal Opportunity  
15     program. Only 16 percent of reports led to punishment of  
16     the perpetrator, and 10 percent somehow led to punishment of  
17     the reporter.

18                While interviewing Anthony Brown last July, you stated  
19     the military is a, quote, "engine to counter racism." With  
20     statistics like this, do you think that engine is actually  
21     working, and would you agree that servicemembers should have  
22     the same ability to report discrimination without reprisal  
23     as a civilian DoD employee?

24                Ms. Hicks: Senator, I hesitate to get into specific  
25     recommendations related to UCMJ or other legal matters. If

1 confirmed, I would absolutely want to speak to the career  
2 lawyers to understand what the implications are. But to  
3 your general point, I think it is crystal clear that the  
4 military has not undertaken sufficient efforts on diversity,  
5 equity, and inclusion, and that we have a major leadership  
6 challenge, quite frankly. We have a problem on the  
7 prevention side, and we clearly have a problem on holding  
8 folks accountable, whether it is sexual harassment and  
9 assault or it is DEI-related issues, more broadly.

10 And I am committed to making sure we make genuine  
11 progress. I know it is difficult to hear nominee after  
12 nominee come up and say that, but you have my commitment,  
13 and I would look forward to working with you on both of  
14 these sets of issues.

15 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Gillibrand. And  
17 via WebEx, Senator Rounds.

18 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Dr. Hicks,  
19 thank you for your years of service and the work that you  
20 have done in national security issues. I want to thank you  
21 for your willingness to serve once again in such an  
22 important position.

23 I enjoyed our phone call last week, and I want you to  
24 know that I intend to support your nomination. I do have a  
25 couple of questions that I would like to go through with

1 you, specifically with regard to our DoD cyber strategy,  
2 which have been published back in December of 2018, which  
3 charges the DoD to Defend Forward, shape the day-to-day  
4 competition, and prepare for war.

5                   The United States Cyber Command has demonstrated  
6 successful instances of Defend Forward in securing the 2018  
7 and 2020 elections. What are your views on the Defend  
8 Forward, shape the day-to-day competition, and prepare for  
9 war concepts to deter and disrupt Russia and China in  
10 cyberspace?

11                  Ms. Hicks: Senator, first, thank you very much for  
12 your support of my nomination. I have had an opportunity,  
13 at different periods in the last several years, to get a  
14 little more information on what is behind Defend Forward. I  
15 would say based on the briefings that I have had I am  
16 supportive of the approach. I think, if confirmed, what I  
17 would like to understand better is exactly how the  
18 authorities are being executed, what kind of oversight is  
19 involved, how we are consulting with allies and partners,  
20 whose systems we might operate on. I think those are very  
21 important questions for civilian policymakers to be engaged  
22 on.

23                  But, in general, I believe that we have had to become  
24 much more forward leaning in our approach, and I also think  
25 Congress has a critical role to play here in terms of

1 authorities. And I would want to understand better, again,  
2 how it is being executed today to engage in a dialogue about  
3 what is the appropriate role for Congress and for civilian  
4 policymakers in the Executive branch.

5 Senator Rounds: I am also very pleased by the progress  
6 that we have made enabling Cyber Com to rapidly conduct  
7 cyber effects operations to include offensive cyber  
8 operations. Can you tell the American people why this is so  
9 important to our national defense? I think it is important  
10 that the public understand that we have got challenges where  
11 people are attacking us, but we have to be in a position to  
12 offer offensive cyber operations, even when we are not in an  
13 identified conflict.

14 Ms. Hicks: Yes, Senator. I think one of the major  
15 challenges about thinking through competition or  
16 confrontations in cyberspace is that the classic definitions  
17 of what is offense and what is defense are very blurred.  
18 And so it is challenging to use the kind of constructs we  
19 have thought of in the terrestrial sense in cyber space.

20 What I would say, to your point, is the way in which  
21 adversaries can come at our systems, and the recent Russian  
22 hacks to include through SolarWinds, demonstrated this, is  
23 they can live in our systems for some time. They can  
24 undertake espionage, extract information, and then can turn,  
25 in many cases, onto what we would think of as offensive

1 approaches. In order for the U.S. to prevent that and deter  
2 that, it also sometimes has to defend forward, that is to  
3 say it has to be living in systems so that it has the  
4 warning, the indicators and warning, to know that an attack  
5 is imminent. And that is where this offensive piece becomes  
6 important.

7 Senator Rounds: Exactly. And not only that but it  
8 also provides us with advanced warning about the types of  
9 tactics that might very well be used, because if they are  
10 using those tactics in other countries in advance they may  
11 very well be using the same tactics when it comes to trying  
12 to get into our systems as well.

13 But as we discussed during our call, there was an  
14 effort, in the last administration, to end the Cyber Com NSA  
15 dual hat. Again, I have been watching this issue for a  
16 number of years now and I am really concerned by that. I  
17 had originally come in thinking that it would be appropriate  
18 to split them up rather quickly. I have changed my mind. I  
19 think that the dual hat, with the unity of command it  
20 provides, is working very well for the current, and likely  
21 for future Cyber Com commanders, and separating the two  
22 organizations could create some real problems with regard to  
23 the assets that would have to be acquired, in addition to  
24 what we have today.

25 Would you please share your thoughts on this with the

1 committee?

2 Ms. Hicks: Yes, Senator. I do not have a position on  
3 the ultimate disposition of the dual hat arrangement for  
4 Cyber Com and NSA. I do have an assessment based on my work  
5 on the transition team, looking at where we are today, and  
6 particularly in light of this recent hack that included  
7 exploitation of the SolarWinds software, and that is that we  
8 are not at a maturation point with Cyber Com that makes the  
9 dual hat arrangement -- and to the dual hat arrangement wise  
10 in the immediate. And, if confirmed, I would be happy to  
11 continue, of course, looking at this issue and giving  
12 Secretary Austin my best advice on, you know, if there comes  
13 a point where that does seem to be -- the split does seem to  
14 be wise.

15 Senator Rounds: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Rounds. Via  
17 WebEx, Senator Hirono.

18 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome, Dr.  
19 Hicks. Thank you for chatting with me the other day.

20 I start with the following two questions of every  
21 nominee who comes before any of the committees on which I  
22 sit. First question, since you became an adult have you  
23 ever made unwanted requests for sexual favors or committed  
24 any verbal or physical harassment or assault of a sexual  
25 nature?

1 Ms. Hicks: No.

2 Senator Hirono: Have you ever faced discipline or  
3 entered into a settlement related to this kind of conduct?

4 Ms. Hicks: No.

5 Senator Hirono: I note in your responses to questions  
6 from my colleagues that you recognize the importance of the  
7 Pacific Deterrence Initiative. That includes the importance  
8 of the compacts that we have with the freely associated  
9 states of Micronesia, Palau, and Marshall Islands. I  
10 believe that we can do more in our partnership with them,  
11 and I hope that you will be open to, for example, Palau has  
12 access to invest in joint use facilities such as airfields.  
13 So I hope that you will be open to doing more with our  
14 important partners in the Pacific.

15 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I am open to that.

16 Senator Hirono: I do applaud Secretary Austin's recent  
17 announcement that the Pentagon will prioritize climate  
18 change considerations in its activities, risk assessments,  
19 and in the next National Defense Strategy. I believe that  
20 renewable energy is not simply an environmental calculation  
21 but it is becoming a tactical necessity for the DoD, which  
22 is the biggest user of energy in our government.

23 So we have included provisions in NDAA to prioritize  
24 energy security and resilience at military installations. I  
25 would like to know whether you will make energy resilience

1 and mission assurance a priority for the DoD.

2 Ms. Hicks: Yes, Senator. I think the resiliency  
3 aspects on climate are critical as a business proposition  
4 for DoD, again, focused really, if you just take a hard-  
5 nosed resources look at it. And I want to commend Congress  
6 for re-establishing the Assistant Secretary of Defense for  
7 Energy Installations and Environment. If confirmed, I would  
8 work with Senator Austin -- excuse me -- Secretary Austin to  
9 ensure that we put forward a nominee who is very capable and  
10 competent in these exact spaces.

11 Senator Hirono: I think the issue of energy resilience  
12 and all of that is we have to stay the course.

13 Senator Shaheen had asked you about the importance of  
14 our shipyards, and she said it is a parochial concern, but  
15 it is not. I view it as a national concern, and, of course,  
16 I chatted with you about the importance of the four public  
17 shipyards of which there is one in Hawaii. So the  
18 modernization of these shipyards is a very important concern  
19 for a number of us, and I hope that I have your commitment  
20 that you will continue to support the funding for the  
21 modernization of our shipyards. Because, as you  
22 acknowledged, it is not enough to just build ships. We  
23 actually have to repair and maintain them.

24 Ms. Hicks: Yes, I agree completely, Senator. The  
25 sustainability of all of our forces, frankly, especially if

1 you look at where the cost curves are on operations and  
2 sustainment, that is going to be vital if we are going to  
3 compete effectively in the future.

4 Senator Hirono: Senators Blumenthal and Gillibrand  
5 have asked you questions about the continuing scourge of  
6 sexual assault and harassment, and I would include  
7 retaliation on the basis of reporting, somebody who reports  
8 these kinds of actions. And it continues to be a scourge,  
9 as I mentioned, and every Secretary, every Deputy, everybody  
10 who comes before us from DoD says that you will do something  
11 about it.

12 So I would like to know, you know, what would be  
13 measures of progress in this area? How would you determine  
14 whether real progress is being made to eliminate or reduce  
15 the scourge of sexual assault, harassment, and retaliation?

16 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I think first one of the most  
17 important tools we could have is transparency and data, and  
18 as you are likely aware, the Department has not collected  
19 recent data with regard to reporting on sexual harassment or  
20 we know how many claims, if you will, have been made but we  
21 do not know the totality of the reporting. If you look at  
22 the Fort Hood report, if you look at that microcosm of the  
23 Fort Hood community, it was very clear there was significant  
24 under-reporting underway. And so I think that is an area we  
25 would want to look at right away, in terms of making clear

1 that reporting does not have negative consequences for the  
2 career of anyone in the total force -- civilians,  
3 contractors, or military -- and that there are tools, easy  
4 tools, hotlines that are easy to use, that everyone knows  
5 about, that the training is there.

6           And then I would just add sort of the training element.  
7 A lot of these harassment -- harassment is often the  
8 grooming process toward assault, so we have to look at both  
9 of those issues. And a lot of this is happening in the  
10 youngest of our servicemembers, and that means there are  
11 training opportunities. That means there are leadership  
12 opportunities at every level, and we need to be making sure  
13 we are holding folks accountable at the same time we are  
14 putting the resources into prevention.

15           Senator Hirono: That is why it is important to have  
16 sexual harassment as a separate charge in these matters.  
17 And maybe another way to determine the extent of the problem  
18 is to poll your servicemembers themselves as to whether they  
19 have experienced sexual harassment, assault, et cetera,  
20 including, by the way, asking them about racial  
21 discrimination.

22           I believe my time is up. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23           Ms. Hicks: Thank you, Senator.

24           Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Hirono. How via  
25 WebEx, Senator Tillis.

1 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, Dr.  
2 Hicks, thank you for being there. I want to also thank you  
3 for being so generous with your time on the phone call last  
4 week. We covered a number of different topics.

5 I did want to get back to some of the discussion we had  
6 last week particularly around the -- on the one hand, I like  
7 all the responses you have given to my colleagues on  
8 commitment to modernization and our defense strategy. On  
9 the other hand, I think we are going to come up with funding  
10 issues and challenges to keep those programs on track.

11 So when you go into this role, and I intend to support  
12 your confirmation, how do you look at getting more  
13 productivity out of the dollars we already have in the face  
14 of the economic challenges that we have, and maybe an  
15 administration that would not place the same priority on  
16 funding that you have seen over the last four years? How do  
17 you get more productivity? What kind of wide programs do  
18 you think are appropriate to drive more productivity for the  
19 dollars being spent?

20 Ms. Hicks: First, Senator, thank you so much for your  
21 statement of support, and I enjoyed our conversation as  
22 well.

23 Let me tackle a few aspects of that, because it is not  
24 an easy answer. I think some of the elements are about  
25 tying the capabilities of the programs to capabilities to

1 concepts to what we are trying to achieve, and that concept-  
2 to-capability link has been weak in the Department for some  
3 time. Again, the Department has some work underway. If  
4 confirmed, I would want to get in, in particular talk to the  
5 Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff about the status  
6 of that effort, and try to understand where the concepts are  
7 driving us to ideas about how we perform in the field  
8 against challengers.

9 That helps us really focus the mind on the priorities  
10 we need to have, in terms of what deters effectively, what  
11 creates credible capability, and also, you know, where are  
12 there areas that are lower risk. There is never a lack of  
13 risk. The question is how to prioritize effectively and be  
14 transparent about where we have decided to take risk so that  
15 Congress, among others, can make its own determinations  
16 about those judgments.

17 I think the other thing I would just point to is the  
18 business operations side of DoD. I mentioned in my opening  
19 statement that that is an area that the Deputy Secretary of  
20 course needs to be involved directly, and it is in large  
21 part for the reason you point out, which is we have to make  
22 every dollar that the taxpayer puts in have a return, and  
23 that return should be measured in terms of joint capability.  
24 So that means we need to squeeze out obviously abuse, but  
25 much more frequently we see waste, and that will be a

1 priority for me.

2 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Dr. Hicks. I think I  
3 mentioned you on the call that we had that if I were there  
4 in person I would be bringing my 600-page-plus RFP for the  
5 next generation handgun. I think that that is a case study  
6 in an acquisition process gone wrong. So I have a bias,  
7 that what we have to do is go in and stratify some of these  
8 acquisition processes that are literally preventing some  
9 viable suppliers from even participating because they are so  
10 costly and so time-consuming that we could get a richer  
11 supply base, I think if we had smarter -- on certain  
12 systems. Clearly on more complex, leading-edge technologies  
13 it may take time, but I think all of them have to have an  
14 up-and-down review.

15 Dr. Hicks, I also just want to go back and associate  
16 myself with some of the comments made by Senator Blumenthal  
17 and Senator Gillibrand on military sexual assault. I  
18 suspect that that is going to be a priority in her position  
19 as Chair of the Personnel Subcommittee. And I am very  
20 frustrated with some of the confidence that I have placed in  
21 the Department to make progress and not seeing the kind of  
22 progress. And I think the Fort Hood review says a lot and  
23 needs to be acted on.

24 The final question I had for you is just your  
25 assessment of our NATO relationship and our partners, what

1 challenges, or what can we build on based on the prior  
2 administration?

3 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I think the U.S. transatlantic  
4 relationship manifested most fully in NATO in the military  
5 sphere is absolutely vital to any of the challenges we think  
6 of in the future. Even when we think about China as the  
7 pacing challenge, our relations with our European allies is  
8 critical to our effectiveness, our ability to build out a  
9 community of democracies that can counter authoritarian  
10 approaches.

11 So I see NATO as a centerpiece of our alliance networks  
12 throughout the world. I have been concerned. I have  
13 written on my concern that the focus on burden-sharing --  
14 and we should always be focused on burden-sharing, ensuring  
15 that allies fulfill their commitments -- but that when it  
16 becomes that tactical issue, the overrides, the strategic  
17 value of the alliances, alliances that the Chinese and  
18 Russians could only hope to match, we have been -- if we get  
19 to that point we have become a strategic, and I am very  
20 hopeful that President Biden, who has spoken eloquently on  
21 this issue, will make good progress in returning strategy to  
22 the center of our alliance relations.

23 Senator Tillis: Thank you. I look forward to working  
24 with you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Tillis. Senator

1 Kaine.

2 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and, Dr. Hicks,  
3 congratulations on your nomination.

4 A couple of topics, first on sexual assault in the  
5 military. When we grappled with this issue in a major way  
6 in 2013, and we have sort of been building upon that since,  
7 there were basically three categories of SASC members.  
8 There were those who felt this problem was so serious that  
9 the only solution to is was to remove it from the chain of  
10 command. There were those who felt that the problem was  
11 deeply serious and we needed to make the chain of command  
12 work to solve it.

13 And then there was a third group, into which I, Senator  
14 King, and some others around the table were in this group.  
15 We knew it was serious, we wanted to give the chain of  
16 command an opportunity to solve it, but if we were not happy  
17 with the results we were very willing to go the path of  
18 taking it out of the chain of command.

19 I just sort of want to put on the record that that  
20 third group of members of this committee, virtually all of  
21 us are really unhappy with the progress since 2013. We are  
22 now getting to eight years from then, and we were willing to  
23 give the chain of command new tools, new resources, new  
24 accountability mechanisms, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera,  
25 and we are not happy with the outcome.

1           And so I think it is just important for the Pentagon  
2       community to know that that was sort of a swing block in  
3       2013 that led us to go down a particular path, that many of  
4       us who were supporting those within the chain of command  
5       improvements have been very dissatisfied with the results,  
6       and we are now very open to pursuing a different path, as we  
7       said we would at the time. That is number one.

8           Number two. Here is an accomplishment that is an  
9       Obama- and Trump-era accomplishment. It is also an  
10      accomplishment of this committee and the Pentagon --  
11      pressure for the Pentagon finally to do an audit, like every  
12      other Federal agency, and to have every function of the  
13      Pentagon, and every part of the Pentagon audited. We did  
14      that because an audit is a good oversight tool for this  
15      committee. An audit is a good accounting tool for the  
16      numbers folks at the Pentagon. But we also did it because  
17      an audit should be a good management tool for folks like  
18      you. Tell this committee how you will use the audit in your  
19      role, should you be confirmed.

20           Ms. Hicks: Thank you, Senator. My understanding from  
21      the team that is in the Defense Department, based on my work  
22      on transition, is that the audit, in fact, has been useful  
23      as a tool of transparency. Getting the data up and shared  
24      and known first of all points directions to some of these  
25      business process improvements that we can have, but then

1 even operationally it has had the effect of revealing  
2 inventory, excess inventory, things of that sort, that not  
3 only, again, is efficient but gets real capability out to  
4 the fields. There are parts that exist in inventory that  
5 are needed in the field, but we did not know we had them.  
6 So the audit has revealed some of those very basic  
7 approaches, as you say, that every business has to abide by  
8 and is advantaged by.

9 I think it has also pointed more generally to the value  
10 of data, and as we move into an era of data the Department  
11 needs to move there too. An audit is showing the way to how  
12 data can be leveraged to make more sound analytic decisions.

13 Senator Kaine: I hope you will continue that focus.  
14 Any dollar or energy we spend on something unnecessary or  
15 ineffective is a dollar that we are not spending on the real  
16 challenges we have before us.

17 My last question is this. There are positions, still  
18 to be named, in the Biden administration, Under Secretaries  
19 of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment and Research and  
20 Engineering. Many of the nominees and appointments for DoD  
21 spots thus far are veterans of the Obama administration,  
22 local think tanks, advocacy groups, all of which is  
23 important, but none thus far have extensive acquisition or  
24 industry experience.

25 The Department was well served, in my opinion, by some

1 previous officials, like Secretaries Lord, Guerts, McCarthy,  
2 who had sizeable acquisition experience before their  
3 appointments. If confirmed, do you have any sense of where  
4 the Department will look to fill up the ranks of the A&S and  
5 R&E portfolios so that we will have acquisition and research  
6 expertise in a Biden Pentagon?

7 Ms. Hicks: Senator, Secretary Austin, when he was  
8 nominee Austin, and I spoke quite a bit about those  
9 particular positions, and then, of course, you have the  
10 service acquisition executives who have increased  
11 responsibilities in these areas. And I know from Secretary  
12 Austin this is among his highest priorities in terms of  
13 positions to fill in the near term.

14 I cannot speak on his behalf about the particulars of  
15 individuals but I can tell you that the attributes I know  
16 that the Department needs is that acquisition expertise, is  
17 a familiarity with the hardware and software ends of where  
18 the Department's capabilities are coming from, and a really  
19 fine-tuned sense of how to work in new ways with industry to  
20 some of the issues that have already been raised. There are  
21 significant challenges to nontraditional defense players  
22 getting into the marketplace. We need to lower those if we  
23 are going to compete successfully.

24 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Dr. Hicks. Thank you, Mr.  
25 Chair.

1           Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Kaine. Senator  
2 Sullivan.

3           Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, Dr.  
4 Hicks, congratulations on your nomination and I appreciated  
5 the opportunity to chat the other day, and I really --  
6 sorry, I am looking at my time here -- appreciate your  
7 background and our discussion.

8           I am going to follow up on a number of the topics. Of  
9 course, I raised the issue of the Arctic, and Alaska's  
10 place. We are an Arctic nation because of my great state.  
11 Can I get your commitment, if confirmed, that you will get  
12 up to Alaska and see the importance of the Arctic and our  
13 strategic location there?

14           Ms. Hicks: Senator, I would welcome coming to Alaska.

15           Senator Sullivan: Good. Well, you know, Billy  
16 Mitchell, the father of the U.S. Air Force, called Alaska  
17 "the most strategic place in the world," but I have a new  
18 quote that I will start using. The now-Secretary of  
19 Defense, in his confirmation hearing, Secretary Austin,  
20 said, "I absolutely agree that Alaska is a national treasure  
21 and it holds some of the most important military assets and  
22 resources." Would you agree with your future boss?

23           Ms. Hicks: I do.

24           Senator Sullivan: Okay, good. One of the things that  
25 he did say, as we have been pressing the Pentagon, which, as

1 I have told you and firmly believe, the Pentagon has been  
2 asleep at the switch on the strategic nature of the Arctic.  
3 The National Defense Strategy, the great power competition  
4 is literally taking place there as we speak, Russia, China,  
5 others. Because of this committee's leadership -- no  
6 offense, not really the Pentagon's -- the services have now  
7 gotten serious about service strategies. Secretary Austin  
8 committed to fully resourcing these service strategies as it  
9 relates to the Arctic. Can I get your commitment on that as  
10 well?

11 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I am certainly committed to making  
12 sure we have the capabilities we need in the Arctic.

13 Senator Sullivan: Great. Thank you. Let me turn to  
14 what I think is a real simple question, but to be honest I  
15 am having a hard time with some of the incoming Biden  
16 cabinet officials to commit to this. In your personal  
17 opinion, the United States -- I want your personal opinion  
18 on this -- from a national security and foreign policy  
19 perspective, we have once again become the world's energy  
20 superpower, because of states like New Mexico and North  
21 Dakota and Alaska. We are the largest producer, prior to  
22 the pandemic, the largest producer of oil and natural gas  
23 and renewables in the world. Is that good for our national  
24 security and foreign policy?

25 Ms. Hicks: It is, Senator.

1 Senator Sullivan: And, on the other hand, becoming  
2 more reliant on countries like Russia or Venezuela for our  
3 oil and gas needs, is that good for our national security or  
4 is that bad?

5 Ms. Hicks: Generally speaking it is bad.

6 Senator Sullivan: So here is what I would ask as a  
7 commitment. I cannot seem to get a commitment from any  
8 Cabinet official in the Biden administration to be a strong  
9 proponent of all of the above strategies. To the contrary,  
10 some of the Executive orders that came out of the  
11 administration last week are focused on curtailing the  
12 production of American energy. Do you think that is in the  
13 national security interest of our nation?

14 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I have to say I think what is in  
15 the interest of the United States is to ensure it is not  
16 dependent on outside capabilities, but I also believe that  
17 growing out alternative uses for -- alternative energy  
18 sources is vital if we are going to manage the challenges of  
19 the future.

20 Senator Sullivan: Oh, I agree that, you know, fully  
21 focused on renewables and building that out is critical. I  
22 could not agree with you more. But we need to do that as we  
23 are also producing, say, natural gas, where we can be the  
24 leader for the next 50 to 100 years, low-emitting, clean-  
25 burning Alaska natural gas or others.

1           So I appreciate your focus on that, I appreciate your  
2 honesty on that, and I appreciate you being a voice about  
3 the importance of this issue -- energy security, energy  
4 independence -- when you are discussing these topics, which  
5 in my view are clearly within the realm of the Pentagon's  
6 responsibilities, as well as other agencies.

7           Let me turn to China. I was on the Senate floor kind  
8 of saying, look, we are giving advice and consent. That is  
9 what we are doing right now. The consent, of course, is  
10 confirmation. The advice is just advice. I saw the White  
11 House Press Secretary last week talk about China and our  
12 strategy. She used a phrase that kind of sent a shiver down  
13 my back -- strategic patience. That was the failed strategy  
14 approach under the Obama administration involving North  
15 Korea. Do you think that is a good term that we should be  
16 using when the challenge and threat from China is immediate?

17           Ms. Hicks: Senator, I think our approach toward China  
18 is first to recognize that they are the pacing challenge for  
19 the defense community and that they present a serious  
20 alternative model to be rejected with regard to how they  
21 govern their society, their authoritarian approaches, and  
22 their economic -- statused economic approaches. That is  
23 where I would center my view. I do think there are  
24 opportunities for the United States and China to work  
25 together. Those generally speaking are not in the defense

1 realm, but even in the defense realm there are confidence-  
2 building measures we should be pursuing so that we can  
3 prevent -- as I said, so that we can prevent conflict  
4 between the two nations.

5 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Dr. Hicks. I will have  
6 more questions for the record, but I appreciate your service  
7 and I am certainly going to support your nomination.

8 Ms. Hicks: Thank you, Senator.

9 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Sullivan. Now via  
10 WebEx, Senator King.

11 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First I want  
12 to correct the record geographically. My dear friend and  
13 colleague, Senator Shaheen, I think slipped, and I did not  
14 want to leave any confusion. She characterized that  
15 Portsmouth Naval Shipyard as being between Maine and New  
16 Hampshire. If you do come to see us, Dr. Hicks, it is in  
17 Maine, I just want to clarify that, not between Maine and  
18 New Hampshire.

19 More seriously, I want to associate myself with  
20 Senator Kaine's comments on the issue of sexual harassment.  
21 I was one of those that opposed taking this out of the chain  
22 of command. I have supported multiple reforms, starting in  
23 2013, that do not seem to have borne results. So I am also  
24 in the camp of being receptive to more significant change.  
25 We simply have to confront this problem in a structural way,

1 I think, that has some hope of some solution.

2 I also should mention that one of the changes we made  
3 was to criminalize retaliation. That does not seem to have  
4 been used, at least not very effectively, in the military  
5 justice system, and I think that is one of the more serious  
6 problems.

7 To move on to just two or three questions. One is the  
8 National Defense Act last year essentially abolished the  
9 role of the chief management officer. How do you see  
10 replacing that function, if not replacing the individual?  
11 We have to be sure that this enormous entity of the Defense  
12 Department is effectively managed. Give me some thoughts on  
13 replacing the function of the chief management officer.

14 Ms. Hicks: Senator, first of all I have been to  
15 Kittery, Maine, so I look forward to engaging in the New  
16 Hampshire-Maine debate over the shipyard.

17 The Deputy Secretary of Defense is often thought of as  
18 the chief operating officer of the Pentagon. My view is  
19 that that is an appropriate way to, generally speaking,  
20 think of the role. In order to bring business process  
21 efficiency and business transformation to the Department you  
22 need components and leaders at every level dedicated to  
23 making sure the return to taxpayers is appropriate, and  
24 again, that the focus is on the joint warfighter in  
25 providing what that warfighter needs today and in the

1 future.

2 So I think there are some shared responsibilities, but  
3 to the extent that the Deputy is the chief operating  
4 officer, that position bears the brunt of the responsibility  
5 and focus.

6 The current Deputy Secretary of Defense has put forward  
7 a memo with the abolishment of the CMO position, that lays  
8 out the disposition of the responsibilities formerly  
9 assigned to the CMO. If confirmed, I would want to look at  
10 the decision-making behind that memo, understand why he made  
11 those decisions, and make my own assessment about whether  
12 those are the right places to put those responsibilities.  
13 And I would look forward to an opportunity to coming back  
14 and speaking with you, Senator King, and others, who are  
15 interested in this space, to make sure that we are set up  
16 for success on the functions, as you point out, that need to  
17 carry forward.

18 Senator King: My concern is that if you have many  
19 people responsible, no one is responsible. One of my  
20 philosophies of management is I like to have one throat to  
21 choke, that is, someone who is accountable. I hope you will  
22 consider having in your office a person who is especially  
23 assigned to this function.

24 Moving on to the question of cyber, Senator Rounds  
25 addressed it very effectively. You talked about we spend

1 billions -- and most of this hearing is about all the money  
2 we are spending to defend ourselves against potential  
3 attacks. I do not believe we are adequately defending  
4 ourselves against actual attacks, attacks that are taking  
5 place at this very moment. And so I hope that the issue of  
6 cyber -- and you used the term "deter our adversaries." The  
7 problem of cyber and deterrence is something that we really  
8 have not wrestled with very well. So I hope that is an area  
9 that you will pay some special attention to, because, as I  
10 say, we are spending billions to deter potential attacks and  
11 I do not think that enough attention is being paid to  
12 deterring and managing actual attacks that are underway at  
13 this very moment.

14 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I will commit to looking into that  
15 space, and I want to thank you for the work you have done as  
16 a leader on the Cyber Solarium Commission. I know the  
17 Department already has been directed to adopt many of those  
18 recommendations.

19 Senator King: One specific I would recommend would be  
20 to facilitate threat-hunting on the defense industrial base.  
21 SolarWinds tells us that sometimes the easiest path into  
22 secure systems is through subs and the supply chain, and I  
23 think that is an area where it would be very fruitful, in  
24 terms of defense, also the policy of deterrence, which we  
25 can talk about at greater length.

1           Finally, Senator Tillis talked about procurement. We  
2 have had testimony before this committee that many smaller  
3 companies, particularly in Silicon Valley and in the  
4 technology field, generally have given up on the Pentagon.  
5 It is too complicated. It is too lengthy. It is too  
6 expensive even to fill out the forms. I commend procurement  
7 reform to you in that regard, because if we are not taking  
8 advantage of the newest ideas, the newest technologies, we  
9 are going to lose our qualitative edge, which you have  
10 defined as important. So I hope you will consider the  
11 procurement program from the point of view of a 12-person IT  
12 firm in Seattle or Portland, Maine, or Austin, Texas, and  
13 how we can make the procurement system manageable for that  
14 kind of operation.

15           Ms. Hicks: Senator, I completely agree with you, and  
16 this ties into several elements of conversation that have  
17 come up this morning. The Department has begun to pursue an  
18 adaptive acquisition pathways approach. I think that is  
19 generally moving in the right direction. If confirmed, I  
20 would want to get in and understand, to your point, how well  
21 that is serving the full range of particularly  
22 nontraditional -- those alternative pathways can serve the  
23 nontraditional suppliers.

24           The data that I have seen from the outside is that the  
25 pickup on nontraditionals is very low. We are not

1 attracting development expertise into the supply chain for  
2 DoD from outside the normal, traditional base, and that is a  
3 real concern. I think greater use of other transactional  
4 authority and other pathways has helped at least on pieces  
5 of this, but jumping over the valley of death and getting  
6 those efforts into procurement, that is the lifeblood for  
7 these small companies that cannot survive just on R&D  
8 dollars.

9 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator King.

10 Senator King: Thank you. I look forward to working  
11 with you on that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

12 Ms. Hicks: Thank you, Senator.

13 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator King. Senator  
14 Cramer.

15 Senator Cramer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank  
16 you, Dr. Hicks, for running the gauntlet. You are almost  
17 through it. Really, there is not that much more. You have  
18 been very generous with your time, and obviously you have  
19 talked to a lot of us on the phone, and I appreciated our  
20 conversation last week, and appreciated drilling down on  
21 some of these issues. And I also appreciated, frankly,  
22 listening to your answers today.

23 As Senator Inhofe, Senator Fisher, Senator Cotton, all  
24 have said is a high priority the same thing that you and I  
25 talked about last week, and that is the modernization of the

1 triad, and not just modernization and not just extension but  
2 the replacement of key components of it, particularly the  
3 airborne and the land-based piece. And so I am going to  
4 skip some of the questions I was going to ask you and maybe  
5 focus on a couple of things I did not hear a lot about.

6 One of the areas that Senator Cotton asked you about, I  
7 think he even sort of bifurcated the issue of policy and,  
8 you know, the product over here from the cost piece over  
9 there, I want to ask you about the cost piece, particularly  
10 as it relates to the ground-based strategic deterrent. We  
11 have talked a lot about it. You talked a lot about it  
12 today. Any delay in that would have, it seems, a time value  
13 of money, part of it that would be detrimental. Could you  
14 speak a little bit to the economics of a delay?

15 Ms. Hicks: Senator, first of all I also enjoyed our  
16 conversation, so thank you very much for your time with me.

17 The challenge I face not being in the administration  
18 and not being in the Department is I do not know the answer  
19 to that question. What I can assure you is that if I am  
20 confirmed the way you phrased that question is does the time  
21 value of money matter. I can answer that, which is yes. At  
22 various points, of course, we have had this in my  
23 experience, and we certainly seem to have today a challenge  
24 with regard to making some investment decisions that have  
25 been delayed and delayed and delayed. And I understand that

1 there comes a point at which one needs to make the decision,  
2 and I am not daunted by that reality. But I do not today,  
3 until I can get in, if confirmed, and get a team in place  
4 and start to really look at the analysis that is there, I do  
5 not have a firm understanding today of what the consequences  
6 are, going one way or another.

7 Senator Cramer: Well, I would look forward to hosting  
8 you in Minot on your way to Alaska.

9 Ms. Hicks: Thank you.

10 Senator Cramer: So you can take a good look at the  
11 cost of delay.

12 But the other issue that I have not heard a lot about  
13 yet, but you have written about, which I have appreciated,  
14 and that is the impact of nonproliferation, the impact of  
15 delay, and maybe uncertainty from our allies, whether it is  
16 Japan, South Korea, others, that rely on our triad umbrella.  
17 Maybe you could expand a little bit on that, because I have  
18 appreciated some of your writings on that topic.

19 Ms. Hicks: Well, thank you, Senator. As you may be  
20 able to tell from some of my answers I believe that the  
21 alliance network that the United States maintains is of  
22 significant comparative advantage over competitors, and I  
23 think we should be pretty strategic about how we consider  
24 the allied perspective so that we advance that advantage.  
25 And one of the areas where the U.S. has built up credibility

1 with allies is through its extended deterrent. That  
2 extended deterrent has a nuclear component. There are  
3 allies who very much rely on the United States' nuclear  
4 assurances, and that that helps dissuade their own internal  
5 dynamics that might look to develop nuclear weapons  
6 themselves. It helps dissuade that viewpoint.

7 So I think it has a significant nonproliferation  
8 benefit to the United States by keeping countries that might  
9 otherwise pursue nuclear weapons from doing so.

10 Senator Cramer: Thank you for that. There are a host  
11 of other issues, but maybe I will try to lump them all into  
12 one and you can just respond to all of them. We have talked  
13 a lot about transparency. You and I talked about budget  
14 transparency. I raised a concern about how some entities  
15 have had their budgets hidden from the American people for  
16 quite a while, and I worry that some of the secrecy might be  
17 more to avoid scrutiny, frankly, than to protect capability.  
18 I am going to avoid some of the specific stuff in this  
19 setting. But can you promise to look at some of the  
20 organizations and programs within the Department of Defense  
21 to make sure the public knows, or even, frankly, the  
22 Congress knows, to the maximum extent possible, where the  
23 money is going? I am talking about pass-through budgets  
24 that give a false sense of that budget level.

25 The other thing is, again, on your way to Minot, on

1 your way to Alaska, I would love to have you come to Grand  
2 Forks as well. You know, there are only two bases left  
3 between Michigan and Montana along the tier. That Arctic  
4 mission is very important. Obviously, Minot plays an  
5 important role in that, and the other one being Grand Forks  
6 with its ISR missions. And I will just throw ISR out there  
7 as well. You and I talked about the importance of ISR,  
8 particularly in the Middle East, Africa, other places, and  
9 some of the cannibalization, as I see it, taking place, to  
10 make room for these more modern systems.

11 Just for the sense of, as the COO I appreciate that  
12 illustration, what your thoughts might be on how we balance  
13 some of those budget stresses and strategic needs.

14 Ms. Hicks: Sure, Senator. Let me first comment on the  
15 transparency point. I will commit to looking into the  
16 questions around particularly the pass-through budget with  
17 the Air Force but also more generally looking at the  
18 transparency questions to ensure we are telling taxpayers,  
19 and of course Members of Congress, the maximum that we can  
20 do, that is operationally safe and wise.

21 The challenge of balancing ready today and ready  
22 tomorrow is sort of at the heart of how the Department of  
23 Defense is constantly working through its budget and program  
24 alignment. I think that tension will exist at any resource  
25 level, and I would anticipate that being a major issue that

1 I would face if I were confirmed.

2 I do think that the imperative to be ready tomorrow is  
3 very significant right now. I think the resources will  
4 always, as I said, be tight and can be especially tight  
5 right now. So we are going to probably have to think about  
6 doing things differently, and that is where concepts become  
7 so important, to figure out how we connect the resources --  
8 the aims -- it is really the aims we have, to the  
9 capabilities we want in a fiscally responsible way.

10 Senator Cramer: Thank you very much. I appreciate all  
11 of that and I look forward to supporting your nomination.

12 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Cramer. Senator  
13 Heinrich.

14 Senator Heinrich: Thank you, Chairman. Dr. Hicks,  
15 welcome. I was actually quite encouraged by the previous  
16 administration's efforts to increase DoD investments in  
17 critical R&D priorities like directed energy, hypersonics.  
18 I believe you mentioned artificial intelligence. I note,  
19 however, that these technologies are really of little use  
20 unless they are transitioned out of our labs and into the  
21 labs of actual servicemembers around the world. If  
22 confirmed, how would you use your role overseeing the  
23 Department's internal management processes to speed and  
24 improve that tech transition process?

25 Ms. Hicks: Thank you, Senator. First, I agree with

1 you that there has been some positive momentum in key areas  
2 of R&D, and I do think a sustained level of R&D investment  
3 is vital. But also to your point, we actually have to field  
4 capabilities, and that is a place where DoD has really  
5 struggled.

6 Some of the tools that the Deputy could have, working  
7 especially with the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of  
8 Staff, is to develop some incentive approaches to get  
9 experiments, field experiments underway, even beyond  
10 experiments up to major exercise level use of capabilities  
11 and prototypes, that can start to demonstrate the value of  
12 some of these new approaches. And when we can demonstrate  
13 value, then we are in a much better position to have a  
14 dialogue with Congress and with industry about where those  
15 capabilities can take us, and that can help us overcome that  
16 valley of death.

17 I also think, frankly, we should be looking at how we  
18 think about new starts so that we can manage the  
19 appropriations cycle more effectively. If I were confirmed,  
20 I would want to get in and understand what makes sense, both  
21 from a congressional oversight perspective and from the  
22 Department's perspective, especially in areas like software,  
23 where the cycle time is so much faster than the typical  
24 appropriations cycle.

25 Senator Heinrich: Thank you. I would really encourage

1 your focus on this issue, and in particular with, you know,  
2 directive energy. I have watched as the experiments have  
3 been proving themselves over and over again, but the desire  
4 within the Pentagon to sort of chase the perfect application  
5 when there are so many applications, where it can provide  
6 real value to a warfighter now, is a real tension and I  
7 think is, in many cases, doing us a disservice.

8 You helped lead the Biden team's transition at the  
9 Department of Defense over the last several months. You  
10 know, I have read, with great concern, a number of public  
11 reports that the previous administration worked to block key  
12 transition officials from accessing critical information  
13 related to worldwide operations. What is your assessment of  
14 how those obstructions impacted important DoD programs and  
15 operations, and what can we do on this committee to give you  
16 and Secretary Austin the resources you need as you stand up  
17 this new team?

18 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I did have the privilege of  
19 leading the defense agency review team, and let me first say  
20 that the vast majority of folks that we worked with in the  
21 Pentagon were incredibly helpful, knowledgeable,  
22 forthcoming, and it is impressive every day, frankly, to  
23 have gone in and seen those military and civilian  
24 professionals doing their job. So the challenges we faced  
25 were really around the handful of folks that made things

1 difficult.

2 I think the biggest challenge that I will face, if  
3 confirmed, because of this, is around budget transparency.  
4 The Trump administration worked on an FY2022 budget. That  
5 is not unusual, but typically that information is shared  
6 with the transition team because the administration will owe  
7 to Congress a President's budget submission in the spring.  
8 So the inability to look at that information, the team, I  
9 think, after I was confirmed, so I was not a part of it, did  
10 have some ability to look at the information late in  
11 January. But I think it will cause some delay in the  
12 timeline by which we can give budget quality information  
13 back to Congress. So that would be the area I would ask for  
14 a little relief on understanding.

15 Senator Heinrich: You know, Dr. Hicks, two weeks ago I  
16 asked Secretary Austin, during his confirmation hearing,  
17 about his plan to prioritize PFAS cleanup and remediation,  
18 and I have to be honest, I was discouraged when Secretary  
19 Austin sort of deflected DoD's responsibility for PFAS  
20 contamination in communities around the country, including  
21 one of the hardest hit communities around Cannon Air Force  
22 Base in New Mexico, despite overwhelming evidence that DoD  
23 activities there were the sole source of the contamination,  
24 and that is the case in many of these instances.

25 If confirmed, how will you work to prioritize DoD's

1 efforts to stand up and address PFAS cleanup and work with  
2 these communities?

3 Ms. Hicks: Senator, first I think it is important that  
4 senior leadership in the Pentagon meet with the families  
5 themselves and the community members and understand what  
6 exactly has occurred and what the consequences have been. I  
7 also think it is imperative, as Secretary Austin has done,  
8 to make it clear that it is a priority for the Department,  
9 both to ensure it is no putting contaminants out into its  
10 military families, military servicemembers, and, of course,  
11 the communities that surround them, and that when we see  
12 instances, we are working with EPA, I know there is now  
13 CERCLA authority, that we can access with regard to PFAS,  
14 that we are working on solutions to do cleanup, and frankly,  
15 to meet the timeline. Congress has given us a clear  
16 timeline for removing PFAS out of our firefighting  
17 approaches, and, if confirmed, I am committed to meeting  
18 that timeline.

19 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Heinrich. Now via  
20 WebEx, Senator Warren.

21 Senator Warren: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and  
22 congratulations on your nomination, Dr. Hicks. I  
23 appreciated the opportunity to speak with you last week and  
24 enjoyed hearing your view on a range of topics.

25 You know, I have been very critical about the size of

1 the defense budget. It has long been a concern of mine, but  
2 after the past year, watching more than 400,000 fellow  
3 Americans die, tens of millions unemployed due to COVID-19,  
4 millions more who are lined up at food banks, and even  
5 millions more who are on the threshold of losing their homes  
6 and being put out on the street, spending \$740 billion a  
7 year on this one piece of the Federal budget is  
8 unconscionable. A budget is about priorities, and we  
9 continue to overinvest in defense while underinvesting in  
10 public health and so much more that would keep us safe and  
11 that would save lives.

12 So let me ask the question this way. Dr. Hicks, do you  
13 believe that we can find way to lower the top-line budget  
14 number and then spend that money more effectively without  
15 sacrificing our security?

16 Ms. Hicks: Senator, first let me say I agree with you  
17 that the nation has seen, in this past year, a crisis that  
18 is generational in its magnitude, and I certainly understand  
19 how it calls into question what the priorities are across  
20 our government. I also, though, believe that we are a  
21 nation that can afford the defense that it needs to have,  
22 and the focus sometimes is about spending more, sometimes  
23 about spending less, but the focus on the top-line number  
24 can really obscure a more important conversation around what  
25 is it we want our military, in the case of the Defense

1 Department, to do, and what hard choices are involved in  
2 getting it in a place to be capable of doing that, being  
3 transparent about the risk.

4 So my view, to your direct question, is I do think  
5 there are ways for the Defense Department to be more  
6 efficient, to be more effective. I think some of those  
7 tools, as I have suggested, involve things like operational  
8 concept advancement, making the right kinds of investments,  
9 making sure we have a competitive industrial base. But  
10 frankly, some of the things, some of the levers that are  
11 available take a lot of partnership between Congress, the  
12 Executive branch, industry, and others to make some hard  
13 choices. It would be hard to significantly squeeze the  
14 defense budget in light of the threats that we face without  
15 that kind of effort together, to get to some hard choices.

16 Senator Warren: Well, just to make sure I am  
17 understanding your answer here, are you saying that, yes, we  
18 can reduce the top-line number without sacrificing our  
19 security so long as we work together on this? Is that what  
20 I am hearing you say?

21 Ms. Hicks: Yes, and so long as we are willing to make  
22 some decisions that may incur risk themselves, yeah.

23 Senator Warren: Fair enough. So one of your tasks is  
24 going to be linking military budget to our strategy and to  
25 the President's and Secretary Austin's priorities. So if

1 President Biden directs Secretary Austin to lower the top  
2 line, and I hope he does, what would be the biggest  
3 challenges that you will have to overcome?

4 Ms. Hicks: I think the biggest challenge is the  
5 balancing of the readiness for challenges of today, threats  
6 of today, and preparing for the future. That is sort of the  
7 overarching piece. But I think more to the mechanics of how  
8 we do that will be getting buy-in and a constructive  
9 approach with, again, Congress working together with the  
10 administration, and vice versa, in a dialogue, and having  
11 industry and other stakeholders willing to come to the table  
12 for the greater good, to get that done.

13 Senator Warren: Okay. You know, if confirmed, one of  
14 the first things you are going to need to do is review our  
15 nuclear weapons program, and I know that you believe in a  
16 safe and secure and reliable nuclear deterrent. But we are  
17 going to spend \$44.5 billion on nuclear weapons this year,  
18 which is more than the entire budget for the State  
19 Department and for foreign operations accounts. Would you  
20 commit that your review will not simply be a rubber stamp of  
21 our current nuclear strategy but that you really will  
22 examine and re-question the core assumptions that underpin  
23 it?

24 Ms. Hicks: Absolutely, Senator.

25 Senator Warren: Good. I really appreciate that. I

1 want a strong defense but I want remedies tailored to meet  
2 the real threats that we face. And more importantly, I want  
3 that defense to be built on a strong economic foundation  
4 here at home, but that is not what we have today. We face  
5 staggering economic inequality that is only getting worse as  
6 a consequence of this crisis, and yet the military continues  
7 to chug along, disconnected from this reality, plowing  
8 billions of dollars into the same big, expensive weapons  
9 systems that we have been buying for more than 20 years. We  
10 have got to fix this by fundamentally rethinking how we  
11 spend our money to protect our nation.

12 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Warren. Senator  
14 Peters.

15 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, Dr.  
16 Hicks, good to see you and thank you for your willingness to  
17 take on this responsibility. It is a large one.

18 Dr. Hicks, listening to Secretary Gates' introduction I  
19 was reminded of a recent book that he wrote, cautioning us  
20 to be wary of overmilitarizing foreign policy in favor of  
21 non-military instruments of power, particularly as we enter  
22 into a number of Gray Zone conflicts, something that you and  
23 I were able to speak about at great length earlier, which I  
24 appreciate that time.

25 But in the 2020 NDAA, we required the Department to

1 designate a principal information operations advisor. This  
2 responsibility was given to the Under Secretary of Defense  
3 for Policy. But based on your experience as a principal  
4 deputy to that position, you certainly, I think, would have  
5 a better appreciation for the scope of the responsibilities,  
6 what is necessary, than most. And so with that in mind, and  
7 then the challenges related to dealing with warfare in the  
8 Gray Zone, would you have advised assigning it to the Under  
9 Secretary of Policy, or would you have preferred to have it  
10 in a more direct and principal position by itself?

11 Ms. Hicks: Senator, first of all thank you for the  
12 conversation the other day. I do agree with you, overall,  
13 of course, that information is a critical element of the way  
14 in which we have to think about threats and challenges of  
15 the future. We live that, frankly, every day, of course.

16 I am not familiar with the principal information  
17 advisor -- I think I got that name slightly wrong --  
18 position. So, if confirmed, I would be happy to look at  
19 that position, the legislation developing it, and the  
20 disposition whether Policy is the right place to put that.

21 Senator Peters: Well, I would appreciate that, because  
22 we obviously -- I think it is very important. We put it in  
23 the NDAA. It is areas that you have written about, as you  
24 have a chance to do a deeper dive into what will be  
25 associated with that. And I would hope that you would give

1 us advice as to how we properly resource that position and  
2 to make sure that it gets the attention that it deserves.

3 You have written and thought a great deal about Gray  
4 Zone activities and the challenges that that will present.  
5 How do you view the Department contributing meaningful to a  
6 whole-of-government approach, which you have written about  
7 extensively, and talk a little bit about how we need to  
8 engage other agencies and break down some of the silos that  
9 exist currently, which impede our ability to deal with these  
10 Gray Zone threats.

11 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I do think information is an  
12 incredibly important element for all of government to be  
13 thinking through, all of the national security enterprise.  
14 I do think it is primarily an element where the State  
15 Department, for overseas, and other agencies such as the  
16 Broadcast Board of Governors follow on, and the Department  
17 of Homeland Security and others should be focused on here at  
18 home.

19 The Defense Department brings some specialized  
20 expertise to that, that is almost always in a supporting  
21 role. They bring a depth of doctrinal development on how to  
22 think about things like political warfare, as we used to  
23 call it in the Cold War. And so I think in a supporting way  
24 DoD can provide helpful insights in how we think about the  
25 information domain.

1 Senator Peters: Part of dealing with the Gray Zone, as  
2 I mentioned in that question, is we have to coordinate a lot  
3 of activities -- cyber, and I know you have addressed a  
4 number of questions related to cyber already here today.  
5 But we have appointed a national cyber director, which will  
6 face pretty much a daunting task of trying to coordinate all  
7 of these operations and the resources of agencies, which a  
8 director does not really exercise any direct control over,  
9 so that makes the job even more complicated.

10 What is your sense on the role of the national cyber  
11 director, and, if confirmed, what is your commitment to work  
12 with that director to coordinate these activities so that we  
13 can be more effective in addressing this significant threat?

14 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I applaud this committee, in  
15 particular, and others who were central to putting in the  
16 national cyber director position into the NDAA. Cyber is a  
17 challenge set that we have learned, you know, over a decade  
18 plus, it has just constantly challenged us in terms of  
19 working across different elements of government, from even  
20 inside the intelligence community, let alone DoD, and DHS,  
21 which has significant responsibilities, and other actors.

22 So I think the advantage of having that director is  
23 pulling a lot of those threads together and creating some  
24 unity of vision. If confirmed, it is my anticipation that I  
25 would work alongside other key elements in the Department

1 with that national cyber director to make sure that the DoD  
2 components of the solution set on cyber are moving in the  
3 right direction and supportive of the national approach.

4 Senator Peters: Thank you, Dr. Hicks.

5 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you. Senator Blackburn, via  
6 WebEx.

7 Senator Blackburn: Yes. Thank so much, Mr. Chairman,  
8 and I want to say thank you every so much, Ms. Hicks, for  
9 your time last week. I appreciate the conversation that we  
10 had and your thoughtful consideration of the topic we  
11 started with in that conversation, which is civilian-  
12 military relations. And you know that this is important to  
13 me, that there is concern over the erosion of civilian  
14 voices in the Pentagon. This goes back, as we discussed,  
15 into the Obama-era budget cuts, which we saw that lead to a  
16 diminishment of morale and really a breakdown of structure  
17 in the Pentagon.

18 So moving forward, we must have a very healthy cadre of  
19 career civilians in key oversight areas for an efficient and  
20 effective Pentagon that really fights our wars and serves  
21 the needs of our servicemembers. And I appreciate your  
22 perspective and your comments on that.

23 We also talked about China and cyber and space and the  
24 vital importance of public-private partnerships. And as I  
25 told you, I discussed this with General Austin. So, for the

1 record, I would like for you to touch on how you will view  
2 these public-private partnerships with companies, with  
3 universities, out National Labs, which we also discussed, to  
4 make certain that we are standing strong against great power  
5 competition and that we are ready for the challenges that  
6 will come to us.

7 Ms. Hicks: Senator, thanks so much for raising both of  
8 these issues. Let me start with the first. I, of course,  
9 think we should be as efficient as possible in the delivery  
10 of capability in the Defense Department, but it is my view  
11 that we have, in the efforts to gain efficiency, we have cut  
12 to the bone on civilian oversight in some key areas. If you  
13 look just at the prior conversation with Senator Peters on  
14 civilian oversight of policy, that is an area very near and  
15 dear to my heart where I know we have really cut out a lot  
16 of capacity and capability, and it is hard for the civilians  
17 to provide the necessary oversight if they are not resourced  
18 appropriately for doing so.

19 So I do believe, if confirmed, making sure that we can  
20 act on and execute on the responsibility for civilian  
21 oversight to create healthy civil-military relations is  
22 vital.

23 On your second point about some of the challenges we  
24 face with regard to China and in many different domains and  
25 the need for public-private partnerships, it is my strong

1 view that the United States, if it leverages public-private  
2 partnerships effectively, can outcompete the Chinese Civil-  
3 Military Fusion model. That model is statused, it is not  
4 taking full advantage of a vibrant private sector, and the  
5 United States has that advantage if it can tap into it.  
6 Tapping into it means exactly as you say, working with our  
7 world-class academic community, our world-class National  
8 Labs, and the sectors of the economy, the private sector  
9 elements that are working on some of the hardest problems  
10 that we face. If we can leverage those successfully,  
11 reducing barriers as we have discussed throughout the  
12 morning, I think that will put the United States in a much  
13 better competitive position than a China or a Russia.

14 Senator Blackburn: All right. I am going to end with  
15 that. You have been generous with your time this morning.  
16 I have a couple of other questions, one on nuclear  
17 deterrent, one on cost-savings at DoD. I will send those to  
18 you as QFRs. And we also touched on workforce development  
19 in our phone conversation, and I want to get a couple of  
20 answers from you on that. But in the interest of time I  
21 will yield back my 25 seconds.

22 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Blackburn.  
23 Senator Manchin.

24 Senator Manchin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank  
25 you, Dr. Hicks, for being here. I know it has been a long

1 morning for you, but I appreciate it very much, and also  
2 wanting to serve at the level you will be serving at, and I  
3 look forward to supporting you.

4 I would like to ask you something that we have been  
5 working on, which is the Chief Management Officer, and it  
6 has been kind of shuffled around and not paid attention to.  
7 And this is such a vital, vital position to try to get our  
8 financial house in order. So I was not sure how your  
9 feelings would be about that. And, you know, it is -- when  
10 you look back the cultural resistance from the Defense  
11 Business Board and the GAO and all of them have been  
12 unbelievable, and it is some critical information I think  
13 could really help us. So I did not know what your  
14 commitment would be to that, for National Defense Strategy,  
15 and if you believe we have the bandwidth to be the necessary  
16 champion for the business reform.

17 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I think business reform a vital  
18 element of the job jar for the Deputy Secretary of Defense,  
19 and, if confirmed, I would put serious time and energy into  
20 that portfolio. The recent end of the CMO role was followed  
21 by the current Deputy Secretary of Defense putting forth a  
22 memo that explained the disposition of those  
23 responsibilities. And if I am confirmed, I would want to  
24 get into place, get my team in place, and look at that memo  
25 and the plan that is put in place, to make sure it is

1 effective.

2 Senator Manchin: So to follow up on that, you know,  
3 the whole cultural spend-it-or-lose-it -- the spend-it-or-  
4 lose-it culture.

5 Ms. Hicks: Yeah, I think that is --

6 Senator Manchin: That is within government across the  
7 board, but especially in defense, which is the biggest  
8 purchasing agent.

9 Ms. Hicks: Yeah. I think we have to change --

10 Senator Manchin: How do we change that?

11 Ms. Hicks: -- yeah, I think we have to change the  
12 incentives around how you promote business reform and  
13 exactly if the incentive structure is you only get your  
14 money if you spend it inefficiently and can hold onto it and  
15 hide the ball, we are never going to get the business reform  
16 we need. So we need to change the incentives.

17 Senator Manchin: We found out, when I was governor, at  
18 the state level, basically if we rewarded the agencies that  
19 did not spend it all, rather than wasting it, gave them a  
20 little bit of a bump the next because of the savings they  
21 had, it made them be more prudent because they were not  
22 penalized. Might be some things we could talk to you about,  
23 that I think would be really great, does not take a whole  
24 lot.

25 The other thing is on holding. The prime contractor

1 that does business with us, the big boys, the Boeings and  
2 all that, hold them accountable for basically the security  
3 of their networks down into their subcontractors. That is  
4 where we are getting picked off. That is where basically  
5 the hacking -- that is where all the information is being  
6 stolen from. That has to be secured, and it has not. I  
7 think we have identified it. They just have not secured it.  
8 There is no penalty for the big prime contractor to  
9 basically secure their subs. So they just rely on the subs  
10 whatever. And you want to know how they get in the back  
11 door? That is where they come from. And the only thing we  
12 are asking for is hold those prime accountable financially,  
13 and also basically being able to continue to be in good  
14 standing to do business. I did not know if that has been  
15 brought to your attention or not.

16 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I would look forward to working  
17 with you and your team on exactly these kind of ideas. We  
18 have to change the accountability. We have to improve the  
19 accountability, change the incentives.

20 Senator Manchin: The hard thing is you have people  
21 that basically keep asking the question, how can we spend  
22 more money than all the other challenges that we have around  
23 the world, and we do not get the efficiency from it. And I  
24 think it is basically we are not afraid to spend the money.  
25 We just want to get results from it. And I think there is a

1 lot of waste and redundancy that we can really work on.

2 My final question would be, basically, how do you rate  
3 the threats we have as a country, our international threats?  
4 And if you would rate whether it would be China, Russia,  
5 Iran, this and that, what do you see where have to basically  
6 be on our game and step up our game, if not?

7 Ms. Hicks: Senator --

8 Senator Manchin: Biggest threats.

9 Ms. Hicks: Yes, Senator. The United States has  
10 regretfully not been able to have just one threat that  
11 focuses its attention, and this period is no different.  
12 From a Defense Department perspective, China is the clear  
13 pacing challenge in almost all capability areas. There are  
14 a few areas where the Russians still are pacing the United  
15 States, particularly in the strategic realm. And I think  
16 that is the key element of how we need to think about  
17 changing and shifting the force.

18 Senator Manchin: How about with cyber? Who are the  
19 big hitters in cyber? The same?

20 Ms. Hicks: Yes.

21 Senator Manchin: Would you rank them --

22 Ms. Hicks: Yes, Senator. I would rank them the same.  
23 I will say I look forward, if confirmed, to getting more  
24 briefings than I have had recently on exactly what  
25 improvements the Chinese and Russians are putting in place.

1     But my view is that the Chinese are probably still the  
2     pacing challenge there.

3              Senator Manchin: The only thing I would caution on is  
4     basically a lot of the smaller, whether it be the Irans or  
5     whether it be, you know, different small players, they  
6     become big players in the realm of cyber, in what they can  
7     do to us or what they try to do.

8              Ms. Hicks: I agree.

9              Senator Manchin: That is very important. But I look  
10   forward to working with you, and especially the business  
11   reforms that need to be made.

12             Ms. Hicks: Thank you, Senator.

13             Senator Manchin: Thank you, Dr. Hicks. I look forward  
14   to supporting you.

15             Ms. Hicks: Thank you.

16             Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Manchin. Senator  
17   Scott.

18             Senator Scott: Thank you, Chairman. Dr. Hicks, we had  
19   a nice conversation the other day. Thank you for your  
20   background and your beliefs.

21             You were just talking with Senator Manchin about pacing  
22   challenge. What do you mean by that?

23             Ms. Hicks: Yeah. The term means the challenge that  
24   focuses us on where the bar is, where the measure is. And  
25   so in most capability areas China is the one who is setting

1 the measuring stick for how advanced the capability and how  
2 large a challenge it is for us to overcome.

3 Senator Scott: Okay. Do you believe we can overcome  
4 the challenge of China, or do you think it is too late?

5 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I do not think I would sit here if  
6 I thought it was too late. I think the United States has  
7 some inherent comparative advantages, if we can tap into  
8 them effectively.

9 Senator Scott: What would you consider to be our  
10 advantages and their advantages?

11 Ms. Hicks: Sure. Some of the advantages I think the  
12 U.S. -- well, I will focus on the U.S., if that is all  
13 right, for operational security purposes. But I think the  
14 U.S.'s major advantage is, first and foremost, its alliance  
15 structure and global network, its ability to galvanize and  
16 lead on the world stage. I think we need to make sure that  
17 we have that ability to create momentum. I think in the  
18 operational sense the United States has some advantages.  
19 Fifth generation aircraft is one. Obviously our undersea  
20 capabilities are another. And I think in the economic, in  
21 the fundamental competition space, I think the United States  
22 has a better model for its economy, and it can be more  
23 competitive than Chinese can, in using their Civ-Mil Fusion  
24 statused approach versus a U.S. dynamic approach that brings  
25 in the private sector.

1 Senator Scott: If American citizens decided to stop  
2 buying Chinese products, how big of an impact would that  
3 have on China's ability to continue to be a threat?

4 Ms. Hicks: Senator, that is something I would have to  
5 look into. I regret I have never looked at that assessment  
6 of what the implications would be, but I would be happy to  
7 continue a conversation on that.

8 Senator Scott: Okay. So the approach we have taken  
9 with Taiwan looks to me, it seems that we have been pretty  
10 ambiguous about what we would do to defend Taiwan. What do  
11 you think about that position? It sure appears, when you  
12 look at what China has been doing now, with infiltrating  
13 their airspace, that our position has not done anything to  
14 deter China. Do you agree with that, and is there something  
15 we ought to be doing that would let Xi know that we are  
16 serious about defending Taiwan?

17 Ms. Hicks: Well, first I think we have to be crystal  
18 clear about our commitments to Taiwan. I think President  
19 Biden has done that, and certainly Congress has had 40 years  
20 of strong bipartisan support. So I think being consistent  
21 in making clear that we will meet the requirements of the  
22 Taiwan Relations Act, that we will meet the Six Assurances  
23 to Taiwan, and that we will operate in accordance with the  
24 three communiques between the United States and China. I  
25 think those are important to keep foremost, but those are

1 the words.

2 I think in the action category two broad areas. One is  
3 the U.S.'s own deterrent capability, the Pacific Deterrence  
4 Initiative, that this committee and the House counterpart  
5 put forward in this latest NDAA provides some opportunity  
6 for us to build out that deterrent capability of the U.S.  
7 And then specifically with regard to Taiwan, I think the  
8 United States needs to be working closely with Taiwan to  
9 ensure that the U.S. can support its approach for its self-  
10 defense.

11 Senator Scott: So we are running pretty big budget  
12 deficits up here, and we have now over \$27 trillion worth of  
13 debt, so there is going to be a lot of pressure to see where  
14 we can save money. You know, do you believe that we ought  
15 to be reducing our defense budget when we have the issues  
16 with China and Iran and Russia and North Korea?

17 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I believe the United States can  
18 meet the challenges it faces in defense. I think it can  
19 provide a strategy-driven approach to its defense budget and  
20 that it can still deliver good value to the taxpayer in  
21 doing so.

22 Senator Scott: So that means you would be okay with  
23 budget cuts in defense?

24 Ms. Hicks: That means I think that we should be driven  
25 by strategy and that we have the ability to afford the

1 defense that we believe we need, among all the other  
2 requirements we might have. Whether that is a slightly  
3 higher top line or a slightly lower top line, personally I  
4 think is less relevant than are we delivering the  
5 capabilities we need for the defense we should have.

6 Senator Scott: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

7 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Scott. Senator  
8 Duckworth via WebEx.

9 Senator Duckworth: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I  
10 apologize. My webcam does not seem to be working so I am  
11 just going to be on audio. Dr. Hicks, it is good to see you  
12 again. I can see you; you cannot see me. Sorry about that.

13 After speaking with you last week I am confident that  
14 your leadership would help the Department of Defense address  
15 some of the most urgent national security issues facing our  
16 country. I think you would bring substantial expertise to a  
17 critically important role, and you would bear much of the  
18 responsibility for day-to-day decisions that could shape the  
19 future trajectory of DoD for many years.

20 If confirmed as the Deputy Secretary of Defense, I  
21 would want you to use your authority and leadership to  
22 address a number of systemic issues within the Department,  
23 including rebalancing the relationship between DoD and the  
24 State Department, rebuilding the team of professionals  
25 civilian leaders in the DoD, and returning focus to

1 underfunded but critically important parts of DoD's budget,  
2 like our logistics enterprise, and renewing efforts to  
3 increase diversity and inclusion among the senior ranks of  
4 our military service and broader national security  
5 community.

6 Today, though, I want to focus my questions on the most  
7 urgent issues facing the Department of Defense -- competing  
8 with the People's Republic of China, the PRC. Dr. Hicks, I  
9 know that we agree that we must use a whole-of-society  
10 approach, and you have discussed this at length this  
11 morning, to present ourselves as a viable alternative to  
12 China for economic, military, and diplomatic partnerships,  
13 especially in the Asia-Pacific region. We have also  
14 discussed the need to increase our military engagement in  
15 the region below the threshold of armed conflict. If  
16 confirmed, what immediate steps would you take to help DoD  
17 build relationships with allies and partners in Southeast  
18 Asia and counter China's rise in the Indo-Pacific?

19 Ms. Hicks: Well, Senator, thank you very much. I  
20 would say it is good to see you but it is certainly good to  
21 hear you. I think you have laid out the challenge set very,  
22 very well. As the Deputy Secretary, I imagine I will be  
23 focused internal to the Department and the Secretary will  
24 be, in particular, focused on some of these broader  
25 questions of the allied approaches.

1        But I will say, based on my experience, there is  
2 opportunity, significant opportunity. There is openness and  
3 interest from partners throughout Asia. You and I have  
4 spoken about Indonesia and Vietnam, for instance. I think  
5 there is opportunity to demonstrate that the United States  
6 is willing to exercise freedom of navigation, freedom of air  
7 as well, and to help them build out their capacity, whether  
8 it is in something like health security, because of COVID  
9 challenges, all the way up to maritime domain awareness in  
10 the South China Sea, I think there is plenty of opportunity.

11       I will highlight the Pacific Deterrence Initiative that  
12 this committee and its House counterpart have put forward as  
13 a venue, an opportunity, a mechanism for the Department of  
14 Defense to put some good ideas forward to Congress, to make  
15 sure we are fulfilling the direction that you have given the  
16 Department in these areas. And if confirmed, I would look  
17 to be using my role helping to pull that budget connectivity  
18 to the strategy forward, to make sure that we are filling  
19 that basket with some good initiatives.

20       Senator Duckworth: Thank you. We also discussed --

21       Chairman Inhofe: Excuse me, Senator Duckworth. Let me  
22 interrupt just a moment. Senator Reed is presiding. Thank  
23 you.

24       Senator Duckworth: Thank you. Dr. Hicks, we discussed  
25 some creative approaches to improving our military

1 partnerships in Southeast Asia, such as sending the Army  
2 Corps of Engineers to assist with flooding in Jakarta,  
3 Indonesia, or expanding our international military education  
4 programs so that foreign junior officers and senior enlisted  
5 could study at U.S. civilian institutions with ROTC programs  
6 such as Northern Illinois University or the University of  
7 Georgia or any number of numerous places where there are  
8 wonderful ROTC programs.

9           If confirmed, would you commit to exploring creative  
10 ideas, such as these, that could be implemented quickly and  
11 relatively cheaply to build stronger military ties,  
12 military-to-military ties with Southeast Asian nations in  
13 the near term?

14           Ms. Hicks: Yes, Senator. I would commit to doing so.

15           Senator Duckworth: Thank you. I bet you can guess  
16 what my next topic is -- logistics, logistics, logistics.  
17 What is your assessment of the most urgent shortfalls that  
18 we must address at U.S. Transportation Command and the rest  
19 of our logistics enterprise?

20           Ms. Hicks: Senator, logistics really is the lifeblood,  
21 and I think contested logistics is a key operational  
22 challenge set for the U.S. military today and going forward.

23 Cybersecurity is probably at the forefront of that  
24 challenge set, and that is obviously both for the military  
25 assets but also the significant civilian assets upon which

1 we rely for our logistics.

2 I think behind that would be the survivability of our  
3 logistics chain and our fuel consumption, and ensuring that  
4 we can have a light footprint with regard to logistics,  
5 maybe even leveraging capabilities that allow us to create  
6 capability in place.

7 Senator Duckworth: Thank you. I have additional  
8 questions I would like to submit to you for the record, that  
9 have to do with additional follow-up on logistics, and then  
10 also on diversity and inclusion within the DoD. And, Mr.  
11 Chairman, I would like to go ahead and submit those  
12 questions for the record.

13 Senator Reed: [Presiding.] Without objection.

14 Senator Duckworth: Thank you. I am out of time.  
15 Thank you.

16 Senator Reed: Thank you. On behalf of Chairman  
17 Inhofe, Senator Hawley, please.

18 Senator Hawley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Dr. Hicks,  
19 thank you for being here. Congratulations on your  
20 nomination. Let me ask you about the National Defense  
21 Strategy Commission, of which you were a member. That  
22 commission wrote that, and I am quoting now, "Successfully  
23 competing in Europe and the Indo-Pacific region while also  
24 managing escalation dynamics requires positioning  
25 substantial capability forward to deter and prevent a fait

1       accompli, an agile, opportunistic adversary." Now, when I  
2       asked Secretary Austin about this he responded that he  
3       agreed with that assessment. Let me just ask you if you  
4       stand by the commission's assessment that the U.S. military  
5       must position substantial capability forward -- I am still  
6       quoting -- to deter and prevent a fait accompli.

7           Ms. Hicks: I do.

8           Senator Hawley: Very good. Secretary Austin also  
9       wrote a response to me that a combat-credible, forward  
10      deterrent posture is instrumental to the U.S. military's  
11      ability to deter, and if necessary, deny a fait accompli  
12      scenario. Do you agree with the Secretary's emphasis on the  
13      need for deterrence by denial, especially when it comes to a  
14      fait accompli scenario?

15          Ms. Hicks: I do.

16          Senator Hawley: Let me ask you about -- I am glad to  
17      hear that also. Thank you. Let me ask you about something  
18      that the President's State Department has recently said with  
19      regard to Taiwan. You were talking with Senator Scott a  
20      moment ago about Taiwan. President Biden's State Department  
21      has recently described America's commitment to Taiwan as  
22      "rock solid" -- that is their words -- which is exactly as  
23      it should be.

24          With that in mind, do you think that China is more or  
25      less likely to attempt a fait accompli against Taiwan if it

1 knows we would be able to defeat such an attempt?

2 Ms. Hicks: Less likely.

3 Senator Hawley: In that case, wouldn't you agree that  
4 we would want to maintain our ability to defeat a Chinese  
5 fait accompli against Taiwan, and that would help strengthen  
6 our deterrence. Is that a fair assessment?

7 Ms. Hicks: It is, Senator. I would only add that  
8 Taiwan primarily also needs to be engaged in that defense.

9 Senator Hawley: Absolutely. I think that is exactly  
10 right.

11 Let me ask you about your experience previously in the  
12 Pentagon. President Obama tried to pivot to Asia, famously,  
13 when you were last at the Pentagon, but he and DoD, in  
14 particular, ended up getting drawn back continually into the  
15 Middle East, due to events there. Can you just give us your  
16 sense, what does the Department need to do differently this  
17 time around to make sure that we avoid the same outcome?

18 Ms. Hicks: Senator, the rebalanced Asia, pivot to Asia  
19 approach did precede both ISIS and the Russian annexation of  
20 Crimea, and those put serious stressors, particularly in a  
21 period of the Budget Control Act. So I think it is about,  
22 frankly, as Secretary Austin has said, matching resources to  
23 strategy to policy to the will of the American people, and  
24 we need to make sure that we have our defense assets and  
25 resources focused on the areas where the American public

1 expects the Defense Department to be.

2 Senator Hawley: Very good. Let me just ask you  
3 further on this subject. President Obama's former Acting  
4 Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan recently  
5 wrote, I am quoting now, "For the long term, the United  
6 States will need a counterterrorism capability that does not  
7 depend on a permanent U.S. military presence in  
8 Afghanistan." And she went on to say that the Biden  
9 administration "should work swiftly to develop such options,  
10 including by ensuring U.S. capacity to mount operations in  
11 Afghanistan from outside the country."

12 Do you think that DoD should be working with its  
13 interagency partners to evaluate and develop options along  
14 those lines?

15 Ms. Hicks: Senator, my view is that we have had 20  
16 years of honorable service by our military members in  
17 Afghanistan, working alongside allies and partners.  
18 President Biden has ordered a holistic review of where we  
19 are in Afghanistan policy, and, frankly, holistic review is  
20 the right approach. This is not just about in-strength  
21 numbers on the ground. This is about achieving the holistic  
22 approach related to counterterrorism and a few other areas  
23 that is important, and what it takes to do that.

24 So I am very supportive of that approach, and if  
25 confirmed as Deputy Secretary of Defense I would work in

1 support of trying to determine what the right answer to your  
2 question is.

3 Senator Hawley: Very good. Would you also support  
4 having the Department brief Congress on its findings, as  
5 these reviews that you have talked about get underway and  
6 then conclude and reach some deliverables, so that we here  
7 can have an informed debate about the best path forward in  
8 Afghanistan?

9 Ms. Hicks: Absolutely, Senator.

10 Senator Hawley: Thank you. Finally, as I am almost  
11 out of time, but let me just ask you about our allies. We  
12 are spending about 4 percent of our GDP to defend ourselves.  
13 That is a big number, as you have referenced several times  
14 today. Should we not insist that our European allies,  
15 especially wealthier ones like Germany, spend at least the 2  
16 percent that they agreed to back in 2014?

17 Ms. Hicks: Senator, I regret this is a slightly long  
18 answer from me so let me try to do it more briefly than I  
19 probably would otherwise. I think we need to make sure that  
20 we are taking a strategic approach to what commitment means.  
21 I think we need to make sure that allies are as into the  
22 security relationship as we are. Sometimes it is through  
23 spending, sometimes it is through defense spending, and  
24 sometimes that commitment is expressed in other ways. And I  
25 think we should be strategic about how we can consider those

1 commitments.

2 Senator Hawley: Can I just -- Mr. Chairman, this is my  
3 last question and I will stop -- just on that point, your  
4 point about strategy, Dr. Hicks. Is not it a matter of  
5 strategic importance to us, however, that our European  
6 allies do as much as they possibly can for their own defense  
7 in Europe, precisely because, as you said just a moment ago,  
8 the pacing threat for us is in INDOPACOM. We face a  
9 challenge there from the Chinese government and a rising  
10 China system. We really have not seen a pure competitor the  
11 likes of which we have not seen in our lifetimes. So is not  
12 it a matter of strategic importance to urge our allies to do  
13 all that they can, in partnership with us but in their own  
14 defense?

15 Ms. Hicks: I do believe that. I think that is true of  
16 every ally.

17 Senator Hawley: Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr.  
18 Chairman.

19 Senator Reed: Thank you, Senator, and, Dr. Hicks,  
20 thank you for your very impressive testimony. And I do not  
21 think I speak for myself, but I look forward to working with  
22 you.

23 There are no further witnesses or colleagues. The  
24 hearing is adjourned. Thank you, Dr. Hicks.

25 Ms. Hicks: Thank you, Senator.

1 [Whereupon, at 12:19 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]  
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