

Stenographic Transcript  
Before the

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

## **UNITED STATES SENATE**

TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE DEPARTMENT  
OF DEFENSE BUDGET REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR  
2026 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

Wednesday, June 18, 2025

Washington, D.C.

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3 PROGRAM  
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5 Wednesday, June 18, 2025  
6

7 U.S. Senate

8 Committee on Armed Services

9 Washington, D.C.  
10

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

14 Committee Members Present: Senators Wicker, Fischer,  
15 Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Cramer, Scott, Tuberville,  
16 Mullin, Budd, Schmitt, Banks, Sheehy, Reed, Shaheen,  
17 Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Warren,  
18 Peters, Duckworth, Rosen, Kelly, and Slotkin.  
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1           OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROGER WICKER, U.S. SENATOR  
2 FROM MISSISSIPPI

3           Chairman Wicker: My watch says 9:30, and we thank  
4 people for being here with enthusiasm. But this hearing  
5 now convenes to hear testimony concerning the President's  
6 fiscal year 2026 budget request. I welcome Secretary  
7 Hegseth, Chairman Caine, and Acting Comptroller MacDonnell.

8           As we review the past 5 months, the President and the  
9 Department of Defense have much to be proud of. The  
10 Administration has largely succeeded in refocusing the  
11 Pentagon on warfighting. Our recruitment numbers have  
12 dramatically improved. That is a very important  
13 achievement and one we will continue to celebrate.

14          The U.S. military has played a significant supporting  
15 role in the President's wholesale success at our southern  
16 border. He has achieved operational control over the  
17 situation, a position the vast majority of Americans  
18 support.

19          In Operation Rough Rider, the President imposed costs  
20 on the Houthis. The operation was well executed by our  
21 servicemembers, and it appears to have achieved its stated  
22 objectives for now. Similarly, the President has  
23 relentlessly struck al-Qaeda and ISIS terrorists. Those  
24 strikes have helped to open up space for diplomatic  
25 breakthroughs in Syria, and they have prevented significant

1 external attacks that could have emanated from Somalia.

2 Unfortunately, the Axis of Aggressors is resilient.  
3 It is hell-bent on challenging American global leadership.

4 It is clearer than ever that Vladimir Putin is  
5 uninterested in President Trump's and President Zelenskyy's  
6 offers for real peace negotiations. The Europeans are  
7 heeding the President's call to re-arm, but we are in a  
8 tenuous period. A precipitate withdrawal of U.S. forces  
9 from Europe could undo all that progress.

10 In Asia, the Chinese Communist Party continues its  
11 campaign of aggression against its neighbors and still  
12 displays open ambitions to retake Taiwan. Secretary  
13 Hegseth recently made this crucial point in an important  
14 speech in Shangri-La. He said, and I quote, "China seeks  
15 to become a hegemonic power in Asia," unquote. He is  
16 right. China intends to use military force to achieve Xi  
17 Jinping's goals.

18 Meanwhile, in the Middle East, the Ayatollah is hiding  
19 as his regime crumbles. He still refusing to negotiate.

20 In short, this is the most dangerous national security  
21 moment since World War II. Unconstrained, aggressive  
22 dictators are on the move, and, importantly, the character  
23 of warfare is rapidly changing. That is a dangerous  
24 combination. We cannot have an American-led Golden Age of  
25 peace and prosperity if we fail to navigate these historic

1 security challenges.

2 President Trump is actively working to protect  
3 American interests against four main adversaries: Xi  
4 Jinping and his Chinese Communist Party, Vladimir Putin's  
5 militarized Russia, Kim Jong Un's North Korea, and the  
6 Ayatollah's religious fanatics, including his web of  
7 terrorists. Our Commander in Chief deserves a military  
8 capable of maintaining deterrence and applying force when  
9 necessary to protect U.S. interests, as he has done in  
10 Yemen. I regret to say that this fiscal year 2026 budget  
11 request will not deliver that military.

12 When Secretary Hegseth testified before this Committee  
13 in his confirmation hearing, he made the correct point that  
14 spending less than 3 percent of GDP on defense would be,  
15 and I quote, "very dangerous," unquote. What we have in  
16 front of us is an inadequate budget request with precious  
17 little detail and no follow-on data about fiscal years  
18 2027, 2028, or 2029. We must assume -- and, in fact, we  
19 have heard -- that OMB intends to maintain defense spending  
20 at \$893 billion across the 4 years of this administration.

21 So even with a one-time, \$150 billion reconciliation  
22 infusion, this would leave us at 2.65 percent of GDP by  
23 2029, below the 3 percent of GDP, and well below the 5  
24 percent of GDP that we really, really need. Clearly, such  
25 a budget plan would allow the military balance to continue,

1 as it has been, to tilt away from the United States and  
2 toward Communist China. Communist China has increased its  
3 budget by over 7 percent each year for the past decade.

4 I know the Secretary fought for a stronger fiscal year  
5 2026 discretionary request, but we need to acknowledge that  
6 a flat fiscal year 2026 budget is what OMB delivered. I  
7 expect we will spend today reviewing the numerous  
8 significant holes in this request, gaps that will make it  
9 much more difficult for President Trump to equip our  
10 servicemembers and for his advisors to develop credible  
11 military options.

12 Across the budget, we see significant holes:  
13 shipbuilding, tactical fighters, basic maintenance money,  
14 and more -- all insufficient. The budget seems to be  
15 written as if there are many items in the reconciliation  
16 package that simply are not in that bill. This is  
17 confusing, because the text of the reconciliation bill has  
18 been public for quite some time.

19 Chairman Rogers, of the House, and I worked closely  
20 with the executive branch, and members of this Committee,  
21 on the contents of the package. This budget threatens to  
22 undermine the good work we have done together on that bill,  
23 and it leads me to question whether some officials in the  
24 Administration plan to ignore congressional intent.

25 I believe ignoring congressional intent would be a

1 wrong-headed decision for the United States of America. We  
2 all work for the American people, and we share largely  
3 identical goals when it comes to deterring Xi Jinping,  
4 Vladimir Putin, and other threats. We need to work much  
5 more closely together on investment strategies and actions  
6 necessary to rebuild our industrial base.

7 The President and the Congress want action on  
8 reindustrialization. We want to rebuild the Arsenal of  
9 Democracy. We need action on industrial base integration,  
10 streamlined weapons sales, and cooperation with our allies  
11 and partners. We agree on fundamentally changing the way  
12 the DoD budgets and handles acquisition. Now we need to  
13 agree on providing the men and women of the Department of  
14 Defense with the resources they need to do their jobs. We  
15 have no time to waste, and we must commit to continued  
16 collaboration now.

17 With that I turn to my friend and colleague, Senator  
18 Reed, for his remarks.

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

3           Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr.  
4 Secretary, General Caine, Ms. MacDougall [sic], welcome.

5           Mr. Secretary, as the Chairman has said, this is a  
6 dangerous moment. As we speak, missiles are striking  
7 cities across Israel and Iran, threatening to ignite a  
8 regional war. There should be no doubt that for the safety  
9 of the United States and the rest of the world Iran cannot  
10 acquire a nuclear weapon. However, Prime Minister  
11 Netanyahu's decision to preemptively launch a war with  
12 Iran, against the urging of the President, threatens the  
13 stability of the entire region and the safety of Americans  
14 stationed there.

15           The Trump administration must take urgent steps to  
16 prevent a wider war. Mr. Secretary, I would ask you to be  
17 crystal clear this morning about the Administration's  
18 posture toward Iran.

19           More broadly, Russia continues its bloody assault on  
20 Ukraine, unmoved by President Trump's negotiating tactics,  
21 and China is threatening our allies in the Indo-Pacific as  
22 America, once again, redirects its attention to the Middle  
23 East. This is a moment that requires leadership,  
24 expertise, and confidence from the Department of Defense,  
25 and Mr. Secretary, I am concerned, frankly, that these

1 qualities have been eroded under your leadership.

2 In your opening statement you write, quote, "At the  
3 Department of Defense we are sweeping away distractions to  
4 focus on our core mission of warfighting," close quote. I  
5 am a bit skeptical. Since you were sworn in, much of the  
6 Pentagon has been in disarray. You have purged thousands  
7 of defense experts, gutted oversight offices, and surround  
8 yourself with hand-picked loyalists. You have fired a  
9 number of our most accomplished generals and admirals with  
10 no explanation nor replacement. Your chief of staff,  
11 several top policy advisors, and chief spokesman have all  
12 either resigned or been fired.

13 This is a legitimate problem for our national defense.  
14 Much of the Pentagon seems to have been paralyzed by  
15 infighting and stripped of expert staff at a time when we  
16 need stability and professionalism. Mr. Secretary, you  
17 must address this so the rest of the Department can be  
18 laser-focused on their missions.

19 I am also concerned about your forays into diplomacy.  
20 The Secretary must be a capable statesman, especially in  
21 this dangerous global environment. During your first  
22 official trip to Europe you made unfortunate mistakes,  
23 including by accidentally conceding America's negotiating  
24 leverage to Russia when you announced, quote, "we must  
25 start by recognizing that returning to Ukraine's 2014

1 borders is an unrealistic objective," and, quote, "the  
2 United States does not believe that NATO membership for  
3 Ukraine is a realistic outcome of a negotiated settlement."

4 The State Department walked back your comments, but I  
5 worry that they cost us lasting credibility during peace  
6 negotiations and with our European allies. And Mr.  
7 Secretary, I hope you have learned from these episodes.

8 The key to our long-earned success against China,  
9 Russia, and Iran, and others depends on our ability to  
10 equip our forces with the ships, aircraft, and weapons  
11 needed to effectively deter them or, if necessary, defeat  
12 them. Mr. Secretary, you have said that readiness is your  
13 top priority, but I am concerned by a number of actions you  
14 have taken that seem to distract from readiness.

15 For example, you are in the process of firing 8  
16 percent of the defense workforce, or 75,000 employees, and  
17 you recently gutted the Office of the Director of  
18 Operational Tests and Evaluation, which is responsible for  
19 testing new weapons and platforms for warfighters. You  
20 have argued that these cuts were needed to eliminate  
21 wasteful spending, but you have simultaneously pledged  
22 hundreds of millions of dollars to convert a second-hand  
23 Qatari jet to be Air Force One. These decisions do not  
24 seem to align with readiness.

25 Similarly, over the past 2 weeks, you have ordered

1 4,700 National Guard troops and marines into Los Angeles,  
2 against the will of the Governor and mayor. These forces  
3 are in addition to the 13,000 troops you have deployed to  
4 the southern border, and separate from the 20,000 National  
5 Guard troops requested by DHS to help ICE conduct, quote,  
6 "interior immigration efforts." As a consequence, military  
7 units have cancelled their national training center  
8 rotations and wasted invariable hours and resources  
9 performing DHS activities unrelated to their warfighting  
10 missions.

11 I cannot imagine a faster way to erode military  
12 readiness and distract from our ability to deter China,  
13 Russia, and Iran.

14 You also claim that merit is the only measurable  
15 performance under your leadership. That is a worthy  
16 principle. However, you refused to explain you fired many  
17 of our most senior military officers, including the Chief  
18 of Naval Operations and the Commander of Cyber Command.  
19 All of these positions remain unfilled, which weakens our  
20 military, as, importantly, these officers were fired  
21 without any justification, indeed without considering  
22 merit, which creates the worst possible outcome for a  
23 military force, fear throughout the ranks that one should  
24 not speak up, should not refuse an illegal order, and  
25 should not call out abuse nor question decisions. I fear

1 that last week's disturbing display of partisanship at  
2 President Trump's event at Fort Bragg is an example of  
3 this.

4 Mr. Secretary, I hope you understand the grave risks  
5 of politicizing the military, and that you will commit to  
6 preventing it.

7 Finally, you have pledged to be transparent as  
8 Secretary of Defense. Yet, to date you have not held a  
9 single press conference at the Pentagon. Instead, you have  
10 evicted news outlets from the building, overwhelmingly  
11 restricted press access, and searched for leaks within your  
12 own staff, even threatening general officers with polygraph  
13 tests. This is not transparency, and it is a disservice to  
14 the American people who deserve to know what their military  
15 is doing.

16 Ultimately, Mr. Secretary, this is a dangerous moment,  
17 and you must better demonstrate leadership, expertise, and  
18 competence atop the Pentagon. You are the ninth Secretary  
19 of Defense I have overseen as a member of this Committee.  
20 In fact, this is the 26th time I have questioned a Secretary  
21 of Defense during their annual posture hearing. I have  
22 disagreed with each and every one of them on issues of  
23 policy and strategy, some more frequently than others, but  
24 I have always been able to work with them openly and  
25 earnestly, because we shared a common agreement that our

1 national defense supersedes partisanship.

2 It is disappointing so far that we have not been able  
3 to establish such a relationship with this Committee and  
4 with your Department. Your candid and honest testimony  
5 today can go a long way towards making that possible, and I  
6 hope we can make that progress.

7 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Reed. At this  
9 point we will ask our witnesses to summarize their  
10 testimony in 5 minutes or shorter. And we begin with  
11 Secretary Hegseth. Sir, welcome to the Committee.

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1           STATEMENT OF HONORABLE PETER B. HEGSETH, SECRETARY OF  
2     DEFENSE

3           Secretary Hegseth: Well thank you, Mr. Chairman,  
4     Ranking Member Reed, distinguished members of the  
5     Committee. We appreciate the opportunity to testify in  
6     full support of President Trump's proposed fiscal year 2026  
7     budget for the Department of Defense. I am honored to  
8     testify alongside General Dan Caine, Chairman of the Joint  
9     Chiefs, and Bryn MacDonnell, who is performing the duties  
10    of DoD's Comptroller and Chief Financial Officer.

11          We are also very proud to represent our warriors and  
12    their families. And today, as they do every day, they are  
13    keeping our country safe. They are defending our homeland.  
14    They are standing up to Communist China. They are working  
15    hand-in-glove with our allies and partners. They are  
16    achieving peace through strength.

17          I would like to start by thanking this Committee and  
18    Congress for your bipartisan leadership to give our troops  
19    a big pay raise in 2025. That includes an additional 10  
20    percent raise for our junior enlisted servicemembers, E-1  
21    to E-4. Thank you for supporting our initiatives that  
22    improve quality of life for our warriors and their  
23    families, things that include making historic investments  
24    this budget, making historic investments in living  
25    conditions in barracks, in base housing. This budget

1 reforms the PCS process to reduce the cost and stress of  
2 moves for families. We have already seen changes there.  
3 And we improved the quality of care provided by our defense  
4 health care system.

5 The best part of my job is meeting and interreacting  
6 with troops and their families. When we hear their  
7 concerns we know what it is like to face these challenges.  
8 I have been there recently.

9 Each of these initiatives responds to feedback that we  
10 have gotten from the force. We are listening, and we are  
11 always looking for ways to improve quality of life for  
12 those who serve.

13 Under President Trump's leadership, this budget puts  
14 American first, and gives our warriors what they need. The  
15 \$961.6 billion budget request, more than \$1 trillion for  
16 national security, will end 4 years of chronic  
17 underinvestment in our military.

18 As is custom with first-year administration budget  
19 releases, additional time was necessary to implement  
20 presidential initiatives. So in the last 4 months we have  
21 moved quickly to reverse course after 4 years of weakness  
22 and mismanagement. We found nearly \$30 billion in savings  
23 across the Department, and this savings, if you add this  
24 savings to our overall budget, we are increasing the DoD  
25 budget in 2026 by \$143 billion. We do that by killing

1 wasteful programs, targeting bureaucratic excess, and  
2 redirecting funding from Biden-era priorities to President  
3 Trump's priorities.

4 We are working with the Department of Homeland  
5 Security to increase border security, to reduce China's  
6 malign influence in the Western Hemisphere, to defend  
7 freedom of navigation in the Red Sea. However, as we would  
8 all acknowledge, there is more work to do.

9 I have got three core priorities in the Department:  
10 restore the warrior ethos, rebuild our military, and  
11 reestablish deterrence.

12 First, we are restoring the warrior ethos. President  
13 Trump has charged me to focus relentlessly on warfighting,  
14 lethality, meritocracy, standards, and readiness, and that  
15 is exactly what we are doing. We are setting standards  
16 that are high, equal, and unwavering. DEI is dead. We  
17 replaced it with a color-blind, gender-neutral, merit-based  
18 approach, and the force is responding incredibly.

19 Because of President Trump and his America First  
20 priorities, recruitment and retention are higher than they  
21 have been in decades, historic surge of young Americans who  
22 want to join our military.

23 Second, we are rebuilding our military. Twenty-five  
24 years ago, our military was unchallenged. Yet we  
25 squandered that advantage as China carried out an

1   unprecedented military build-up. President Trump is  
2   correcting that.

3           We are reviving our defense industrial base, reforming  
4   our acquisitions process, rapidly fielding emerging  
5   technologies and new weapons to meet the challenges of the  
6   future. This budget invests \$25 billion in Golden Dome for  
7   America, a down payment on President Trump's priority to  
8   defend our homeland. It also commits more than \$62 billion  
9   to modernize and sustain our nuclear forces as we face  
10   rising nuclear dangers. The budget allocated \$3.5 billion  
11   for the F-47, the world's first sixth-generation air  
12   superiority fighter.

13          The budget will revitalize our shipbuilding industrial  
14   base with \$6 billion in funding in fiscal year 2026, and  
15   that is on top of \$47 billion overall for shipbuilding.  
16   The budget significantly increases funds to buy next-  
17   generation technology, including autonomous systems, long-  
18   range drones, long-range fires, and hypersonics.

19          We will put these capabilities in the hands of our  
20   warfighters, ensuring we remain the most lethal force in  
21   the world for generations to come.

22          And third, we are reestablishing deterrence. When an  
23   opponent sees our well-equipped and tough-as-nails  
24   warriors, they will decide that today is not the day to  
25   test U.S. resolve. Credible deterrence, it starts at home,

1 and it starts with securing our borders. As was mentioned  
2 by the Chairman, we are working to achieve 100 percent  
3 operational control of the border. Illegal crossings have  
4 decreased 99.9 percent, and it was just reported today that  
5 CBP released zero illegals into the U.S. last month, down  
6 from 62,000 released into the interior last May.

7 The Indo-Pacific is our priority theater, and China is  
8 our pacing threat. That is why I have traveled twice to  
9 that region to visit our forces and meet with our allies  
10 and partners. As we shift toward the Indo-Pacific, we are  
11 looking more to our allies and partners to be force  
12 multipliers alongside the United States, and we are making  
13 progress in that. We applaud those allies who are stepping  
14 up, but others need to do more, and quickly.

15 At the NATO heads of state meeting next week, we  
16 expect NATO allies to commit to spending 5 percent of GDP  
17 on defense and defense-related investment, an almost  
18 inconceivable accomplishment when President Trump started  
19 that project in his first term. And with NATO stepping up,  
20 we now have a new standard for allied defense spending that  
21 all of our allies around the world, including in Asia,  
22 should move to. As the President has rightly pointed out,  
23 it is only fair that our allies and partners do their part.  
24 We cannot want their security more than they do.

25 The Department of Defense is executing a commonsense

1 agenda to achieve peace through strength. We know the  
2 threats we face are serious, and so our investments are, as  
3 well. And that is what this budget does. It matches  
4 capabilities to threats. We long for peace so we prepare  
5 for war. We must overcome decades of neglect and decline.  
6 We must fortify our position as the world's most lethal  
7 fighting force, and we have to act fast because our  
8 opponents are.

9 This Committee is our critical partner. We appreciate  
10 your leadership and oversight, which is essential. And I  
11 look forward to accomplishing these goals to achieve peace  
12 through strength, support our warriors, protect our  
13 citizens and our taxpayers, together with you.

14 May God grant us the wisdom to see what is right and  
15 the courage to do it. Thank you.

16 [The prepared statement of Secretary Hegseth follows:]  
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1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

2 General Caine, do you wish to summarize your  
3 testimony?

4 General Caine: Yes, sir.

5 Chairman Wicker: You are recognized for 5 minutes.

6 General Caine: Thank you, sir. I will try to hit  
7 that target.

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1           STATEMENT OF GENERAL J. DANIEL CAINE, USAF, CHAIRMAN  
2       OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

3           General Caine: Yes, sir. Chairman Wicker, Ranking  
4       Member Reed, members of the Committee, thank you for being  
5       here. I am honored to join Secretary Hegseth and Ms. Bryn  
6       MacDonnell to appear before you today to testify on the  
7       President's fiscal year 2026 budget.

8           Today's hearing reflects our shared commitment to  
9       maximize efficiency, accountability of our taxpayers'  
10      dollars, and ensuring every expenditure increases the  
11      lethality and survivability of your Joint Force, providing  
12      our warfighters with the advanced capabilities and cutting-  
13      edge technology required to dominate our adversaries.

14          I have deep gratitude for everyone in this room and  
15      our shared commitment to help deliver the capability and  
16      capacity that the Joint Force needs. That goes to our  
17      civilians and their families as we work to deliver peace  
18      through overwhelming strength. And I want to echo the  
19      Secretary's comments regarding our brave men and women  
20      serving abroad today.

21          It is my responsibility, as Chairman, to understand,  
22      advise, and integrate our Joint Force to confront and  
23      manage the risks worldwide. This demands a comprehensive  
24      understanding of every domain, across every service, and  
25      across every region, across all time horizons. It also

1 requires making and advocating for difficult decisions that  
2 prioritize the finite taxpayer resources that we have in  
3 order to ensure the greatest impact and capability for our  
4 warfighters.

5 The President's budget enables the Joint Force to  
6 defend our great nation from adversaries seeking to do us  
7 harm, and we are relentless in the pursuit of innovation  
8 and technologies that allows us to hopefully deter, but if  
9 need be, win, on battlefields of the future.

10 This budget empowers the Joint Force to get after the  
11 Secretary's three pillars -- restoring the warrior ethos,  
12 rebuilding our military, and reestablishing deterrence --  
13 and ensures that the Joint Force is properly armed,  
14 globally integrated, and ready to go.

15 The President's budget invests in our warfighting  
16 capabilities to win, as I said, on the battlefields of the  
17 future. We must be properly armed, with the right  
18 capabilities, lethal, modern, reliable, survivable, and at  
19 scale, in order to win. Victory requires people and  
20 platforms that overmatch the enemy's systems and work under  
21 the harshest conditions to ensure our decisive edge.

22 This budget gives the necessary tools to reinvigorate  
23 our national and defense industrial base. Our nation is  
24 full of incredible talent, and we need to unlock every bit  
25 of it.

1           This budget also helps us become more globally  
2 integrated, which is one of my main jobs. We are, in the  
3 Joint Force, relationship entrepreneurs, working together  
4 with the military but also with our allies and partners,  
5 the interagency, and industry to make sure that we are  
6 connected before crisis or conflict. And this budget helps  
7 us to integrate that combat capability as our commanders  
8 and leaders consider actions and activities, not at the  
9 point that we are in a crisis somewhere.

10           Finally, the President's budget reflects our mandate  
11 to stay ready, always on the account, anticipating the next  
12 fight, and making sure that everyone is ready to go.

13           But the most important component is our people. The  
14 budget makes meaningful investments in our servicemembers  
15 and their families, improving quality of life for housing,  
16 medical care, and the ever-important moving process. As  
17 our most precious asset, we have to deliver for our people.

18           I want to highlight one of them today. Sitting behind  
19 me is Colonel Matt Jemmott. Many folks know Matt up on the  
20 Hill today. It is probably his last hearing in uniform,  
21 which after 31 years he graduates from service later this  
22 year. He has been like a pterodactyl for the Joint Force,  
23 always delivering and advocating for us.

24           Chairman Wicker: Pterodactyls are very, very old.

25           General Caine: Yes, sir. I know. You will note his

1 --

2 Chairman Wicker: Can you raise your hand, Colonel?  
3 Thank you. Thank you for your service.

4 General Caine: It is an honor every day to serve  
5 alongside some of the extraordinary warriors and civilian  
6 teammates that our nation has to offer.

7 I assure this Committee that the Joint Force remains  
8 committed and capable, and we are grateful for your  
9 continued support.

10 I want to also highlight the leaders that will come  
11 before this Committee in the coming days, which will be  
12 carefully considered by each of you for the general and  
13 flag officer assignments. They are all extraordinary.

14 I am mindful, and mindful, and grateful for those that  
15 are currently deployed right now. They are on my mind and  
16 in my heart, and I know the Secretary's, as well. And I  
17 continue to hold a special remembrance for our fallen and  
18 the families of our fallen, who show us what right looks  
19 like.

20 Thank you for your time, and with that I look forward  
21 to your questions.

22 [The prepared statement of General Caine follows:]

1 Chairman Wicker: Very skillful use of time, General.  
2 And Ms. MacDonnell, we will not require an opening  
3 statement from you. Thank you for being available for  
4 questions today.

5 Now we move to rounds of 5-minute questions. And let  
6 me say, we expect full attendance today, and I expect all  
7 members will want to ask questions. I have tried to be  
8 very skillful, sometimes, in my membership on this  
9 Committee to ask a very involved question with about 20  
10 seconds to go in my 5 minutes. We will not be using that  
11 practice today, or we will be here in the wee hours of the  
12 early evening.

13 At this point let me begin by asking Secretary Hegseth  
14 about congressional intent. We worry about the explicit  
15 choices that the Congress has made, that have been enacted  
16 into law by the President. In the fiscal year 2026 budget,  
17 the decision came to us, surprisingly, to zero out  
18 destroyers, even though Congress intended for  
19 reconciliation to give the industrial base the ability with  
20 a third DDG in fiscal years 2027 and in 2029.

21 I have asked this of every nominee from the Department  
22 who has come before us about honoring congressional intent.  
23 We will put funds in the reconciliation funds, working with  
24 the House, and working with the Administration to get the  
25 signature on the bill, and we will make clear alongside

1 that the specific congressional intent. I have asked this  
2 of every official, and I will ask you, as well, Mr.  
3 Secretary. Do you commit to following congressional  
4 intent, unequivocally, on reconciliation?

5 Secretary Hegseth: Well, thank you for the question,  
6 Mr. Chairman. Yes. Our team looks forward to working with  
7 this Committee, both through the budget process and  
8 reconciliation, and would acknowledge, just as a starting  
9 point of the conversation, that we are looking at two bills  
10 and one budget at the Defense Department. So as we have  
11 discussions about allocation, we may sometimes be talking  
12 about different numbers because of that. But from our  
13 perspective, we built a budget to \$960 billion.

14 Chairman Wicker: Are you qualifying your explicit  
15 yes? Because we have not had that from any of the other  
16 witnesses that have come before us. If our congressional  
17 intent, alongside the numbers in reconciliation, is  
18 explicitly expressed, do you commit to following  
19 congressional intent, unequivocally, in reconciliation?

20 Secretary Hegseth: Yes. We just wanted to clarify  
21 the entirety of the budget from our perspective.

22 Chairman Wicker: Well, thank you very much.

23 Now you said once before that -- and I quoted in my  
24 opening statement, Mr. Secretary -- that going below 3  
25 percent of GDP would be very dangerous. That was your

1 testimony in January. Of course, you know well that we are  
2 asking our allies in Europe and NATO to go to 5 percent,  
3 and it has been the intention of most of us on the  
4 Committee that the United States lead by example, and, in  
5 fact, follow the Peace Through Strength example of  
6 President Reagan and his administration of getting to 5  
7 percent.

8 I understand that if you put reconciliation and the  
9 budget request together for this year it exceeds 3 percent.  
10 But if we go back to that same baseline for the next 3  
11 years after that, we will be under 3 percent. We intend to  
12 fix that. But do you still agree that going below 3  
13 percent would be a, quote, "very dangerous," unquote,  
14 choice?

15 Secretary Hegseth: Yes, sir, and so does the  
16 President of the United States, which is why this budget  
17 increases from fiscal year 2025 13 percent. It puts us at  
18 3.5 percent of GDP on defense and we feel like it is a  
19 generational increase in defense capabilities. And when  
20 you add that alongside the \$30 billion we have already  
21 found in savings and repurposed, that is where I get to the  
22 \$143 billion in additional spending in defense.

23 Chairman Wicker: And you agree, Mr. Secretary, that  
24 in future years it would be very dangerous to go below that  
25 3 percent.

1 Secretary Hegseth: As I said in my remarks, we are  
2 going to match budget to threats, and so yes, in the future  
3 we anticipate threats like we have today, so I would  
4 anticipate a robust budget in the future, yes.

5 Chairman Wicker: Would you please be kind enough to  
6 answer my question? Would going below 3 percent in future  
7 fiscal years be, quote, "very dangerous," unquote, as you  
8 said in your statement in January?

9 Secretary Hegseth: Yes, sir, and I believe the  
10 President of the United States definitely feels the same  
11 way.

12 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, sir. Senator Reed.

13 Senator Reed: Thank you very much --

14 Chairman Wicker: And I yield back 5 seconds.

15 Senator Reed: I will take those 5 seconds.

16 Chairman Wicker: Oh no, sir. That is not the way it  
17 works.

18 Senator Reed: First, let me apologize to Ms.  
19 MacDonnell, who I said was Ms. MacDougall. You are Irish,  
20 right?

21 Ms. MacDonnell: My husband is. Yes, sir.

22 Senator Reed: Well, that is good enough. Thank you.  
23 You were Scotch for a few minutes. But I apologize, ma'am.

24 And Mr. Secretary, you have fired a number of generals  
25 and flag officers, and you clearly have the authority to do

1 that, but there was no cause given. And it is also deeply  
2 concerning that it is taking a long time to appoint  
3 successors. I understand that today you announced that the  
4 nominee for CNO will be Admiral Daryl Caudle. Is that  
5 right?

6 Secretary Hegseth: Yes, sir.

7 Senator Reed: Well, we still have many of these  
8 positions open, including U.S. Cyber Command, which is  
9 absolutely critical. Do you believe that this lack of  
10 nominated leaders is affecting our warfighting abilities?

11 Secretary Hegseth: Sir, I believe we all serve at the  
12 pleasure of the President, and in every single position we  
13 are looking for the right man or woman to fill that role,  
14 to execute on behalf of the missions of this Department,  
15 and we are doing it expeditiously in every case.

16 Senator Reed: Again, do you have any anticipation of  
17 when will we see the nominee for Cyber Command?

18 Secretary Hegseth: Sir, as I mentioned before, we  
19 have a very capable deputy at Cyber Command who has taken  
20 the helm. So it is not as if it is without leadership.  
21 Very much so. But as recently as yesterday we had a high-  
22 level discussion of exactly what that will be.

23 Senator Reed: Mr. Secretary, in your opening  
24 statement you stated, "At the Department of Defense we are  
25 sweeping away distractions to focus on our core mission of

1 warfighting." However, since your confirmation your office  
2 has been consumed by high turnover and disarray. At least  
3 three senior aides were fired and subsequently investigated  
4 for leaks, alleged leaks, to the press. Your first Chief  
5 of Staff has since left his position. And to the best of  
6 my knowledge that position is vacant. The inspector  
7 general is reviewing your use of Signal after sending  
8 sensitive information pertaining to military operations in  
9 Yemen, not only to senior government officials but to your  
10 wife, your brother, and your personal lawyer. Finally,  
11 according to press reports, you have threatened polygraph  
12 tests against senior members of the military.

13 As I said in my opening statement, this is a dangerous  
14 world. You know that. And this turmoil in your office is  
15 not contributing, I think, to the clarity and  
16 thoughtfulness and decisiveness necessary.

17 Secretary Hegseth: Sir, I would just say the media  
18 loves sensational headlines that are not connected at all  
19 to reality. If you look at the execution of our office and  
20 what we have done on the President's priorities I am very  
21 proud of what we have been able to do in 140 days. And  
22 when you move fast, to reestablish deterrence and restore  
23 our warrior ethos and rebuild a military, it is going to  
24 come with some changes.

25 But when you look at the leadership structure, both in

1 uniform and on the civilian side of the Defense Department,  
2 it is as strong and capable as it has ever been. And I  
3 would contrast it with the chaos of the world under the  
4 previous administration -- the debacle in Afghanistan, war  
5 unleashed in Ukraine, what happened on October 7th. That  
6 was a view of weakness and chaos unleashed by the Biden  
7 administration under the previous Defense Secretary.

8 So if a few changes have to be made in the first  
9 portion of my term in order to get it right, I think that  
10 is pretty acceptable to establish deterrence and rebuild  
11 our military and restore the warrior ethos.

12 Senator Reed: Well, Mr. Secretary, you can cite those  
13 examples. History, I might have a different perspective.  
14 As I understand it, the direction to leave Afghanistan was  
15 an agreement with President Trump in Doha, which left our  
16 forces in very precarious positions since they were there  
17 for a year and they had to come out. And Taliban knew  
18 that, and they were going after them.

19 But let me move on to another issue --

20 Chairman Wicker: Thirty seconds.

21 Senator Reed: -- 35. We have had detainees in  
22 Guantanamo, and we have used military flights to get them  
23 there. The problem, I think, is that some of these  
24 military flights have not contained DHS agents on it, so,  
25 in effect, the military becomes not just the custodial

1 agents, they are also the control agents. And that would  
2 seem to me a violation of military procedures. Is that  
3 practice continuing?

4 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, every aspect of that  
5 mission is in coordination with DHS and with DHS officials.

6 Senator Reed: So there are no flights with airmen  
7 only on board?

8 Secretary Hegseth: Not that I am aware of, sir.

9 Senator Reed: Thank you.

10 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Reed. Senator  
11 Fisher.

12 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr.  
13 Secretary, General, Ms. MacDonnell, welcome.

14 I serve on both the Armed Services and the  
15 Appropriations Committees, and every year we legislate  
16 annual authorization and appropriation bill that provide  
17 the policies and the funding for the Department. While I  
18 am confident we will do so again this year, the  
19 Administration has made this process more difficult by  
20 delaying the delivery of budget materials to Congress.

21 Mr. Secretary and General Caine, I have appreciated  
22 our previous discussions about the need to modernize our  
23 nuclear triad and to provide the President with additional  
24 options for regional nuclear deterrence, and to achieve  
25 this we must have sustained and predictable funding within

1 the Department's base budget.

2 I am concerned that the Department's fiscal year 2026  
3 request relies too heavily on reconciliation for some of  
4 our nuclear programs. For example, the reconciliation text  
5 includes funding for Sentinel. That is meant to accelerate  
6 and reduce risk in the program over the next several years.  
7 It is not meant to fill a self-imposed gap in funding in a  
8 single fiscal year, created by shortchanging ICBMs in the  
9 base budget.

10 I understand using reconciliation funding is  
11 relatively new to the Department, but I expect us to work  
12 together throughout this cycle so that we can assure that  
13 funds are used as intended, and that the programs are  
14 adequately funded within that base budget.

15 General Caine, do you agree that nuclear modernization  
16 programs should be prioritized, both to keep pace with the  
17 threats and to ensure that the President has a full array  
18 of options for nuclear deterrence?

19 General Caine: I do, Senator, and appreciate your  
20 leadership on ensuring that we have got the tools that we  
21 need to deliver for the triad of the future.

22 Senator Fischer: Secretary Hegseth, although progress  
23 has been made the last several years, I continue to be  
24 concerned about the ability of our defense industrial base  
25 to produce munitions at an adequate scale to support our

1 warfighters in these modern conflicts that we have. And  
2 now that you have been sworn in and had time to review the  
3 current state of our industrial base, what more should the  
4 Department be doing to increase munitions production and  
5 how does this budget request support these objectives?

6 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, it is a great question  
7 that we should be doing everything we can, which is  
8 precisely what we are doing, at the very highest levels,  
9 from myself to the Deputy Secretary of Defense with  
10 industry. This budget is a 45 percent increase in the  
11 defense industrial base. It invests in critical munitions  
12 procurement. It invests in defense supply chains, in  
13 resilience in supply chains, in increased competition and  
14 capabilities for outside companies to get into the business  
15 of providing critical munitions.

16 So across the board we are finding and hiring  
17 innovators to move as quickly as possible, cutting through  
18 the bureaucracy, the red tape, to deliver those systems in  
19 a world that needs them now more than ever.

20 Senator Fischer: Could you get back to me on timeline  
21 that you have set for each of those areas that you  
22 mentioned, and obviously the funding that is going towards  
23 them. But I would be interested in what you are setting  
24 for yourself for goals for the timelines and getting that  
25 achieved.

1           Secretary Hegseth: Yes, ma'am. We have those, and we  
2 will get those to you.

3           Senator Fischer: Thank you. And General Caine, do  
4 you assess that the total munitions requirement is  
5 currently aligned with the magnitude of the threats that  
6 this country faces, or should the Department review its  
7 stockpile requirements to ensure that we are fully prepared  
8 for these modern conflicts?

9           General Caine: Senator, we are always looking at the  
10 lessons learned of past conflicts, to include the most  
11 recent ones around the world, and taking those and applying  
12 those to what the future of war might look like. So we are  
13 always evolving and considering the mix of munitions that  
14 we need for the Joint Force in order to deliver  
15 overwhelming strength.

16          Senator Fischer: And I would be remiss if I did not  
17 bring up spectrum. As we look towards the Golden Dome and  
18 the importance of that, over the next several weeks I hope  
19 we can see some more details on that, because we cannot  
20 shoot what we do not see. And I think it is important that  
21 all of us here, as well as the public, understand the  
22 importance of the spectrum that the Department has in order  
23 to reach that. Thank you.

24          Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Fisher, for that  
25 important and correct observation. Senator Shaheen.

1           Senator Shaheen: Thank you all very much for being  
2 here. News reports this morning suggest that the President  
3 is actively considering intervening in the situation in the  
4 Middle East. I understand that we have 40,000 troops  
5 deployed in the region, many of whom are in range of  
6 Iranian missiles. And it is being reported that the  
7 President is being asked to consider providing the bunker  
8 buster bomb that is required to be carried only by the B-2  
9 bomber and would require a U.S. pilot. That raises real  
10 concerns about what retaliation might mean for the safety  
11 and stability of the entire region and our troops and  
12 Americans who are in the region.

13           So can you tell us, Mr. Secretary, are you considering  
14 military action that would bring us into active  
15 hostilities, and whether you expect a decision to be made  
16 on that any time in the next few days?

17           Chairman Wicker: Just bearing in mind, and you can  
18 stop the clock, we will be going into a classified portion  
19 of the hearing later on. But proceed, Mr. Secretary.

20           Senator Shaheen: I understand that, Mr. Chairman, but  
21 I think this is a question that is very important for the  
22 American public to hear.

23           Chairman Wicker: I just wanted to make it clear that  
24 there would be an opportunity --

25           Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

1 Chairman Wicker: -- to get very deep into that. Go  
2 ahead.

3 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, I agree with the  
4 Chairman. Most of what I can or should say would be  
5 reserved for a classified setting. I would say the  
6 President, obviously, any decisions on this matter are at  
7 the presidential level. He has communicated very clearly  
8 for quite some time --

9 Senator Shaheen: I do understand that, Mr. Secretary,  
10 but my question for you is whether you have been asked  
11 actively to provide options for the President regarding a  
12 strike in the Middle East.

13 Secretary Hegseth: If I had, or I had not, I would  
14 not disclose that in this forum, Senator. Our job, the  
15 Chairman and I, at all times, is to make sure the President  
16 has options and is informed of what those options might be  
17 and what the ramifications of those options might be.

18 Senator Shaheen: I appreciate that. Thank you.

19 Secretary Hegseth: You mentioned the troops in the  
20 region.

21 Senator Shaheen: I expect --

22 Secretary Hegseth: With maximum force protection at  
23 all times is being maintained.

24 Senator Shaheen: I would hope that as soon as  
25 consideration about action is determined that the public

1 will be informed about that.

2 Six of us on this Committee just returned from the  
3 largest air show in the world. It was very impressive to  
4 see the innovation and technology from our industry on  
5 aerospace. And one of the concerns that I heard from many  
6 of the companies that I talked to was about the potential  
7 to partner with our allies and partners for innovation for  
8 co-production. And one concern I heard was about the  
9 proposed review of the AUKUS agreement. That is after the  
10 Australian government has already contributed half a  
11 billion dollars to our submarine industrial base, and  
12 American and U.K. shipbuilders have made capital  
13 investments to support the increased demand.

14 So do you disagree with the position that President  
15 Trump has taken about AUKUS, that we should move forward,  
16 and what is the review expected to produce?

17 Secretary Hegseth: Well, Senator, I think reviews are  
18 always prudent, but those reviews actually come after  
19 conversations I have had with the Minister of Defense  
20 Healey in the U.K. and Marles in Australia, long, personal  
21 conversations about the status of this arrangement, both  
22 aspects of it.

23 So we are reviewing it because that is what the  
24 Defense Department ought do to make sure it fits the  
25 priorities of the President and that our defense and

1 shipbuilding industrial base can support, ensure that we  
2 are clear on all sides of that, on either pillar, and then  
3 on Pillar 2 identifying specifically the ways we can work  
4 together most meaningfully to co-produce with our  
5 industrial base, munitions or other capabilities that would  
6 be most applicable to the threats we face.

7 Senator Shaheen: But do you agree that it is  
8 important to increase the capability of our nuclear  
9 deterrent in the Indo-Pacific and that AUKUS is one way to  
10 do that?

11 Secretary Hegseth: I do, and working through AUKUS --

12 Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

13 Secretary Hegseth: -- as a possible avenue for that  
14 is a good thing.

15 Senator Shaheen: Last week, Mr. Secretary, during the  
16 SACD appropriations hearing you reaffirmed the need for an  
17 exemption for the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard to your hiring  
18 freeze. Senator Collins asked you a very relevant question  
19 on that, and since Senator King and I share that shipyard I  
20 would like to ask you again, because we have not yet heard  
21 anything from you or from the Office of Personnel  
22 Management about how they are responding to this. DoD has  
23 told us that the Office of Personnel Management needs to  
24 review every single new hire, one by one, at a time when we  
25 need 550 people every year just to keep up with the Navy's

1 demand for maintenance and on its nuclear submarines. So  
2 will you commit to talking to OPM on this issue?

3 Secretary Hegseth: Yes.

4 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Shaheen. Senator  
5 Cotton.

6 Senator Cotton: Welcome, everyone. Thank you for  
7 your testimony, and more importantly your service.

8 Secretary Hegseth, the President, at a press gaggle  
9 just now at the White House, said of strikes against Iran,  
10 to Senator Shaheen's question, "I may do it. I may not do  
11 it. I mean, nobody knows what I'm going to do."

12 You had referred to these questions as a presidential  
13 level decision. Is that right? And I think that is always  
14 true. Advisors advise and Presidents decide. But it is  
15 your job to have contingency plans for everything that the  
16 President may or may not decide. Is that correct?

17 Secretary Hegseth: That is correct.

18 Senator Cotton: And no one should be surprised or  
19 scandalized that the Pentagon has lots and lots of  
20 contingency plans.

21 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, our job is to have  
22 contingency plans.

23 Senator Cotton: It is like in Armageddon, Billy Bob  
24 Thornton's character, Truman, speaking of NASA, could have  
25 been speaking of the Pentagon. "You are geniuses. You are

1 just thinking stuff up, and you've got people in another  
2 room, backing them up." Is that right?

3 Secretary Hegseth: We plan.

4 Senator Cotton: Thank you. And although it is true  
5 in every part of the government, it is probably no more  
6 true in your Department that it is a presidential level  
7 decision. This is the President's core constitutional  
8 responsibilities, as the Commander in Chief. I mean, it is  
9 important what he does with Labor and HUD and the rest, but  
10 as the Commander in Chief it is the most important role he  
11 has, and therefore at the Department, where you take the  
12 most direct guidance from the President. Everyone in the  
13 Department has to support the President's decisions, once  
14 those decisions are made. Correct?

15 Secretary Hegseth: Correct, Senator. As I have said,  
16 there is only one person that was elected President of the  
17 United States, and the American people elected him to make  
18 these decisions on their behalf. And if and when those  
19 decisions are made, the Department is prepared to execute.

20 Senator Cotton: And I know that you welcome, and  
21 have, robust policy debates in the Department, and no doubt  
22 you have very differing view on many questions, whether it  
23 is what to do with Iran or what kind of aircraft or ships  
24 we need to build, or what the quality of commissaries are  
25 on our bases. And that is welcomed. You need that kind of

1 robust debate to make the right recommendations.

2 But once the President's decision has been made on any  
3 question, that is final, right? That is your standard?

4 Secretary Hegseth: The President welcomes -- I have  
5 watched it in real time -- views on all issues, from all  
6 aspects. But yes, once those have been represented,  
7 intelligence is represented, options represented, up sides,  
8 down sides, threats, of course, when the President makes a  
9 call as the Commander in Chief we will execute.

10 Senator Cotton: Well, thank you. Because I know  
11 there was some controversy earlier this year inside the  
12 Department, and not everyone seemed to be on the same page  
13 that you and the President are, after presidential  
14 decisions had been made, and you had to make some tough  
15 decisions there. And I commend you for those decisions. I  
16 think you did the right thing. You have to make sure that  
17 everyone stays on the same page and everyone supports  
18 presidential decisions.

19 One decision I also want to call out, since we have  
20 not spoken about it here, and I am not sure we will, and I  
21 want to commend you for, as well, and commend your team, is  
22 the redesignation of base names for Army bases. In the  
23 summer of 2020, as a Jacobin fever swept the country during  
24 the BLM riots, it was decided to rename several Army bases.  
25 To be honest with you, I think most soldiers serving on

1 those bases did not even know who they were named after.  
2 They just had fond recollections for decades of their time  
3 at Fort Benning, or Fort Bragg, or other places. And I  
4 think now you have completed the effort to redesignate  
5 those bases to the names that so many generations of  
6 soldiers served at, for new American heroes. Is that  
7 right?

8 Secretary Hegseth: Yes. All of the previous names  
9 for the U.S. Army installations have been returned.

10 Senator Cotton: Well, thank you. I think that was an  
11 inspired approach. It complies with the law. It teaches a  
12 new generation of soldiers about those who went before  
13 them. And I hope the matter is settled.

14 I especially want to commend you for Fort Gordon,  
15 named after Gary Gordon, one of two Delta operators, along  
16 with Randy Shughart, who willingly laid down their life in  
17 the Battle of Mogadishu to protect their buddies, not even  
18 in the battle at the time, and against commanders' repeated  
19 wishes, until they pestered the commanders finally to let  
20 them get on the ground and protect those soldiers on the  
21 ground and laid down their life. I think that was an  
22 inspired choice.

23 One final question. You had said that everything  
24 needs to be on the table to address our munitions crisis.  
25 We all agree on this Committee. We all have been working

1 hard for many years on that. Private industry is very  
2 important, but you have your own organic industrial base --  
3 ammunition plants, arsenals, depots -- that is included in  
4 everything, right, that we need to look at every possible  
5 source to address every potential chokepoint in our  
6 munitions supply chain.

7 Secretary Hegseth: Every possible source.

8 Senator Cotton: Thank you. General Caine, you agree  
9 with that, I presume, that our organic industrial base,  
10 especially the arsenals and ammunition plants and depots --

11 General Caine: I do.

12 Senator Cotton: -- are a solution to this problem,  
13 not a part of the problem or a relic of the past?

14 General Caine: I do, sir, and I am aware of your  
15 letter to the Army on that matter, which I know they are  
16 looking at.

17 Senator Cotton: Okay. Thank you.

18 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator Cotton.  
19 Senator Gillibrand.

20 Senator Gillibrand: Secretary Hegseth, this Committee  
21 has had many hearings about the future of warfare and  
22 making sure that we have the complement of warfighters that  
23 we need to win any future wars, and not focus on how we  
24 could have done better in the previous war.

25 One of the areas where I have deep concern is cyber

1 defense in this country. I am concerned about cyber  
2 warfare. I am concerned about cyber terrorism. I am also  
3 concerned about the deployment of UAS, as we have seen  
4 being extremely powerful in the war in Ukraine. We have  
5 seen what Iran has done. So I am concerned about our  
6 posture with regard to UAS, a defensive posture with regard  
7 to UAS attacks.

8 I am very concerned about what happened over many of  
9 our military sites, drone configurations hovering for weeks  
10 without response, no authorities to be able to track where  
11 those drones came from by the DoD to assess are they  
12 Iranian, are they Chinese, are they Russian, are they on  
13 spy missions, what is their purpose. Inadequate  
14 authorities, inadequate defenses, inadequate technology.  
15 The Langley incursion is incomprehensible.

16 On top of that, I am very concerned that we are not  
17 investing in our cyber professionals, that we do not have  
18 enough cyber offense, enough cyber defense. We have  
19 currently 30,000 open cyber positions within the DoD.

20 So I would like to hear from you, what is your plan to  
21 have cyber defense and cyber warriors at the appropriate  
22 complement, and number two, what is your plan to create the  
23 authorities that you need for UAS defense, and to have the  
24 inadequate response of this is someone else's job no longer  
25 come out of our leaders?

1           Secretary Hegseth: Well, Senator, thank you for the  
2 question. You are right over the target. Cyber needs to  
3 be a part of every single way that we plan and look at the  
4 world. That gray zone part of conflict, and we cannot cede  
5 that terrain, in any way, to our adversaries.

6           So you will see the resources in this budget that  
7 invest in that. You will see it fully integrated in the  
8 planning and capabilities. And what we are looking for in  
9 the next CYBERCOM, and what we are looking for there, our  
10 Deputy Secretary of Defense is leading a charge to make  
11 sure it fits precisely what the world needs today.

12          Senator Gillibrand: So we have a program that this  
13 Committee supported in the last two NDAA's, which is a Cyber  
14 Academy, to create a pipeline of young people who do cyber  
15 for service. So they get a state-of-the-art cyber  
16 education at over 600 schools around the country, and then  
17 they dedicate the number of years they had education to the  
18 Department of Defense or the intelligence community. And  
19 right now it is not being funded.

20          And right now, because of the hiring freeze, these  
21 kids, who have completed their degree under the Cyber  
22 Service Academy, actually cannot get a job at the DoD or  
23 the intelligence community, and they are either going to  
24 have to no longer serve, which was part of the program, who  
25 get employed somewhere else and we lose them.

1           So what are you doing to unplug this problem of not  
2   hiring these cyber professionals immediately, because they  
3   are part of the Cyber Service Program, and your budget does  
4   not show that you are planning to fill 100 cyber positions  
5   for these young people who want to serve in the I or in the  
6   Department of Defense?

7           Secretary Hegseth: We will review that aspect of the  
8   hiring freeze and the Cyber Academy. We want those  
9   positions filled. We are fully committed to it.

10          And then on counter UAS, which you mentioned, it is, I  
11   mean, it is a reality of the modern battlefield, whether it  
12   is in Ukraine or elsewhere, that we have to fully account  
13   for and address, as aggressively as possible. And you have  
14   my assurances at the highest levels we are putting our best  
15   people in charge of ensuring we have counter UAS systems  
16   that can match the threats of the future.

17          Senator Gillibrand: I would like you to prepare for  
18   this Committee two letters in response to these  
19   requestions. One, what are you going to do to fill the  
20   1,000 slots for the Cyber Academy, and how are you going to  
21   get this hiring freeze taken care of? And two, what is  
22   your plan for increased authorities, increased investment,  
23   appropriate review of UAS that hover over our military and  
24   nuclear sites, so this Committee has a fulsome response  
25   from your whole team about how you will address these two

1 problems.

2 Secretary Hegseth: We will get that to you, Senator,  
3 and authorities -- you are right -- is a huge issue on  
4 counter UAS.

5 Senator Gillibrand: It is something Senator Cotton  
6 and I are committed to passing. We both serve on  
7 intelligence and Armed Services, and so we share the  
8 urgency on this issue.

9 Chairman Wicker: And so, Mr. Secretary, you will  
10 submit those letters for the record. Thank you, sir.  
11 Thank you, Senator Gillibrand. Senator Rounds.

12 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To all of  
13 you, first of all, thank you for your service to our  
14 country.

15 I have heard now from 25 senior Department officials,  
16 including every service chief and eight combatant  
17 commanders that vacating the 3.1 to 3.45 GHz and the 7-8  
18 GHz bands of the spectrum would have significantly negative  
19 consequences for our warfighting capabilities. Being  
20 forced to share these bands with commercial interests in a  
21 non-optimal way would have the same impact.

22 General Caine, does the Joint Force have capabilities  
23 operating on the 3.1 to 3.45 band and the 7-8 bands of the  
24 spectrum which would be used in a conflict with China?

25 General Caine: We do, Senator, yes.

1 Senator Rounds: And would those capabilities be  
2 negatively impacted if the Department of Defense were  
3 forced to share those bands with commercial users in a non-  
4 optimal manner?

5 General Caine: Senator, I think the key is non-  
6 optimal. I know there is some work going on around dynamic  
7 sharing that would minimize, to an acceptable level, the  
8 ability to frequency hop in and out of those particular  
9 bands that would not adversely impact the Joint Force.

10 Senator Rounds: But as of today there is no way to  
11 make it happen.

12 General Caine: Not today, as you know, Senator, and I  
13 appreciate your leadership on this. But there is a lot of  
14 work going on in that space, sir.

15 Senator Rounds: I think we agree that the economic  
16 security is national security and that we need to move  
17 forward in the next gen with regard to our communications  
18 capabilities. But as it pertains to spectrum auction  
19 authority, how do you view a spectrum auction process that  
20 bases decisions solely on economic considerations?

21 General Caine: Well, as you said, Senator, economic  
22 security is national security. You know, those are policy  
23 decisions. My job as the Chairman is to provide the  
24 military advice to our policymakers and let them make that  
25 decision, and this firmly sits in that policy space. So

1   rather than put myself sideways, out of my swim lane, I  
2   will leave it to them to decide.

3       Senator Rounds: But in your professional military  
4   opinion, the areas between 3.1 to 3.45 and the 7-8 band are  
5   critical to our national defense.

6       General Caine: 3.1 to 3.45, no doubt. The lower end  
7   of the 7 there is, I think, some discussion. 7.4 to 8.4 is  
8   an area that I would prefer us to hang onto, Senator.

9       Senator Rounds: Thank you. And Secretary Hegseth, I  
10   know that you have told me that you would be willing to go  
11   to the mat to protect these critical capabilities. I think  
12   that is critical. In fact, these bands are essential to  
13   building Golden Dome, which will require even more radars  
14   and military communications infrastructure than we  
15   currently have, particularly around population centers and  
16   defense sites, as we see in Israel today.

17       Would you agree with that today, sir?

18       Secretary Hegseth: Yes, Senator. I concur with the  
19   Chairman's characterization, and I would just say at no  
20   time in conversations around spectrum has DoD's equity  
21   never been -- it has always been fully represented in those  
22   conversations, to ensure we protect what we need to  
23   protect.

24       Senator Rounds: Thank you. General Caine, what is  
25   your assessment of the operational and strategic benefits

1 of maintaining the dual-hat leadership arrangement between  
2 U.S. Cyber Command and National Security Agency, the NSA,  
3 particularly in terms of intelligence integration, speed of  
4 action, and mission success in contested environments?

5 General Caine: Sir, I can argue both sides of that  
6 one. You know, mindful that that is a policy discussion, I  
7 think, that either will go on soon or has been going on,  
8 and I would prefer to leave that to the policymakers. I  
9 think the key is both organizations are critically  
10 important, and whether it is a single commander or two  
11 leaders that collaborate with no distance between them, we  
12 achieve the same end state.

13 Senator Rounds: Would it be fair to say that the dual  
14 hat prevents stovepipes in the cyber domain today?

15 General Caine: Senator, there are stovepipes in all  
16 kinds of domains today, so I cannot assure you that it  
17 would prevent them. What I do hope is that whatever path  
18 we take, we select leaders who are committed to integrating  
19 and knocking down those stovepipes, whether it is a single  
20 leader or two leaders. That is what the nation needs.

21 Senator Rounds: We have been successful in making  
22 significant exchanges in utilizing assets for both the NSA  
23 and for Cyber Command so far. Secretary Hegseth, are you  
24 committed to maintaining the dual-hat relationship that has  
25 significantly benefitted our national security to date?

1           Secretary Hegseth:   Senator, as of right now we are  
2 maintaining the status quo, but it is something we reserve  
3 the right to review.

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

5           Chairman Wicker:   Thank you, Senator Rounds.   Senator  
6 Blumenthal.

7           Senator Blumenthal:   Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  
8 Secretary Hegseth, you have been asked about options for  
9 the use of force abroad.   I want to ask about the use of  
10 our military at home.   I have been deeply disturbed and  
11 alarmed by the use of active-duty troops, marines, in Los  
12 Angeles, and President Trump has made clear his intentions  
13 to continue to use the military to suppress dissent and  
14 likely inflame tensions there and elsewhere, all under the  
15 guise of enforcing the law.   What he is doing may well be  
16 illegal.

17           I want to ask you about contingency plans for the use  
18 of active-duty military in other cities.   Do you have such  
19 contingency plans?

20           Secretary Hegseth:   Senator, I would just say we share  
21 the President's view that, as you characterized it, we are  
22 deeply disturbed and alarmed that ICE officers are being  
23 attacked while doing their job in any city in America.   And  
24 so allowing National Guard or active-duty soldiers --

25           Senator Blumenthal:   -- alarmed by the attacks on ICE

1 officers, yes, but we ought to be equally alarmed by the  
2 illegal use of active-duty marines or other military. I  
3 take it from your answer that you do have contingency plans  
4 for the use of military in other cities.

5 Secretary Hegseth: We have never, and will not,  
6 illegally deployed troops. All have been under existing  
7 and well-established authorities --

8 Senator Blumenthal: But you do have such plans.

9 Secretary Hegseth: -- use troops to support law  
10 enforcement officers.

11 Senator Blumenthal: I find that equally alarming. So  
12 far there has been no legal justification. It has been  
13 challenged successfully. I think that it will prevail,  
14 those challenges will prevail in the courts. And I want to  
15 ask you right now to submit to this panel those contingency  
16 plans for the use of active-duty military in other cities.

17 I want to move on to another area of questioning. The  
18 Chairman has said that you have submitted precious little  
19 detail, to quote him, precious little detail about the  
20 budget. I think there is no detail. This budget is  
21 literally a rough outline, with short-sighted shortfalls,  
22 for example, the shortfall on the Columbia class, \$2  
23 billion, only about \$1 billion for Virginia class. There  
24 is virtually no outline or specificity as to how you are  
25 going to provide drones to defend and also engage in

1 offensive outline and maneuvers.

2 The nature of warfare is changing, right before our  
3 eyes, in real time. Unmanned aerial and undersea warfare  
4 is happening in Ukraine and elsewhere. And I think that  
5 you owe this Committee and the American public more  
6 specificity in that budget, because we will be at risk --  
7 we are at risk right now -- in the Middle East. And I want  
8 to know whether we have contingency plans to protect our  
9 U.S. personnel in the region from the kind of swarm of  
10 drones that have proved devastating already to three of our  
11 service people in the Middle East, on a base in Jordan. Do  
12 you have such plans to protect against drones there?

13 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, we work hand-in-glove  
14 with the Joint Staff and CENTCOM and every COCOM,  
15 especially right now, to ensure everything at our disposal  
16 is available to ensure maximum force protection against any  
17 contingency, including the one you described, sir.

18 Senator Blumenthal: Well, I have no assurance that we  
19 have the capacity to safeguard against the swarm of small,  
20 lightweight, slow-moving drones that are, in my view, our  
21 major vulnerability. And right now, if we engage in the  
22 Iran conflict, would put us and U.S. personnel at risk  
23 there.

24 Let me ask you about Ukraine. I have just returned  
25 from my seventh trip to Ukraine. I am the advocate, chief

1 sponsor, with Senator Graham in the Russia Sanctions Bill.  
2 You said that the United States, and the Ranking Member  
3 cited it, that we must start by recognizing that returning  
4 to Ukraine pre-2014 borders is an unrealistic objective and  
5 will only prolong the war.

6 My question to you is, when will you release the PDA  
7 \$4 billion in equipment that Ukraine desperately needs? It  
8 is sitting there. Ukraine deserves it. When will it be  
9 released?

10 Secretary Hegseth: We are aware of PDA 75, and that  
11 is a decision we can make in the future.

12 Senator Blumenthal: My time has expired, but I do not  
13 consider that answer adequate.

14 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.  
15 Senator Ernst.

16 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you,  
17 Secretary, and thank you, Chairman, for being here. Ms.  
18 MacDonnell, I am actually going to have a question for you.  
19 Thank you very much for being here.

20 I know that Iran is on our minds right now, and  
21 Secretary, I will just pose a very quick question to you.  
22 October 7, 2023, Hamas attacked Israel. Who is the primary  
23 funder of Hamas?

24 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, it is Iran.

25 Senator Ernst: And who is the primary sponsor that

1 provides them with the weapons that they used to attack  
2 Israel?

3 Secretary Hegseth: Same answer, ma'am.

4 Senator Ernst: And maybe our public is not aware, but  
5 43 Americans lost their lives on October 7th, at the hands  
6 of Hamas, which is an Iran-backed terrorist organization,  
7 43 Americans. We never talk about it, folks. I heard  
8 nothing about this in the Biden administration.

9 So when there is question about whether it is  
10 appropriate for America to be engaged in the Middle East  
11 and defending Americans that live and work abroad, I think  
12 there is our answer. So thank you, Secretary.

13 I will start with the Secretary, and then I will come  
14 to you, Ms. MacDonnell. Secretary Hegseth, I do want to  
15 thank you, because we have had many discussions about this.  
16 You have appointed Steve Erickson as the Executive Director  
17 of Force Resiliency, and he will oversee the Department's  
18 Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, what we know  
19 as SAPRO. And he will directly report to you on the issue  
20 of sexual assault within our military. You have been very  
21 responsive on this issue, and I commend you for that. And  
22 I have already received my first briefing by Mr. Erickson.

23 To continue building on this progress, I am going to  
24 hold quarterly meetings with the SAPRO, and we want to make  
25 sure that we continue the momentum that we are seeing

1 within the Department on that.

2 And Secretary Hegseth, from your vantage point, what  
3 positive trends are you seeing out of SAPRO?

4 Secretary Hegseth: First of all, Senator, I want to  
5 thank you and other members of this Committee for the work  
6 you have done on that issue. And I think in large part,  
7 and you will see this in this budget, we continue to fund  
8 the programs, which have seen efficacy.

9 And so I think a lot of these were newer programs, new  
10 initiatives, new emphasis put in place that we have simply  
11 sought to maintain and accelerate, and you see that in that  
12 in this budget. And thankfully, we have seen this year  
13 sexual assault numbers decrease. One is too many, as we  
14 have said before, but a decrease is a good trend to see,  
15 and we want to continue that.

16 Senator Ernst: Wonderful. And we will continue  
17 working with the Department on that. An amendment that I  
18 am going to propose for this year's NDAA would require  
19 quarterly briefings from the SAPRO for Members of Congress,  
20 just as they do with suicide prevention. So we will  
21 continue working on that.

22 I also would love to touch upon a number of other  
23 issues I have worked when it comes to fiscal sanity within  
24 the Department. I can submit those for the record, because  
25 I do want to give Ms. MacDonnell an opportunity.

1           Let's talk about an audit. I love working with the  
2   comptrollers out there. But GAO released a report warning  
3   that the Department of Defense is unlikely to achieve a  
4   clean audit by 2028, citing long-standing financial  
5   management weaknesses. And it is my understanding that a  
6   key issue in the Department's continued reliance on  
7   outdated business and feeder systems that lack internal  
8   controls continues to contribute to that.

9           So to help address that, in the reconciliation package  
10   we have \$350 million that will be dedicated and directed  
11   toward improving audit outcomes across the Department.

12          So Ms. MacDonnell, all to you. Can you walk us  
13   through how the Department intends to meet its statutory  
14   requirement of achieving that clean audit by 2028.

15          Ms. MacDonnell: Thank you for the question, Senator,  
16   and thank you for your support in reconciliation for  
17   automation, AI, and business system replacement to achieve  
18   the audit.

19          The first day we came in, that was one of the first  
20   topics the Secretary and I discussed, and he actually just  
21   put out a memo with guidance for milestones each fiscal  
22   year that the Department is going to achieve, to achieve  
23   the financial audit by 2028, or sooner, as he has  
24   challenged us to do.

25          The Marine Corps just passed their second clean audit

1 opinion. Two additional components have done the same  
2 recently. And within the next 3 years, under the  
3 Secretary's guidance, the remainder of the Department will  
4 achieve the clean audit opinion.

5 Senator Ernst: Well, outstanding. We really  
6 appreciate that. Thank you, everyone, for your service to  
7 our great nation.

8 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator Ernst.  
9 Senator Hirono.

10 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary  
11 Hegseth, you have had a tough start. At your confirmation  
12 hearing my Democratic colleagues and I rightly questioned  
13 whether you had the requisite qualifications and experience  
14 to lead the DoD, the largest Federal agency, especially  
15 given your checkered past, which included paying \$50,000 in  
16 hush money to settle a sexual assault allegation against  
17 you, and driving two veterans' organizations into the  
18 ground.

19 After only months on the job, our concerns about you  
20 have proven true, as far as I am concerned. Instead of  
21 strengthening national security, you have turned the  
22 Pentagon into a dysfunction mess. You are jeopardizing  
23 military operations and servicemembers' lives with your  
24 unprecedented action of texting classified military plans  
25 to anyone who might stoke your ego.

1           Leading the Department of Defense is more than just a  
2 PR campaign filled with photo ops. While you pose for  
3 cameras, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine  
4 continues unabated. Israel and Iran are also at war, in  
5 large part because your boss tore up a multilateral  
6 agreement former President Obama brokered with the U.K.,  
7 France, Germany, China, and Russia, that curbed Iran's  
8 nuclear program and ambitions. Meanwhile, China advances  
9 in the Pacific, as this regime undermines and attacks our  
10 allies. At a time when steady leadership is critical, we  
11 are confronted with crises and instability.

12           Mr. Secretary, close to 5,000 Marines and National  
13 Guard have been deployed to L.A. without the request or  
14 consent of the California Governor or the Los Angeles Mayor  
15 Bass. Rather than calming the situation, this troop  
16 deployment is purposefully inflaming and escalates  
17 tensions.

18           You claim lethality is your top priority. Do you plan  
19 to unleash this lethal force against U.S. citizens and  
20 civilians in L.A. and other cities?

21           Secretary Hegseth: Well, Senator, I would reject most  
22 of the characterization of that statement, including  
23 lethality against U.S. cities, when all of those National  
24 Guardsmen and Marines --

25           Senator Hirono: Mr. Secretary --

1 Secretary Hegseth: -- have conducted themselves with  
2 the utmost of professionalism, defending our Federal  
3 agents, Americans.

4 Senator Hirono: Well, we obviously --

5 Secretary Hegseth: They deserve to be able to do  
6 their job --

7 Senator Hirono: -- have a different --

8 Secretary Hegseth: -- to deport illegal immigrants  
9 after the previous administration --

10 Senator Hirono: Reclaiming my time.

11 Secretary Hegseth: -- allowed 21 million illegals to  
12 cross our border.

13 Senator Hirono: You know, I am not here to listen to  
14 your rhetorical responses. I would like to have a  
15 professional response that I would expect from somebody who  
16 is the Secretary of Defense.

17 Millions of people peacefully demonstrated this  
18 weekend against the President acting like a king. Given  
19 this regime's dangerous policy of mobilizing troops inside  
20 the U.S., the politicizing of the military is a legitimate  
21 concern. So given the dangerous policy of mobilizing  
22 troops inside the U.S., if ordered by the President -- I am  
23 going to ask you once again -- to shoot peaceful protesters  
24 in the legs, would you carry out such an order from the  
25 President?

1           Secretary Hegseth:  Senator, as I have said before, of  
2   course I reject the premise of your question, and the  
3   characterization that I would give, or are giving unlawful  
4   orders.  It is all meant --

5           Senator Hirono:  Excuse me.

6           Secretary Hegseth:  -- to attempt to smear the  
7   Commander in Chief, and I will not fall for it.

8           Senator Hirono:  Again, considering that the  
9   President, in his first term, actually ordered such a  
10  thing, it is not a premise that you can reject.  He can do  
11  the same thing.  So again, I think you would just follow  
12  what the President wants you to do.

13          Let's face it, it is not normal to call up our troops  
14  in this way, and there is active litigation against this  
15  deployment.  Will you follow a court's order regarding  
16  whether or not this deployment is legal?  If the court says  
17  this deployment of troops into our cities is not legal,  
18  would you follow that court's order?

19          Secretary Hegseth:  It is pending the courts, Senator.

20          Senator Hirono:  Well, when the court decides, would  
21  you follow the court's order, decision?

22          Secretary Hegseth:  I do not believe district courts  
23  should be determining national security policy.

24          Senator Hirono:  So you will not be following the  
25  decisions of the --

1           Secretary Hegseth: When it goes to the Supreme Court,  
2 we will see.

3           Senator Hirono: -- court, and unless the President  
4 decides to appeal, there you have it. So I take it that  
5 you do not consider district court decisions to be  
6 legitimate.

7           Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8           Chairman Wicker: Senator Sullivan.

9           Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr.  
10 Secretary, General, welcome. I think you guys are doing a  
11 great job, and I think this kind of line of questioning, it  
12 is amazing how my colleagues on the other side of the aisle  
13 are all now focused on readiness, right. I mean, I know my  
14 colleague from Hawaii chaired the Readiness Subcommittee.  
15 I think we had two hearings in 4 years. So I appreciate  
16 your focus on readiness, lethality, deterrence.

17           Mr. Secretary, thank you also for your focus on  
18 INDOPACOM. Your speech and attendance at the Shangri-La  
19 Dialogue was really outstanding. And General, I am glad  
20 you were there, as well. I appreciate your direct answer  
21 to the Chairman on following the laws directed by the  
22 budget reconciliation bill, which hopefully we are going to  
23 get over the goal line. It will be great for our military.  
24 It is important that all your subordinates get that  
25 message, as well. I am sure they will.

1           General, thank you for your visit to Alaska, the most  
2   strategic place in the world. Mr. Secretary, I would love  
3   to have you up there soon. As a matter of fact, for your  
4   staff to take a look, August 16, 18, that is going to be  
5   the overlap of two large-scale exercises in Alaska,  
6   Northern Edge, Arctic Edge. I believe the INDOPACOM  
7   Commander and NORTHCOM Commander will likely be there  
8   around that time. I would love to have you there, Mr.  
9   Secretary. So take a look at that date.

10           General, do you have any quick takeaways from your  
11   Alaska visit?

12           General Caine: Sir, thanks for hosting me up there on  
13   my way to Shangri-La. It was great to see all the  
14   soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines on the Northern Flank,  
15   getting after it. It reminded me of the criticality of  
16   that part of our country and the importance of taking power  
17   projection up there. I know the services are all looking  
18   at that. So thank you for having me.

19           Senator Sullivan: Everybody appreciated your visit,  
20   so thanks again.

21           Mr. Secretary, I really appreciate your focus on  
22   reestablishing deterrence. By the way, it is really hard  
23   to do once you have lost it. This has been particularly  
24   true with regard to Iran.

25           Let me give you my view on how tough that has been.

1 You know, the Quds Force, led by Soleimani, killed and  
2 wounded thousands of U.S. servicemembers when they were  
3 providing EFPs to the Iraqi Shia militias, while John Kerry  
4 was palling around with the Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif  
5 on the JCPOA stuff. General, you might remember, one of  
6 your great predecessors, General Dunford, in a hearing  
7 before this Committee, said we had completely lost  
8 deterrence, that the Iranians thought they could kill  
9 American servicemembers any time they wanted, and they  
10 ended up killing over 600 and wounding over 2,000, with no  
11 consequences. That was General Dunford telling this  
12 Committee. "We regained deterrence under President Trump's  
13 first term, with a maximum pressure campaign and, in  
14 particular, killing Soleimani."

15 Biden came in. Appeasement of Iran was the order of  
16 the day. Appeasement of Iran's proxy was the order of the  
17 day, and we lost deterrence, again, so much so that not  
18 only did he unleash the proxies, the Iranians, and fund  
19 them, but it was public knowledge that Iran was trying to  
20 assassinate senior U.S. officials, including Mike Pompeo  
21 and President Trump. Talk about losing deterrence.

22 Mr. Secretary, Iran's military and leadership is in  
23 complete disarray right now because of the bold actions by  
24 Israel. Is this an opportunity now to once again, like we  
25 did in the first term of the Trump administration,

1 reestablish deterrence against this terrorist regime by  
2 making sure, one way or the other, they never have the  
3 capacity to enrich or produce a nuclear bomb, a goal that  
4 President Trump has repeatedly emphasized?

5 And again, I thank you for focusing on reestablishing  
6 deterrence.

7 Secretary Hegseth: It is critical, and you are right,  
8 it is difficult to reestablish when you have lost it.

9 Senator Sullivan: It is.

10 Secretary Hegseth: Which we did under the Biden  
11 administration. We know right now that Tehran understands  
12 exactly what the President is saying. He said 60 days.  
13 The world can believe it, and the world cannot believe it.  
14 He said 60 days. They had an opportunity to make a deal.  
15 They should have made a deal. President Trump's word means  
16 something. The world understands that. And at the Defense  
17 Department, our job is to stand ready and prepared with  
18 options, and that is precisely what we are doing.

19 Senator Sullivan: So is this an opportunity now to  
20 reestablish deterrence the way it was done in the first  
21 administration?

22 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, I think we already have,  
23 in many ways, in this environment, reestablished  
24 deterrence. The question is, in the coming days, exactly  
25 what direction that goes.

1           Senator Sullivan: Finally, Golden Dome. We look  
2 forward to working with you. It was good to see you at the  
3 Oval Office. We have a great opportunity here --  
4 presidential leadership, your leadership, budget  
5 reconciliation bill, \$25 billion down payment. Senator  
6 Cramer and I will be introducing legislation with Senator  
7 Sheehy on this next week, to firmly entrench our strategy.  
8 We have been working closely with DoD on Golden Dome in the  
9 law, and we look forward to continuing to work with you on  
10 that.

11          Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Sullivan.  
12 Senator Kaine.

13          Senator Kaine: Thank you. Mr. Secretary, earlier  
14 this month you announced a plan to change the name of three  
15 Virginia military bases to restore the names of  
16 Confederate-era generals on those bases. You researched to  
17 find brave American soldiers with the same last names --  
18 Lee, Hill, and Pickett -- who had not fought for the  
19 Confederacy, and declared that those Confederate-adjacent  
20 names would be restored.

21          The problem is that you had to strip away the names of  
22 four amazing people, that the Pentagon and local  
23 communities had chosen to honor at the Virginia bases. Var  
24 Barfoot -- he was a Mississippi native, Mr. Chair, who came  
25 to Fort Pickett in the early '40s to train for war. He

1 fought all over Europe in World War II. He won the  
2 Congressional Medal of Honor for his bravery. Leading his  
3 platoon in southern Italy he killed 10 of the enemy,  
4 captured 17 more, and escorted 2 wounded Americans 1,700  
5 yards to safety under enemy fire. He stayed in the Army  
6 for another 34 years, seeing action in both the Korean and  
7 the Vietnam Wars, and being assigned as the Army liaison to  
8 the Virginia National Guard at Fort Pickett.

9 Long after he retired, he maintained his tie to the  
10 fort and to the Virginia National Guard. I was at the  
11 naming ceremony where this base, to which he had devoted  
12 much of his life, was named in his honor. His family was  
13 there, and they were so proud.

14 Arthur Gregg served in the Army for more than 30  
15 years, the first African American to reach the rank of  
16 brigadier general, first to reach the rank of lieutenant  
17 general. He began as an enlisted, eventually decided to  
18 become a commissioned officer. He went to Fort Lee for  
19 quartermaster training, quickly rose through the ranks as  
20 an instructor, even though he was not allowed to go to the  
21 Officers' Club because of the color of his skin.

22 He finished his career in 1979 as the director of all  
23 Army logistics operations around the world. He stayed near  
24 Fort Lee in retirement, raised his family there, and was a  
25 continuous beloved presence until his death last summer at

1 96. He was actually at the renaming ceremony with his  
2 family 2022, at this place that meant so much to him.

3 Charity Adams. Charity Adams was an Army officer  
4 during World War II, the first African American woman  
5 allowed to join the WACS. She was the commanding officer  
6 of the 6888 Central Postal Directory Battalion, a unique  
7 battalion composed primarily of African American women,  
8 making sure that American GIs in Europe got their mail  
9 during World War II.

10 Our colleagues, Jacky Rosen and Jerry Moran,  
11 successfully passed a bill, in 2022, giving the 6888 the  
12 Congressional Gold Medal. Charity Adams was the highest  
13 ranking African American woman in the military at the end  
14 of World War II. Her family was at the dedication of Fort  
15 Gregg-Adams, named in honor of these two trailblazing  
16 logistics leaders. They were so proud.

17 Finally, Mary Walker, the only woman ever to receive  
18 the Congressional Medal of Honor. She graduated from  
19 Syracuse Medical School in 1855. She tried to join the  
20 Union Army as a surgeon and was turned away because she was  
21 a woman. But the need was so great she eventually got  
22 hired in a military hospital in Washington, and then was  
23 deployed as an Army surgeon with the Army of the Cumberland  
24 in the 52nd Ohio Infantry, becoming the first female  
25 surgeon in the U.S. Army. She served all over Virginia,

1 including the place where the base is now named after her.  
2 She frequently crossed battle lines to treat civilians, and  
3 even treated Confederate soldiers. She was captured, a  
4 prison of war, in Richmond. President Andrew Johnson gave  
5 her the Congressional Medal of Honor after the Civil War.

6 Why did you decide that these four patriots were not  
7 worthy enough to have their names on a base?

8 Secretary Hegseth: Well, Senator, as you know, this  
9 was never about the names of the bases they were renamed  
10 to.

11 Senator Kaine: So you do not challenge the worthiness  
12 --

13 Secretary Hegseth: All bases --

14 Senator Kaine: -- you do not --

15 Secretary Hegseth: We are restoring all bases to  
16 their original names, because we are not about erasing  
17 history.

18 Senator Kaine: Okay. You do not care about their  
19 military record. You wanted to restore the Confederate  
20 names. When you called the Gregg family to tell them that  
21 their dad's name was no longer going to be on the base,  
22 what was their reaction?

23 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, the Army notified them of  
24 that.

25 Senator Kaine: You did not call any of the families,

1 and I have spoken with the families, and the families were  
2 called by the press. That is how they learned about this.  
3 They learned about it from the press. You did not call the  
4 Barfoot family, the Gregg family, and you did not call the  
5 Adams family.

6 I told the families I would ask you about this today.  
7 In fact, two of General Gregg's granddaughters, Avery and  
8 Sydney, are right here in the audience, and I want to ask  
9 you this as I close. While you announced that these brave  
10 men and women's names would be stripped from the Virginia  
11 bases, no orders to that effect have been received by the  
12 base commanders. In light of the patriotic service of Dan  
13 Barfoot, Arthur Gregg, Charity Adams, and Mary Walker, I  
14 would like to ask you simply not to issue the orders  
15 changing the names of these Virginia bases. These  
16 families, my commonwealth, are very proud of these heroes,  
17 very satisfied with these names, and ask you not to change  
18 them.

19 Will you honor these exemplary patriots and keep their  
20 worthy names in places on the bases they loved and where  
21 they served?

22 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, we very much thank and  
23 appreciate them for their service and will find ways to  
24 recognize them. But the orders will soon be going to those  
25 bases to change the names back to the original name that

1 never should have been changed.

2 Senator Kaine: But you have the power to not send  
3 those orders. They have not gone out yet. Correct?

4 Chairman Wicker: Thank you. Senator, your time has  
5 expired. Senator Cramer.

6 Senator Cramer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you,  
7 Mr. Secretary, General, for being here and for your  
8 service.

9 I want to go back to something that Senator Hirono  
10 mentioned in her questioning. She credited the Obama  
11 administration, along with some other allies, with curbing  
12 Iran's nuclear capabilities. As I recall, it licensed  
13 their aspirations, and a serious problem and we are still  
14 living with some of that.

15 And by the way, when it comes to deterrence, and I  
16 appreciate you making this point and I agree with my  
17 colleague from Alaska, Senator Sullivan, on this,  
18 deterrence is definitely made up of weapons, but it is more  
19 of a reputation than it is a capability. The capability is  
20 only good if you have earned the reputation.

21 And with that in mind, and speaking of Iran and the  
22 current situation, maybe, General, I could ask you this.  
23 If Fordow was destroyed, demolished, if all of the nuclear  
24 capabilities that Iran has today were wiped out, would the  
25 war be shortened or lengthened, realizing that is not the

1     only factor, of course.

2           General Caine:  Yes, sir.  And, of course, I cannot  
3     split that hair, given the complexities of the war that is  
4     ongoing there.  So I would rather not comment on one  
5     particular part.  You know, the Israelis, as reported in  
6     the open source press, are making great progress, so I  
7     think I will just leave it at that, Senator.

8           Senator Cramer:  And I understand and appreciate that.  
9     Can you then highlight for me -- as we talk about  
10    deterrence and reputation I am sitting here thinking about  
11    the air superiority that Israel has accomplished over Iran.  
12    I would like to have you speak to that and then speak,  
13    perhaps, to the lack of air superiority that Russia had  
14    over Ukraine and the difference in those two wars.  My  
15    point being, how important is air superiority in the  
16    current fights and in our future fights?

17          General Caine:  Well, sir, we could spend hours  
18    talking about the advocacy of air power.  I think the  
19    freedom of maneuver that it creates is a great example of  
20    that.  If you look at the two theaters right now, with the  
21    Israeli Air Force striking at will, at this point, over  
22    Iran, juxtaposed with the challenges that we are having  
23    with the frozen forward line of troops in Europe is a great  
24    case study of it.

25          You know, the great thinkers, air power thinkers, are

1 looking at the advancement in technologies from both  
2 theaters, the advancement of first-person view drones and  
3 things like that. And I think folks are going to have to  
4 think clearly about what does the future of air superiority  
5 look like and how does it evolve to make sure that we are  
6 protecting those essential teammates that are on the  
7 ground, fighting in order to prevent frozen FLOTs, forward  
8 lines of troops, in the future.

9 Senator Cramer: I appreciate that. Secretary  
10 Hegseth, there has been some discussion, certainly in your  
11 opening statement and then with a couple of the questions,  
12 related to base defense, and this would be something both  
13 of you could speak to, but I would like to start with you,  
14 Secretary.

15 Obviously, we have seen some pretty spectacular  
16 displays of the ability to go deep, covertly deep within  
17 the enemy's territory, and take out some pretty significant  
18 assets, both in Russia and in Iran. A lot of us fear that  
19 we are vulnerable, as well. You spoke very briefly in  
20 reference, I think, in response to one of Senator  
21 Gillibrand's questions, about the importance of policy. So  
22 when we talk about the United States itself and our bases  
23 here, in the country, policy is a bigger challenge than  
24 weapons, to be honest.

25 But what about responsibility? In other words, I

1 think to me there is some confusion over, is there a  
2 service, is there a particular institution that is  
3 responsible for base security and base defense, or is it up  
4 to the individual services to protect their own bases? Can  
5 you help straighten that out for me?

6 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, you are right to ask the  
7 question. We met on this very topic 2 days ago, because  
8 you are right, we have already made initial efforts. But I  
9 liken it to the effort that was made around IEDs in Iraq  
10 and Afghanistan, where it could not be a service-only  
11 response. It needed to be across the Joint Force. It  
12 needed to be immediate, and the capabilities had to be  
13 prepared to adapt in real time to adjustments the enemy is  
14 making. And you saw that in counter-IED technology.

15 We need the same type of effort in counter-UAS, not  
16 just forward deployed, because right now you do it with  
17 what you have, but also at home, considering the  
18 authorities. So that is something the Department is doing  
19 in real time.

20 Senator Cramer: If you have a second. I guess that  
21 is it. I am out of time. Thank you.

22 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator Cramer.  
23 Senator King.

24 Senator King: Mr. Secretary, I am somewhat puzzled.  
25 I grew up in Virginia where Robert E. Lee was revered. I

1 think when I was a kid his birthday was a school holiday.  
2 But as I grew older and learned more about American history  
3 I learned that he fit the classic definition of a traitor.  
4 He took up arms against his country. He broke his oath as  
5 a member of the United States Army, which he took upon  
6 entering his career at West Point.

7 Why are you going through these incredible gymnastics,  
8 finding current soldiers or other soldiers to rename? And  
9 you slipped a minute ago. You said, "We are returning  
10 these bases to their original names." Robert E. Lee,  
11 leading general of the Confederacy, Pickett, the other  
12 names. Why are you doing this? I do not understand what  
13 the motivation is to rename bases for people who took up  
14 arms against their country, on behalf of slavery? What  
15 possible motivation can there be for this? Who is telling  
16 you to do this? Who is urging you to do this?

17 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, the veterans, the  
18 servicemembers across the country, who have deployed from  
19 Fort Bragg or Fort Benning or Fort Hood or Fort Pickett,  
20 there is a legacy. There is a connection to those bases  
21 and to those places, to what they trained for there, what  
22 they did, and what they came home back to. That matters to  
23 them. Ask enough of them, as I do, all the time, before  
24 and later. And we recognize the service of those who were  
25 put into the replacement. No one is disputing that. I

1 would never dispute that.

2 What we are looking at is erasing history, erasing  
3 names, erasing base names that servicemembers are tied to -  
4 -

5 Senator King: -- recognizing this --

6 Secretary Hegseth: Ask the people that served at  
7 Bragg or Fort Benning if they like the fact that the names  
8 have been returned, and to a man and to a woman, they will  
9 tell you, "Thank God we are back to Fort Bragg," and  
10 thankfully because so many men and women in this country  
11 have served, there is a Benning and a Bragg and a Pickett  
12 and a Hood that has a Silver Star or a Medal of Honor, that  
13 we could rename the base to because of the limits of what  
14 Congress allowed us to do.

15 So this is something we have been proud to do,  
16 something that is important for the morale of the Army, and  
17 those communities appreciate that we have returned it back  
18 to what it was, instead of trying to play this game of  
19 erasing names.

20 Senator King: We are not erasing history, Mr.  
21 Secretary. We are recognizing history and recognizing that  
22 mistakes have been made in this country. The greatest of  
23 all was the Civil War, where people took up arms against  
24 their country on behalf of the institution of slavery. And  
25 to continue the practice of recognizing those people and

1 honor thing by the naming of these bases is, I believe, an  
2 insult to the people of the United States.

3 Let me talk about the budget. I do not understand why  
4 the budget is coming to us in two pieces. Why not give us  
5 an honest base budget instead of putting a piece of it  
6 reconciliation. As I understand it, OMB is saying we are  
7 going to have a flat defense budget for the next 4 or 5  
8 years. Are we planning reconciliation every year from now  
9 on? Why not give us an honest budget, telling us what your  
10 priorities are, and then we can consider it. This  
11 Committee always works in a bipartisan basis on a defense  
12 budget. We all want to see some increases in the defense  
13 budget. And yet you are giving us this fake, here is a  
14 piece of the budget, here is another. In the base budget  
15 you are cutting shipbuilding in half and saying, "Well, we  
16 are going to make it up in reconciliation." Are we going  
17 to have reconciliation every year, which basically, by the  
18 way, puts a significant part, 10 or 15 percent of the  
19 defense budget, in a wholly partisan decision-making  
20 process, whereas in the history of this Committee it has  
21 always been bipartisan.

22 Why are we doing it this way?

23 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, from our view the budget  
24 number, 961, meets the requirements and threats that we  
25 face.

1           Senator King: That is not the number. The number is  
2   892.6. You are adding reconciliation. That is my whole  
3   point. Why not give us a base budget of 961, or whatever  
4   the right number is, what you consider the right number,  
5   and then we can operate and make our decisions. Why do it  
6   in this bifurcated way that really is fooling the American  
7   people about what the defense budget is?

8           Secretary Hegseth: We are not trying to fool anybody,  
9   sir. It is two bills, one budget.

10          Senator King: I have not asked my question yet.

11          Secretary Hegseth: We are working with OMB --

12          Senator King: Why is it being done this way?

13          Secretary Hegseth: -- and we feel very comfortable  
14   with --

15          Senator King: Why is it being done this way?

16          Secretary Hegseth: -- the number of \$961 billion.

17          Senator King: Why don't you give us a straight-up  
18   budget for the Defense Department? That is my question.

19          Secretary Hegseth: Senator, this is a straight-up  
20   budget for the Defense Department.

21          Senator King: It is not.

22          Secretary Hegseth: It is a 13 percent increase over  
23   what Joe Biden gave us.

24          Senator King: It is a two-part defense budget. Part  
25   of it is in reconciliation instead of in the budget that is

1 being presented to this Committee. This Committee only has  
2 a partial review of the budget. I do not understand why we  
3 cannot have an honest, straightforward budget instead of  
4 this Son of OCO that you are putting over on us.

5 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 Chairman Wicker: Senator Scott.

7 Senator Scott: Thank you, Chairman. I want to thank  
8 each of you for being here, and I want to thank you for  
9 your dedication to the country, each of you.

10 Secretary, sir, you talked a little bit in your  
11 opening statement about China. In this Committee we have  
12 basically outlawed the use of Chinese drones by our  
13 government or military. We have the ability now, going  
14 forward, that we will not even license them in this  
15 country.

16 Can you just talk about the importance of making sure  
17 that our military -- you know, we do not have Chinese  
18 products, whether it is drones, we do not buy Chinese drugs  
19 for our military, we do not allow China to buy farmland  
20 close to our military bases, we do not allow them to be  
21 involved in our electrical grid, bring in despicable foods  
22 into our commissaries. Can you talk about the importance  
23 of that, when they have a government that wants to destroy  
24 everybody in this room's way of life?

25 Secretary Hegseth: You are correct in what you are

1 describing, Senator. We need to get smarter, faster. And  
2 that is the kind of urgency that we feel in the Defense  
3 Department, is there has been a lot of talk about  
4 prioritization and pivoting and recognizing the size and  
5 scale and scope of the Chinese threat, and then there is  
6 doing everything possible inside your decision cycle, to  
7 include how you posture, how you procure, how you plan, to  
8 ensure that it is not reliant, in any way, you do not have  
9 Achilles heels in any part of the process, whether it is  
10 critical munitions or it is critical minerals or it is any  
11 number of our weapon systems. I mean, you have heard the  
12 President say Golden Dome, his signature priority for  
13 defending the homeland, will be American made, because we  
14 cannot have systems like that depending on what the Chinese  
15 could do about it later on.

16 So we completely agree with you, and myself and the  
17 Deputy Secretary, that is kind of an A, number one for us,  
18 is making sure that what we source is sustainable.

19 Senator Scott: So if Communist China continues to  
20 build up their economy, do you think they will continue to  
21 invest in their military?

22 Secretary Hegseth: Yes, sir, and I think a lot of  
23 that spending is comingled.

24 Senator Scott: Right. And do you believe that if the  
25 American public knew the risk of China, like what you think

1 about every day, that they buy fewer Chinese products?

2 Secretary Hegseth: Sir, it is our job to think about  
3 that every day. If a lot of the information we saw were to  
4 be made public there would probably be more urgency, yes,  
5 sir.

6 Senator Scott: Do you think that we ought to be  
7 allowing Chinese companies that support either the economy  
8 of China, so they can build up a military, or companies  
9 that actually work with the Chinese military, do you think  
10 they ought to be able to sell stocks in America?

11 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, that is not really my  
12 lane, but I would say the President is focused, especially  
13 through trade, on right-sizing a lot of those dynamics and  
14 making sure that American companies, American industries  
15 are protected and brought back to the United States.

16 Senator Scott: Okay. So whether it is Americans  
17 buying products that help China build their economy, so  
18 they can build a military to try to defeat us, or whether  
19 it is buying Chinese drones or drugs, or allowing them to  
20 buy farmland, you would recommend to the American public  
21 that we wake up and stop doing these things.

22 Secretary Hegseth: Generally speaking, Senator, yes.

23 Senator Scott: Thank you.

24 Chairman Wicker: Senator Warren.

25 Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. President

1 Trump has deployed the National Guard and then the U.S.  
2 Marines to Los Angeles, over the objections of state and  
3 local officials, saying that the troops are needed to  
4 support immigration detention operations that are being  
5 carried out by ICE.

6 On Sunday night, the President threatened to deploy  
7 ICE agents to other cities around the country that he sees  
8 as, quote, "the core of the Democrat Power Center," end  
9 quote, specifically mentioning Chicago and New York.

10 Secretary Hegseth, if the President wanted to deploy  
11 marines to Chicago and New York City, like he did in Los  
12 Angeles, would you carry out that order, even if the local  
13 Governors and mayors objected?

14 Secretary Hegseth: Well, Senator, because Governor  
15 Newsom was unwilling to address --

16 Senator Warren: That is not my question.

17 Secretary Hegseth: -- protecting Federal law  
18 enforcement agents in Los Angeles, President Trump had all  
19 the authorities, and the Defense Department happily  
20 supported defending our ICE agents in the conduct of their  
21 job. They have the right, as Americans, to be able to do  
22 their job without being attacked by mobs.

23 Senator Warren: I --

24 Secretary Hegseth: And we will protect them in that  
25 process --

1 Senator Warren: I know that you heard my question --

2 Secretary Hegseth: -- and if other states needed it,  
3 we would provide that.

4 Senator Warren: I know that you heard my question.

5 So you would be willing to send troops, if the President  
6 ordered it, to Chicago and New York City? That is right?

7 Secretary Hegseth: Thankfully, New York City, unlike  
8 California, unlike Gavin Newsom, is willing to step up and  
9 address the issue with their local law enforcement.

10 Senator Warren: I will take that as a yes. How about  
11 if the President says he wants to send troops to 15 cities?  
12 Would you be willing to do that?

13 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, I do not accept your  
14 hypothetical, because it is not a real one.

15 Senator Warren: That is the question. You are the  
16 Secretary of Defense. Would you send troops to 15 cities?  
17 If the President said, "Do it," would you do it? Fifteen  
18 cities.

19 Secretary Hegseth: Again, Senator, it is a complete  
20 hypothetical, lacking any context at all.

21 Senator Warren: Well, you are the Secretary of  
22 Defense --

23 Secretary Hegseth: And I refuse to box myself in  
24 based on questioning on a hypothetical basis.

25 Senator Warren: But you are here asking for a

1 trillion dollars, and I want to know how you are going to  
2 spend it. And so my question is, if Donald Trump tells you  
3 to send troops to 15 American cities, are you going to  
4 spend the money and send the troops?

5 Secretary Hegseth: Thankfully, we are spending money  
6 on securing our southern border, in a way the previous  
7 administration abandoned --

8 Senator Warren: Okay.

9 Secretary Hegseth: -- and allowed 21 million illegals  
10 to enter our country.

11 Senator Warren: So you are not going to answer that  
12 question anyway.

13 Secretary Hegseth: So defending our homeland is a  
14 real serious priority under this Administration, and we are  
15 doing it.

16 Senator Warren: I understand the question about  
17 defense. Secretary Hegseth, about 4,000 National Guard  
18 troops and 700 marines have been sent to L.A. Is there a  
19 number of troops deployed to American cities, over the  
20 objections of Governors and mayors, at which you would be  
21 concerned that we are undermining our national defense?

22 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, we have spent two decades  
23 guarding other people's borders. We think, at the Defense  
24 Department, it is about time we shore up ours.

25 Senator Warren: So that is my question. Is there a

1 number at which sending those troops to Los Angeles or  
2 Chicago or New York starts to undermine our ability to  
3 defend ourselves around the globe? Is there a number?

4 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, we look at capabilities  
5 and readiness around the globe all the time, and we are  
6 quite satisfied with our capabilities to defend the  
7 homeland, and will provide more if and when it is  
8 necessary.

9 Senator Warren: So you are satisfied with our  
10 capabilities. Let me just ask, have you actually done the  
11 analysis and figured out how many troops you can deploy  
12 domestically before you start to undermine readiness around  
13 the world? Have you done that analysis?

14 Secretary Hegseth: Yes, ma'am.

15 Senator Warren: Then would you let the rest of us in  
16 on it? We are the Senate Armed Services Committee, and you  
17 are here to ask for a trillion dollars. What is the  
18 number?

19 Secretary Hegseth: We have got contingencies and  
20 plans for any number of capabilities, should Governors be  
21 unable, as Gavin Newsom has been, to actually secure --

22 Senator Warren: So can you give us a ballpark number?

23 Secretary Hegseth: -- his own Federal agents in their  
24 cities.

25 Senator Warren: How many troops can you deploy

1 domestically before you start to cut into our readiness  
2 internationally?

3 Secretary Hegseth: As I said, previous  
4 administrations deployed our National Guard all around the  
5 globe, in numbers far beyond what we were capable of  
6 supporting.

7 Senator Warren: So you have a number but you are just  
8 not going to tell us.

9 Secretary Hegseth: So limited contingencies inside  
10 the United States --

11 Senator Warren: So let me ask you one more question.

12 Secretary Hegseth: -- to protect Federal law  
13 enforcement --

14 Senator Warren: If the Supreme Court ordered you to  
15 remove troops from American city streets, will you do so?

16 Secretary Hegseth: Can you repeat the question,  
17 please?

18 Senator Warren: Yes. If the Supreme Court orders you  
19 to remove troops from American cities, will you do so?

20 Secretary Hegseth: As I have said, Senator, I do not  
21 believe district courts should determine national security  
22 policy.

23 Senator Warren: That was not my question.

24 Secretary Hegseth: But if the Supreme Court rules on  
25 a topic, we will abide by that.

1 Senator Warren: Okay. During her press conference  
2 last week, Secretary Noem said, "We are staying here to  
3 liberate the city from its mayor and its Governor," people  
4 who are elected by a majority of voters. Secretary Hegseth  
5 is saying he is ready to deploy more troops and will not  
6 tell us what the implications are for our national defense.  
7 This is un-American, and it makes us unsafe. I wish our  
8 Republican colleagues would speak up.

9 Chairman Wicker: The time of the Senator has expired.  
10 Senator Tuberville.

11 Senator Tuberville: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks  
12 for being here today. Mr. Secretary, thanks for looking  
13 out for the law enforcement and the millions of people in  
14 California that still love this country and want this  
15 country to survive, and not the radicals that wave non-  
16 American flags, that protest in the streets, tear things  
17 down. It is ridiculous, and thank you for doing what you  
18 are doing, you and President Trump. It is getting out of  
19 hand.

20 Chairman of the Personnel Committee, thanks for your  
21 recruiting. You are doing great. Keep looking out after  
22 the quality of life. Please do that. We have done  
23 research after research. We did give a raise. We want to  
24 continue to give raises. These first-year staffers in this  
25 building make tens of thousands of dollars more than first-

1 year military personnel. That is not right. We need to  
2 change that. It is an all-volunteer Army, and thank you  
3 for working towards that.

4 Mr. Secretary, China is kicking our butt in AI. They  
5 can build something in a year that takes us 3 or 4 years to  
6 build. The budget provides for increases in AI investment  
7 of \$250 million. Is that adequate for us to catch up with  
8 China?

9 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, we are very aware of the  
10 accelerant that is AI, and that it is the next chapter, the  
11 next sphere of where advantages will be gained. And we are  
12 making the necessary investments, we believe, in this  
13 budget to stay there.

14 We are also working with private industry in the  
15 United States, who is, thankfully, at this point, is not  
16 getting their butt kicked yet by China, and I think  
17 presents an opportunity for us to work with them to press  
18 the advantage. So we are looking for private partners, as  
19 well, to enhance our capabilities across the DoD.

20 Senator Tuberville: You have to know your problems  
21 and where you are at before you can go forward, and I  
22 hopefully we are understanding that. Obviously, we have  
23 got a lot of problems that are going on.

24 Mr. Secretary, your opening remarks mentioned the  
25 force-wide review of military standards. What is the

1 status of that review?

2 Secretary Hegseth: It is ongoing and very close to  
3 fruition. We have reviewed standards, specifically on  
4 combat MOSs first, to ensure that we have not seen a  
5 reduction in pursuit of quotas or any other agenda. So  
6 standards are being moved back to where they were at their  
7 highest level, gender neutral.

8 And then we are looking at overall fitness standards,  
9 overall grooming standards, overall basic standards across  
10 our formations that we believe have slipped, certainly  
11 under the previous administration, but over decades. But  
12 we are being very careful about it, too. We do not want to  
13 make big changes that are wide, sweeping, that have  
14 unintended consequences. So we are looking service by  
15 service, but also trying to simplify and clarify, as much  
16 as possible, high standards, clear standards that set us  
17 apart.

18 Senator Tuberville: Thanks for your help on putting  
19 me on the Air Force Board of Visitors at the military  
20 academy, and I look forward to going out soon. It is very  
21 important we understand we do have problems in the Air  
22 Force Academy, and we are going to get those straightened  
23 out, one way or another. So thanks for you and President  
24 Trump putting me on the Board of Visitors.

25 General Caine, in the last few years we have seen

1 major efforts to refocus our services for future fights.  
2 The Marine Corps Force Design and the Army's Transformation  
3 Initiative are major changes to the Joint Force. Can you  
4 describe the Joint Staff's level of involvement in these  
5 efforts?

6 General Caine: Sir, thanks for the question. As the  
7 services carefully consider what they need to look like,  
8 one of my primary jobs is a global integrator, so I look at  
9 all of these capabilities as well as capacities. And then  
10 through a series of formal products that we deliver to the  
11 Secretary have a chance to give the Secretary my views on  
12 this. I appreciate the leadership of both of those  
13 services, all of the services, and the combatant commanders  
14 to identify what the fight of the future looks like and  
15 what the force mix of the future needs to look like. So we  
16 are deeply involved in all of that.

17 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. This is right up my  
18 alley here. One important aspect of recruiting is how our  
19 services are represented in elite sports. We have made  
20 progress here, but we still have to work some things out.  
21 But West Point, this year, they had a young man that was  
22 drafted to play baseball. In the past times when President  
23 Trump was in he allowed them to go do their thing in  
24 baseball and then come back and fulfill their services.  
25 But we are disallowing a young man at West Point to go to

1 major league baseball. Could you look into that, Mr.  
2 Secretary?

3 Secretary Hegseth: Coach, we will review that, yes.

4 Senator Tuberville: Thank you very much. Thank you,  
5 Mr. Chairman.

6 Chairman Wicker: Thank you. Senator Peters.

7 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General  
8 Caine, both before and during your confirmation hearing we  
9 discussed your commitment to duty and to adhering to the  
10 Constitution as well as your oath of office. And I  
11 certainly appreciated your reassurance that you will  
12 remain, quote, "a nonpartisan leader through and through,"  
13 unquote, with one of your top priorities being maintaining  
14 the independence of the U.S. military. Along with  
15 remaining apolitical I am sure you will agree that  
16 fostering a stable, mission-focused environment is  
17 essential to leading the Department of Defense.

18 My question for you, sir, is can you please share with  
19 this Committee and the American people what your approach  
20 to leadership as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is?

21 General Caine: Yes, sir. Certainly the job is one to  
22 understand the global set of challenges, integrate the  
23 options that must be considered, and then to present those  
24 options to the President. And I have always taken a  
25 servant leadership approach throughout my career, based on

1 my oath of office and the Constitution and my commission.

2 Senator Peters: And as a nonpartisan leader, you  
3 reiterate that.

4 General Caine: Always. Yeah, I reiterate that.

5 Senator Peters: Well, thank you. And as a former  
6 lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy Reserve I certainly  
7 agree with that and agree with your answers and your  
8 commitment to the men and women in uniform.

9 Secretary Hegseth, your approach to leadership, I  
10 believe, stands in direct conflict with the ideas that we  
11 just discussed with General Caine, and at a time of great  
12 chaos and uncertainty in the world I am extremely concerned  
13 that your many shortcomings could have potentially life-  
14 threatening consequences for American servicemembers.

15 In your confirmation hearing I expressed my deep  
16 reservations about your qualifications to run the DoD. I  
17 also made it clear that no board of directors in the world  
18 would hire someone with so little experience to run a large  
19 business, much less the Department of Defense, where  
20 American lives are on the line regularly. For this reason,  
21 in addition to some concerns we had about character, I  
22 ultimately opposed your nomination.

23 And unfortunately my reservations have become reality.  
24 I know my colleagues have touched on some of these issues,  
25 but to briefly summarize, you have failed to set the

1 example, or lead from the front as you like to say, and  
2 this includes prompting a leadership and oversight vacuum  
3 at the Department by firing qualified uniformed leaders  
4 without cause; creating loyalty tests and leak  
5 investigations that have led to five of your senior  
6 advisors resigning or being fired; sharing classified  
7 military details on an unsecure app during operations in  
8 Yemen that included unauthorized individuals on at least  
9 two separate occasions; and revoking the DoD personal  
10 protection detail for both Secretary of Defense Mark Esper  
11 and the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Mark Milley,  
12 putting their safety at risk while they are still under  
13 threat from Iran.

14 We have seen time and time again how your conduct and  
15 lack of personal responsibility are harming readiness,  
16 reputation, and professionalism of our military. At a time  
17 where Israel and Iran are in open conflict and our  
18 adversaries in Russia and China will exploit any  
19 weaknesses, unfortunately my worst fears about your  
20 leadership shortfalls, unfortunately, have been realized.

21 Secretary Hegseth, I firmly believe that  
22 accountability from leadership is vital in all sectors, not  
23 just in the military, and demonstrating to your  
24 subordinates that everyone plays by the same rules helps to  
25 build trust and open communications within your team. And

1 those two things are extremely important.

2 And I know that you share my desire to ensure that we  
3 are holding our senior leaders accountable for actions, and  
4 during your nomination hearing you stated, quote,  
5 "accountability is coming because everybody in this room  
6 knows if you are rifleman and you lose your rifle, they are  
7 throwing the book at you," end of quote. You also said  
8 that leadership has been unwilling to take accountability,  
9 and I could not agree more on how important accountability  
10 is.

11 As we all know, at the request of this Committee, the  
12 Department of Defense inspector general launched an  
13 investigation into your use of Signal, an unclassified,  
14 commercially available messaging application, to discuss  
15 information pertaining to military actions in Yemen.

16 So given your focus on accountability, how will you  
17 demonstrate this accountability to the men and women in the  
18 U.S. military if the inspector general finds that you  
19 improperly disclosed information?

20 Secretary Hegseth: That assessment is pending at this  
21 time.

22 Chairman Wicker: That is a hypothetical question, but  
23 the gentleman's time has expired.

24 Senator Peters: I think your answer is clear, you are  
25 not going to be held accountable.

1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator Peters.  
2 Senator Mullen.

3 Senator Mullin: Talk about accountability, I wonder  
4 who was held accountable for the disastrous withdrawal out  
5 of Afghanistan, where 13 soldiers died and we left  
6 thousands of Americans behind, under Secretary Austin's  
7 lead. Did one person get held accountable during that  
8 time? I do not know of anybody that got held accountable  
9 for the Afghanistan withdrawal. But let's not talk about  
10 that.

11 Let's talk about the turmoil, to which my colleagues  
12 on the other side of the dais wants to talk about. Let's  
13 talk about that turmoil. Under Secretary Austin, who was a  
14 general by the way, you had the lowest morale measured in  
15 our military history. You had retention absolutely  
16 disastrous. You had recruitment that was not even meeting  
17 the lowered standards that you guys lowered.

18 But let me see the contrast. We have the highest  
19 morale that has been measured in decades in the military.  
20 We have recruiting numbers that are exceeding expectations  
21 that we have had. We have our enemies that fear us once  
22 again, and our allies that love us, because they can trust  
23 us. But that is not the narrative, Secretary Hegseth, that  
24 our Democrat colleagues want to draw.

25 But how short-minded is your memory? It was just a

1 few months ago that you were supporting a Commander in  
2 Chief that you guys were covering up for or flat out lying  
3 about. Who was in charge? And that was the Commander in  
4 Chief -- although let's not talk about that. Instead,  
5 let's just point fingers at something that fits the  
6 narrative.

7 You want to talk about war powers or the fact that  
8 during our reposturing in the Middle East against Iran,  
9 which would have never taken place if our colleagues on the  
10 other side would have held the administration accountable  
11 while they were giving billions of dollars back to Iran,  
12 and knowing good and well there in the briefings that they  
13 were actually trying to develop a nuclear weapon. But we  
14 turned a blind eye to that, and now the mess that was  
15 created by the Biden administration, this administration,  
16 the Trump administration, and the leadership of Secretary  
17 Hegseth, is simply trying to clean up. But forget about  
18 the past. Let's talk about this.

19 Oh, let's talk about reposturing, by the way. Wasn't  
20 it Secretary of the Navy Del Toro that came to us and said  
21 that he was fighting the largest naval battle since World  
22 War II. Did anybody on this dais authorize that? That was  
23 his words, who sat right there where Secretary Hegseth was,  
24 and I laughed, and I said I did not think the Houthis had a  
25 navy, so why are we fighting a naval battle. Did you guys

1 complain about it? Did you all say one thing about it?

2 No. You just sat there. Because, hey, it did not fit your  
3 narrative, but this one does.

4 And does anyone want to start talking about the  
5 National Guard, the marines. Didn't President Eisenhower  
6 deploy troops, or federalize troops in Arkansas in 1957,  
7 and also deployed the 101st Airborne, because the Governor  
8 then refused to protect civil rights and personal property?  
9 Yeah.

10 What about President Kennedy, in '62 and '63, that  
11 also did it because Mississippi and Alabama refused to do  
12 the same thing. So since the Governor at that time refused  
13 to protect citizens and the property, he federalized the  
14 National Guard. Oh, let's think about '65, too, because  
15 LBJ did the exact same thing.

16 But that is history, but yet it is extremely important  
17 to the context of what you guys are claiming to be done  
18 here. But that does not fit the narrative that you guys  
19 want to put out there.

20 History is history. Look back at it if you want to,  
21 or not. But keep in mind, every time you are pointing  
22 fingers here you have got three fingers pointing back at  
23 you. Because the previous administration, you guys 100  
24 percent turned a blind eye to and did nothing to hold them  
25 accountable. Nothing. So do not sit up here on the dais

1 and pretend like you are trying to hold the Administration  
2 accountable now, because you did not for 4 years. You had  
3 literally covered up for a Commander in Chief that was  
4 absent, absent minded and absent leadership. And you guys  
5 did absolutely nothing. Even your left-leaning media is  
6 saying it was the worst cover-up possibly in political  
7 history, yet nothing from you guys.

8 You all should be ashamed of yourselves. Literally,  
9 you should be ashamed of yourselves.

10 I yield back.

11 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Mullen. Senator  
12 Rosen.

13 Senator Rosen: I yield my time to Senator Duckworth.

14 Chairman Wicker: Senator Duckworth.

15 Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In  
16 response to my colleague from Oklahoma, I believe the  
17 Secretary of Defense has just responded last week and  
18 admitted that the \$1 billion mission that he led against  
19 the Houthis, who do not have a navy, has not restored the  
20 transitive U.S.-flagged commercial vessels through the Red  
21 Sea, and in fact, has resulted in the loss of two F-18  
22 Hornets, to the tune of \$60 million apiece, as well as, I  
23 believe the last count was seven Reaper drones to the tune  
24 of another \$200 million.

25 You are blowing through money like my fellow cadets

1 and I did in our first liberty after basic camp. Luckily,  
2 I did not end up with a questionable tattoo.

3 Your failures, Mr. Secretary, since you have taken  
4 office, have been staggering. You sent classified  
5 operational information over Signal to chest-bump in front  
6 of your wife, who by the way, has no security clearance,  
7 risking servicemember lives in the process. You blew the  
8 \$1 billion fight against the Houthis, whom, again, as my  
9 colleague says, has no navy, and yet you lost all of those  
10 aircraft. You have created such a hostile command  
11 environment that no one wants to serve as your Chief of  
12 Staff, or work with you and other senior DoD leadership  
13 roles.

14 But what we should all be talking about, more than all  
15 of this, is that you have an unjustified, un-American  
16 misuse of the military in American cities, pulling  
17 resources and attention away from core missions, to the  
18 detriment of the country, the warfighters, and yes, the  
19 warfighting that you claim to love. I do not know if this  
20 is because you are too inexperienced and incompetent to  
21 understand the real threats facing our country, or if it is  
22 because you are just an unqualified yes-man who cannot tell  
23 the President how to keep Americans safe. You are focusing  
24 on renaming bases for Confederate generals. You said just  
25 now to Senator King that, "to a man and to a woman, we

1 would rather be associated with the old Confederate names."

2 Well, I am one of those women. I served at Fort  
3 Rucker, Alabama, a base that was named for a traitor who  
4 took arms against the United States of America, led troops  
5 to kill Americans. It was renamed for Mike Novosel, a  
6 Medal of Honor recipient, who, in his citation for the  
7 Medal of Honor, includes that he saved 29 American lives,  
8 to include hovering backwards in a helicopter towards an  
9 enemy bunker where a wounded American was laying, and saved  
10 that person, including after taking fire himself. I know a  
11 little something about what it takes to fly a helicopter  
12 when you have been hit by enemy fire. That was heroic. I  
13 would rather be associated with Mike Novosel than a failed  
14 Confederate traitor.

15 I do not know whether you are inexperienced or too  
16 incompetent, but I wonder when you will actually focus on  
17 our nation's warfighting mission.

18 We know that California is just a deliberate,  
19 political and dangerous campaign led by you. We should not  
20 be using our military to be cops against Americans.

21 General Caine, as Chairman, a key part of your job is  
22 to coordinate military planning across the Joint Force. Is  
23 the Department currently incorporating into any military  
24 plans expanding the use of the Reserve forces, to include  
25 the National Guard or active-duty troops, to support

1 domestic law enforcement, including in other locations in  
2 the United States?

3 General Caine: Senator, you know, we carefully --

4 Senator Duckworth: Yes or no, General?

5 General Caine: Well, it is not really a yes-or-no  
6 question, Madam Senator. We plan all kinds of different  
7 things.

8 Senator Duckworth: I think it is a yes-or-no  
9 question.

10 General Caine: I am not aware of anything. But the  
11 reason why I am answering is the TAGs may be looking at  
12 something that I am not aware of.

13 Senator Duckworth: What are you doing at your level?  
14 You are not aware of that happening at your level? Because  
15 we know that on his first day, President Trump directed  
16 U.S. Northern Command to revise its Unified Command Plan to  
17 add new planning requirements to combat, and I quote,  
18 "criminal activities." A series of follow-up executive  
19 orders continued to redirect DoD priorities to supporting  
20 domestic law enforcement, including one in April that tells  
21 DoD, and I quote, "use national security assets for law and  
22 order." In other words, do law enforcement's job.

23 I would like to enter these executive orders into the  
24 record, Mr. Chairman.

25 Chairman Wicker: Is there objection? Without

1 objection, so ordered.

2 [The information follows:]

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1           Senator Duckworth: Secretary Hegseth, you say you are  
2 focused on warfighting and warriors. These are your words.  
3 Yet you are diverting untold DoD resources and attention to  
4 the fundamentally non-military mission of domestic  
5 policing. Across our country we have qualified police  
6 officers who are trained for that mission. They know those  
7 streets better than the marines you deployed to Los  
8 Angeles, who normally focus on the Indo-Pacific. And you  
9 recently approved 700 more troops in three other states to  
10 do admin and logistics work for ICE.

11           You say all of this is valuable training, but I would  
12 much rather have our troops do tough, realistic training  
13 relevant to high-end combat. Instead of typing in  
14 spreadsheets for ICE, they should be conducting live-fire  
15 maneuver exercises. Instead of patrolling American  
16 neighborhoods and standing in front of Federal buildings,  
17 they should be rehearsing proper firing mission. We have  
18 local police who can stand in front of those Federal  
19 buildings. And the list of distractions goes on.

20           You are encouraging a DoD workforce to go work for DHS  
21 in increasing numbers. You are pulling the military away  
22 from facing foreign enemies who literally say things like  
23 "death to America." And you are putting troops with  
24 weapons aimed at Americans.

25           Mr. Secretary, let the military get back to its real

1 job. Stop ordering them to do DHS's. And if you want to  
2 be DHS Secretary, maybe you can apply for that job when you  
3 are fired from this one, due to your incompetence.

4 Chairman Wicker: The Senator's time has expired.  
5 Senator Budd.

6 Senator Budd: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you  
7 all for being here. I think you all are doing a great job,  
8 and the proof is in the pudding, if you look at morale, if  
9 you look at recruiting, you look at deterrence. Incredible  
10 performance compared to the last administration, so thank  
11 you all for your work, in short order, as well.

12 Mr. Secretary, while I was overseas and time zones  
13 away this past weekend I was able to watch the parade, even  
14 though it was on the size of a phone screen. But I just  
15 wanted to catch a quick glimpse at it, since it was  
16 controversial from the other side. And I tell you what, I  
17 stayed up until 2 a.m. I could not turn it off.

18 Because it was not about you, Mr. Secretary. It was  
19 not about our President. It was about the men and women  
20 that do not get recognized each and every day. And I could  
21 just see them grinning, underneath their helmets and their  
22 battle dress uniforms, smiling from ear to ear, being  
23 recognized, whether it is on TV or by those of us in  
24 elected office that were present, or the folks that stood  
25 up to support them. So thank you for that. And again,

1 back to the morale that we are seeing and the recruiting  
2 numbers, I think it will go even higher as a result of  
3 that, so I appreciate what you did.

4 Mr. Secretary, I want to echo what my colleague,  
5 Senator Cramer, said a few moments ago about air dominance.  
6 In previous years, Air Force officials have recommended  
7 purchasing at least 72 fighters a year, which would be  
8 reachable by maximizing F-35 and the F-15EX production  
9 lines. And I applaud the President's decision to proceed  
10 with the F-47, but I understand it is going to take a while  
11 before that is developed and fielded. And I am interested  
12 in maintaining a strong level of production of other  
13 advanced fighters in the interim.

14 So what can you tell us about the future of the F-  
15 15EX, in particular, while we await the arrival of the F-  
16 47? And, Mr. Secretary, that would be for you, and Mr.  
17 Chairman, you have got significant experience as a fighter  
18 pilot, so if you would care to weigh in, as well.

19 Secretary Hegseth: To your point, Senator, I would  
20 defer the balance of my air superiority time to the  
21 Chairman. But I would note that the budget does have a  
22 substantial increase on F-15EX, recognizing its  
23 capabilities and the bridging function that particular  
24 aircraft provides us. And all of this with an eye towards  
25 existing fights and future fights, but it certainly does

1 make an investment.

2 Senator Budd: Chairman?

3 General Caine: Yes, sir. Thanks for the question.  
4 You know, you could use the current Israeli efforts as a  
5 case study in air dominance and air superiority. And if  
6 you look at harder problems in Iran, you start to see the  
7 importance of having the mix of things like F-47, EX, and  
8 any other future capabilities that are considered.

9 So we have to stay up on the TacAir step, and  
10 appreciate your leadership and interest in this, sir, as we  
11 move forward.

12 Senator Budd: Thank you. Switching gears a bit, Mr.  
13 Secretary, our special operations forces play a crucial  
14 role in preventing and then winning armed conflict.  
15 However, the previous administration proposed cuts to SOF  
16 billets in the programs. So how does the President's  
17 budget request impact the size, structure, and posture of  
18 our special operations forces for 2026?

19 Secretary Hegseth: Well, sir, what you will not see  
20 is cuts to SOF billets, especially recognizing not just the  
21 last 25 years but even the OPTEMPO of the last 4 to 6  
22 years, and the recognition that those are forces that are  
23 used often, mobilized often. There is a stress and strain  
24 on that. So investments both in personnel but also  
25 training and capabilities is front and center.

1 Senator Budd: Thank you for that. Last year, I led  
2 an NDAA provision that mandates that all future annual  
3 defense planning guidances includes specifics with respect  
4 to the size, structure, posture, and priorities for SOF.  
5 So I want to make clear the importance of this directive.  
6 The Committee was due a report back on March 1st on this  
7 component of the defense planning guidance, but since that  
8 date has come and gone, I will ask now.

9 Will you, Mr. Secretary, commit to seeing this  
10 requirement through and providing an update to this  
11 Committee on its progress?

12 Secretary Hegseth: Yes, Senator, we will get that to  
13 you.

14 Senator Budd: Thank you. I want to ask briefly about  
15 munitions, General Caine. How do you see the rate of  
16 munitions usage in Ukraine and the Middle East,  
17 particularly our ground-based interceptors and air-to-air  
18 missiles influencing this budget request and future budget  
19 requests?

20 General Caine: Well, Senator, we are always mindful  
21 of the consumption rate. One of the great case stories of  
22 the fight in the Middle East is the advancement of use of  
23 rockets, laser rockets, to target one-way attack drones,  
24 which I know the Committee helped push. And that is  
25 helping to save some of our critical air-to-air munitions.

1 And I can circle back with you on the other matters  
2 offline, sir.

3 Senator Budd: Please do. Thank you. Chairman?

4 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Senator Kelly,  
5 Senator Rosen yielded her time to Senator Duckworth, who  
6 was scheduled to be last. Do you think we ought to go  
7 ahead and let Senator Rosen ask questions right now?

8 Senator Kelly: One hundred percent.

9 Chairman Wicker: Absolutely. Senator Rosen, you are  
10 recognized. I thought I would just create a stir down  
11 there.

12 Senator Rosen: No. I thank you to my seatmates on  
13 both sides. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We take care of each  
14 other.

15 Again, thank you, Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member  
16 Reed, for holding this hearing. Mr. Secretary, we have a  
17 short amount of time, so I am just going to ask a few  
18 simple questions, and I would just appreciate for some of  
19 them you would just answer yes or no.

20 Secretary Hegseth, would you agree that every senior  
21 official in the Department of Defense must reflect the  
22 values and conduct that our servicemembers must uphold and  
23 our citizens expect?

24 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, we want to uphold the  
25 highest possible standards.

1 Senator Rosen: I will take that for a yes. Would you  
2 also agree then that antisemitism and antisemitic  
3 conspiracy theories have no place in our government or  
4 military? Yes or no.

5 Secretary Hegseth: They should not.

6 Senator Rosen: Thank you. So would you also agree  
7 that anyone who has posted, and I am going to quote,  
8 "antisemitic conspiracy theories lifted right out of a neo-  
9 Nazi playbook," end quote, should not be anywhere near a  
10 position of power? Yes or no.

11 Secretary Hegseth: Since I do not believe the  
12 characterization of many officials in the news media, I  
13 would need to see precisely what is being characterized.

14 Senator Rosen: But generally. But generally, would  
15 you not say that --

16 Secretary Hegseth: Generally speaking, sure.

17 Senator Rosen: -- if we thought something was coming  
18 out of a neo-Nazi playbook, it does not have any place in  
19 our Department of Defense.

20 Now, Secretary Hegseth, the quote that I just read you  
21 was referencing Ms. Kingsley Wilson, the DoD Press  
22 Secretary. It is a direct quote from her, who my  
23 Republican colleagues on this Committee have also expressed  
24 alarm over, due to her comments. In fact, one colleague  
25 said, and I am going to quote again, "Obviously I don't

1 agree with her comments. I trust the Pentagon will address  
2 this," end quote. However, in the months since, not only  
3 have you not addressed these antisemitic comments, you have  
4 promoted Ms. Wilson. This seems to be at odds, honestly,  
5 with President Trump's commitment, very public commitment,  
6 to combat antisemitism, which you just said you, too,  
7 agreed with.

8 So Secretary Hegseth, given the rise in antisemitic  
9 violence, hate crimes in our nation, and to show that the  
10 Trump administration -- the Trump administration, your  
11 administration -- does have a zero tolerance policy for  
12 antisemitism, will you dismiss Ms. Kingsley from her role  
13 as the U.S. military spokesperson today? Yes or no.

14 Secretary Hegseth: Again, that is why I referenced  
15 the context and characterization.

16 Senator Rosen: Oh, we will send you the quote, sir.

17 Secretary Hegseth: I have worked directly with her.  
18 She does a fantastic job. And any suggestion that I or her  
19 or others are party to antisemitism is a  
20 mischaracterization simply to win political points.

21 Senator Rosen: I will be glad to send you this quote,  
22 sir, and I am going to --

23 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, you are attempting to --

24 Senator Rosen: -- take your lack of an answer --

25 Secretary Hegseth: -- win political points on the

1 backs of mischaracterizing --

2 Senator Rosen: -- confirms what we have known all  
3 along.

4 Secretary Hegseth: -- statements of a member of my  
5 Department.

6 Senator Rosen: The Trump administration is not  
7 serious.

8 Secretary Hegseth: And I am not going to stand for  
9 that.

10 Senator Rosen: You are not a serious person. You are  
11 not serious about rooting out, fighting antisemitism within  
12 the ranks of our DoD. It is despicable. You ought to be  
13 ashamed of yourself.

14 I am going to move on to General Haugh, the sudden,  
15 inexplicable dismissal of General Haugh. He served as both  
16 the Director of the National Security Agency, Commander of  
17 USCYBERCOM. It is deeply concerning. It raises  
18 significant questions about the decision-making process's  
19 potential consequences. Public reports indicate that the  
20 removal of General Haugh, who has served his country  
21 proudly, has been influenced by social media influencer --  
22 an influencer, a personality on social media -- Laura  
23 Loomer. She spreads conspiracy theories. She has been  
24 denounced even by Republicans. And the idea that any  
25 leaders within our agencies responsible for our nation's

1 security, somebody would be dismissed based on the advice  
2 of a social media influencer is alarming, to say the least.  
3 It is surely not how we should be running our military.

4 So were you consulted regarding General Haugh's  
5 dismissal? Yes or no.

6 Secretary Hegseth: Well, Senator, I would not advise  
7 believing everything you read in the media.

8 Senator Rosen: Were you consulted --

9 Secretary Hegseth: And I am consulted on every single  
10 decision.

11 Senator Rosen: Okay. So that is alarming.

12 Secretary Hegseth: I am the decision-maker for the  
13 Department --

14 Senator Rosen: It is your Department.

15 Secretary Hegseth: -- and we all serve at the  
16 pleasure of the President.

17 Senator Rosen: Okay.

18 Secretary Hegseth: And we have the prerogative to  
19 make --

20 Senator Rosen: So what was your --

21 Secretary Hegseth: -- those decisions for the best of  
22 the country --

23 Senator Rosen: -- what was your recommendation?

24 Secretary Hegseth: -- and we did that.

25 Senator Rosen: Did you personally approve Mr. Haugh's

1 dismissal? Yes or no.

2 Secretary Hegseth: Anyone coming or going --

3 Senator Rosen: Personally approve.

4 Secretary Hegseth: -- at the Defense Department,  
5 especially at that level, would ultimately be a decision  
6 made by me --

7 Senator Rosen: So that is a yes.

8 Secretary Hegseth: -- and I stand behind that.

9 Senator Rosen: Did you personally relieve him? Did  
10 you personally relieve him? Yes or no.

11 Secretary Hegseth: Anyone at that level --

12 Senator Rosen: You did, so that is a yes.

13 Secretary Hegseth: -- who is relieved, would be  
14 relieved by the Secretary of Defense.

15 Senator Rosen: Was there a specific justification for  
16 General Haugh's dismissal? Was there specific  
17 justification for General Haugh's dismissal?

18 Secretary Hegseth: Ma'am, we all serve at the  
19 pleasure of the President, and the President deserves the  
20 type of commanders and advisors that he thinks will best  
21 equip him --

22 Senator Rosen: Did you discuss General Haugh's  
23 dismissal --

24 Secretary Hegseth: -- to accomplish the mission.

25 Senator Rosen: -- with Laura Loomer prior to his

1 removal?

2 Secretary Hegseth: I do not discuss who I talk about  
3 anything with, but ultimately this is my decision, and he  
4 serves as the pleasure of the President, and that is why he  
5 is no longer there.

6 Senator Rosen: So do you believe it is appropriate  
7 for any social media personality to influence personnel  
8 decisions in your Department? Yes or no.

9 Secretary Hegseth: I believe your time is up,  
10 Senator.

11 Senator Rosen: Oh, it is not up to you to tell me  
12 when my time is up.

13 Chairman Wicker: Well, the time of the Senator --

14 Senator Rosen: I am going to say, Mr. Secretary, you  
15 are either feckless or complicit. You are not in control  
16 of your Department. You are unserious. It is shocking you  
17 are not combatting antisemitism within your ranks. It is a  
18 dangerous and pivotal time in our nation's history.

19 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back. And I do not  
20 appreciate the smirks, sir. You are the Secretary of  
21 Defense.

22 Chairman Wicker: The time of the gentlelady has  
23 expired. Senator Kelly.

24 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr.  
25 Secretary, I want to talk about the proposed Golden Dome

1 missile defense system. There is a request to spend \$25  
2 billion in this year alone. First of all, is this system  
3 designed to intercept a full salvo attack?

4 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, it is a multilayer system  
5 that would include different types of salvos. Obviously --

6 Senator Kelly: So it is not just rogue nation. Okay.

7 Secretary Hegseth: No, it is meant to -- yeah, it is  
8 not meant to be just one nation. It could be utilized in  
9 different scenarios.

10 Senator Kelly: Against Russia and China, full salvo.  
11 So what kind of reliability are you aiming to build into  
12 the system? Are we looking for something like four 9s on  
13 intercept success, 99.99 percent reliability?

14 Secretary Hegseth: Obviously, you seek the highest  
15 possible. You begin with what you have and integrating  
16 those C2 networks and sensors. Building up capabilities  
17 that are existing with an eye toward future capabilities  
18 that can come online as quickly as possible, not just  
19 ground-based but space-based, all aspects.

20 Senator Kelly: So against future capability too.

21 Secretary Hegseth: Correct.

22 Senator Kelly: So do you believe that we can build a  
23 system that can intercept all incoming threats? Do you  
24 think we could build that system? This is a very hard  
25 physics problem.

1           Secretary Hegseth: And you would know, as well as  
2 anybody, sir, how difficult this problem is, and that is  
3 why we put our best people on it. We think the American  
4 people deserve it --

5           Senator Kelly: So let me tell you --

6           Secretary Hegseth: -- in jeopardy by --

7           Senator Kelly: Let me tell you what I think we are  
8 facing here. We are talking about hundreds of ICBMs,  
9 launched simultaneously, varying trajectories, MIRVs,  
10 multiple reentry vehicles, thousands of decoys, hypersonic  
11 glide vehicles, all at once. And considering what the  
12 future threat might be, it might even be more complicated  
13 than that. And you are proposing spending not just \$25  
14 billion, but upwards of, I think CBO estimated this, at  
15 least half a trillion, other estimates a trillion dollars.

16           I am all for having a system that would work. I am  
17 not sure that the physics can get there on this. It is  
18 incredibly complicated.

19           So I want to get to another issue that you are facing  
20 here. How much of the staff of the Office of the Director  
21 of Operational Test and Evaluation did you cut?

22           Secretary Hegseth: After collaboration, sir, with the  
23 service departments, the Joint Staff, and others, we  
24 identified that as a place where there were redundancies  
25 and additional layers --

1 Senator Kelly: I will tell you what you cut. You cut  
2 most of it.

3 Secretary Hegseth: So most of it. Most of it.

4 Senator Kelly: Most of it. And was your decision to  
5 cut more than half of the Pentagon's Testing and Evaluation  
6 Office staff driven, in part, by concerns about the  
7 office's plan to oversee testing of Golden Dome?

8 Secretary Hegseth: The concerns were not specific to  
9 Golden Dome, sir. It was years and years of delays,  
10 unnecessarily, based on redundancies in the decision-making  
11 process, that the services, COCOMs, and the Joint Staff,  
12 together with OSD, identified as a logjam --

13 Senator Kelly: Mr. Secretary --

14 Secretary Hegseth: -- that was not helping the  
15 process --

16 Senator Kelly: -- to get the reliability we would  
17 need, you need something that is at four 9s, 99.99 percent  
18 reliability, with all these challenges. And you cut the  
19 staff of the people who are going to make sure this thing  
20 works before we make it operational, before we give it to  
21 the warfighters. You have got to go back and take a look  
22 at this.

23 But I also strongly encourage you to put together,  
24 before we spend \$25 billion or \$175 billion or \$563 billion  
25 or \$1 trillion, put together a group of people to figure

1 out if the physics will work. You could go down a road  
2 here and spend hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars  
3 of the taxpayer money, get to the end, and we have a system  
4 that is not functional. That very well could happen. And  
5 you are doing this just because the President -- and I  
6 understand your role as the Secretary of Defense; you have  
7 got to execute what the President says.

8 But this idea, you know, might not be fully baked, and  
9 you can get in front of it now and figure out and find out  
10 if you put the right physicists on this. And I am not  
11 saying go to the big defense contractors. Go to  
12 scientists, and I know there is a questionable relationship  
13 with this Administration and scientists, but go to some  
14 scientists, figure out what we would have to do to build a  
15 system, and then make smart decisions before we spend  
16 hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars.

17 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, we are doing that,  
18 leveraging existing technologies and not premising the  
19 project on aspirational technologies, what we can actually  
20 do, and would welcome --

21 Senator Kelly: But \$25 billion in the first year is a  
22 lot of money. That is more than just figuring out if we  
23 have the ability to build a system that can handle a full  
24 salvo threat -- hypersonic live vehicles, MIRVs, thousands  
25 of decoys.

1 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Kelly. Senator  
3 Sheehy.

4 Senator Sheehy: For General Caine, I am curious of  
5 your thoughts, now that you are in the chair officially.  
6 China is building ships about 230 times faster than we do.  
7 Our ability to scale our maritime industrial base has been  
8 the subject of much discussion. And my biggest concern is  
9 we could give the Navy unlimited funds right now, and even  
10 that would not be able to fix the problem we have within  
11 the existing paradigm. And we have to rethink how we  
12 acquire, deploy, and maintain our Navy.

13 As we approach, potentially, a new CNO taking the seat  
14 here, what are we doing at the Department level to explore  
15 alternative ways like leasing a navy, like giving private  
16 industry the incentive to build stable requirements,  
17 towards stable requirements with consistent engineering  
18 specs so that they can build to these requirements, let  
19 private industry take some risks and extend themselves on  
20 this so we can benefit from the ability and the agility of  
21 private industry to solve problems quickly?

22 General Caine: Sir, thanks. Thanks for your  
23 question. I share your concerns about how fast we are  
24 building ships. I am encouraged, though, by the leadership  
25 that the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the

1 Navy, the current acting CNO, have all been leaning into  
2 this, as well as the other parts of the Department,  
3 Acquisition and Sustainment, and Research and Engineering.

4 You know, I have not heard yet on a leasing  
5 discussion. As you know, as a former aviation business  
6 owner, there are ops leases and things like that, that  
7 offer capability at different models. There has been some  
8 experience of that on the Hill before. I am thinking back  
9 to Senator McCain had some strong views on leading in a  
10 prior life.

11 But I would defer that conversation to our OSD  
12 colleague, sir, who would drive that.

13 Senator Sheehy: Okay. Well, I think we have to think  
14 outside the box, and that is true on all defense  
15 acquisition programs, and I welcome either of your  
16 thoughts, as well.

17 Senator Warren and I actually have recently partnered  
18 on an initiative that is praising what Senator Driscoll has  
19 done at the Army side, to expand the flexibility of the  
20 services to have more alternative pathways. I go back to  
21 our MRAP program about 15 years ago, a program which saved  
22 my life and the lives of many other servicemen, I am sure,  
23 in this room, as well.

24 So finding alternative ways to acquire things is  
25 really what we have to do now. And if we continue to try

1 to jam a turkey into the garbage disposal and just give  
2 more and more money to a process that, frankly, has been  
3 failing for decades, I think we need to try to fix the  
4 process first. And I would be curious as to either of your  
5 thoughts, open response, as to what we can do immediately  
6 here to start reforming our defense acquisition paradigm so  
7 we can keep pace with -- it is not a near-peer threat with  
8 China. They are a peer. So it is a peer-to-peer threat.  
9 How are we going to reform our industrial base to keep pace  
10 with them?

11 General Caine: Sir, I think this could be a much  
12 longer conversation, which I am happy to have with you.  
13 You know, I note that the lineup of leaders that we have in  
14 the Congress right now, here on this Committee and the  
15 other side, the leaders in the Department, the leaders in  
16 industry, it feels like we have the team now who will  
17 actually move the ball, grab ahold of that entrepreneurial  
18 spirit that America is so well known for, and get after it.

19 I am mindful of the work that has been done before.  
20 We cannot continue to move on the same trajectory, and we  
21 must get after this. We owe it to the Joint Force to be  
22 properly armed, at scale, with the right capabilities, so  
23 that they can win and come home.

24 So I would love to partner with you on that, as I know  
25 our OSD colleagues would, as well.

1 Senator Sheehy: Well, and the speed at which we have  
2 solved our recruiting challenges, hopefully we can do the  
3 same thing with the ability to make bullets, bombs,  
4 artillery shells, planes, and ships, because we owe it to  
5 the 17-, 18-, 19-year-old kids who are going to be fighting  
6 these systems on the front line, to make sure they have  
7 enough of them to replace attrition, and also that those  
8 systems are as good as they can be, and when they need  
9 them.

10 Thanks for your time today.

11 Chairman Wicker: Senator Sheehy and General, I would  
12 love to be part of that longer conversation about that  
13 issue. Thank you, Senator Sheehy. Senator Slotkin.

14 Senator Slotkin: Thank you, Chairman. Mr. Secretary,  
15 I said in your hearing, when you had your confirmation  
16 hearing, that my biggest concern with you at the helm was  
17 the potential use of the military in ways that contradict  
18 the Constitution or that taint what I hope we all want,  
19 which is an apolitical military.

20 And when I asked you about whether you would accept an  
21 order, that was actually given to your predecessor,  
22 Secretary Esper, Trump's SecDef, to deploy active-duty  
23 troops against unarmed protesters, and to, in Secretary  
24 Esper's words, "shoot at them, shoot at their legs," you  
25 said this was all theoretical.

1           Here we are, a few months later. You have deployed  
2   4,700 troops to Los Angeles, against the wishes of the  
3   Governor. And my colleague across the aisle was right --  
4   it is the first time since 1965 that we have deployed Guard  
5   troops without the permission of the Governor. In all the  
6   instances he laid out, the President had sent in the  
7   military to protect protesters, not against the protesters.

8           So you may dismiss it, but I feel like this is a  
9   fundamental issue of American democracy. If you love your  
10   country and you want to an apolitical military, then it  
11   should be the last resort, not the first resort, in our  
12   country to use them.

13          So to get to the non-theoretical, have you authorized  
14   the uniformed military to detain or arrest protesters in  
15   Los Angeles?

16          Secretary Hegseth: Senator, I would just start by  
17   saying you are not a protester if you are throwing concrete  
18   at law enforcement officers.

19          Senator Slotkin: A hundred percent. Arrest those  
20   people. Throw them in the jail, 100 percent. But what you  
21   are doing is something different. Everyone knows this is a  
22   political decision, right, so we do not trust that you are  
23   using the best interests of the military, certainly, and of  
24   democracy on top of that.

25          So have you given the order -- that is all I want to

1 know; it is not theoretical -- for the U.S. military --  
2 military, not law enforcement; they can arrest all day  
3 long, that is their job -- do they have the ability, the  
4 uniformed military, to arrest and detain protesters  
5 currently today?

6 Secretary Hegseth: I --

7 Senator Slotkin: It is a yes-or-no thing, authority.

8 Secretary Hegseth: It is amusing the extent to which  
9 the speculation is out there. These troops are given very  
10 clear orders --

11 Senator Slotkin: Then what is the order? Then list  
12 it out for us. Be a man. List it out. Did you authorize  
13 them to detain or arrest? That is a fundamental issue of  
14 democracy. I am not trying to be a snot here. I am just  
15 trying to get the actual -- did you authorize them to do  
16 that?

17 Secretary Hegseth: All of these orders and what they  
18 are sent to do there are public. They are there to --

19 Senator Slotkin: So say it. Say it. Yes or no.

20 Secretary Hegseth: I would like to.

21 Senator Slotkin: Please, yes or no, did you --

22 Secretary Hegseth: As I have said time and time  
23 again, through interruption, they are there to protect law  
24 enforcement, ICE officers --

25 Senator Slotkin: Do they have the ability to arrest -

1 -

2 Secretary Hegseth: -- who are trying to do their job

3 --

4 Senator Slotkin: Okay.

5 Secretary Hegseth: -- of deporting illegals who were  
6 allowed in by the previous administration.

7 Senator Slotkin: So they cannot arrest and detain  
8 citizens of the United States, the uniformed military. Is  
9 that right?

10 Secretary Hegseth: As we have stated, if necessary,  
11 in their own self-defense, they can temporarily detain --

12 Senator Slotkin: Okay.

13 Secretary Hegseth: -- and hand over to ICE.

14 Senator Slotkin: Have you given --

15 Secretary Hegseth: But there is no arresting going  
16 on. And you know this.

17 Senator Slotkin: -- have you authorized --

18 Secretary Hegseth: You are trying to play political  
19 games --

20 Senator Slotkin: -- the U.S. military --

21 Secretary Hegseth: There is no arresting of U.S.  
22 personnel.

23 Senator Slotkin: -- to use cyber tools of the U.S.  
24 military against members of the protest? Have you  
25 authorized U.S. military cyber tools to investigate people

1 participating in these protests? Yes or no.

2 Secretary Hegseth: Certainly in no way that I would  
3 be aware of.

4 Senator Slotkin: Okay. That is good. I love that  
5 answer. That is great. Have you given the order to be  
6 able to shoot at unarmed protesters, in any way? I am just  
7 asking the question. Don't laugh. Like the whole country  
8 -- and by the way, my colleagues across the aisle --

9 Secretary Hegseth: What is that based on? What  
10 evidence would you have that an order like that --

11 Senator Slotkin: Based on Donald Trump --

12 Secretary Hegseth: -- has ever been given?

13 Senator Slotkin: -- giving that order to your  
14 predecessor, to a Republican Secretary of Defense, who I  
15 give a lot of credit to, because he did not accept the  
16 order. He had more guts and balls than you, because he  
17 said, "I am not going to send in the uniformed military to  
18 do something that I know in my gut is not right." He was  
19 asked to shoot at their legs. He wrote that in his book.  
20 That is not hearsay.

21 So your poo-poohing of this, it just shows you do not  
22 understand who we are as a country, who we are. And all of  
23 my colleagues across the aisle, especially the ones that  
24 served, should want an apolitical military and not want  
25 citizens to be scared of their own military.

1 I love the military. I served alongside my whole  
2 life. So I am worried about you tainting it. Have you  
3 given the order -- have you given the order that they can  
4 use lethal force against -- I want the answer to be no.  
5 Please, tell me it is no. Have you given the order?

6 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, I would be careful what  
7 you read in books and believing it, except for the Bible.

8 Senator Slotkin: Oh, my God. So your former  
9 predecessor, I guess that is not enough for you. Okay.

10 On Iran, I do not think there is a debate. There is  
11 like a catfight going on in your own party about whether to  
12 go after Iran. Have you commissioned any day after  
13 planning, so any force protection, any use of ground troops  
14 in Iran, any cost assessments? Because I do not think we  
15 doubt what we can do as a country in the attack. It is the  
16 day after, with Iraq and Afghanistan, that so many of us  
17 have learned to be so deeply concerned about. Have you  
18 authorized day after planning?

19 Secretary Hegseth: As I have said, we have plans for  
20 everything, Senator.

21 Senator Slotkin: Okay.

22 Chairman Wicker: And I would also reiterate how we  
23 began, that there will be a classified portion of this 15  
24 minutes after we adjourn.

25 Senator Banks, you are recognized.

1 Senator Banks: An apolitical military. Secretary,  
2 wouldn't you say that in the last administration, under Joe  
3 Biden, Secretary Austin, Mark Milley, we have never seen  
4 the military politicized in a way that it was over those 4  
5 years?

6 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, I would say our mission  
7 has been to take the politics out of the military, take the  
8 ideology out of the military. And as a result, you have  
9 seen the response of young Americans who have -- I called  
10 it a bump, at first. I just want to correct that, Senator.  
11 It has been a tsunami. It has been a historic response of  
12 young Americans who are joining.

13 Senator Banks: I want to unpack it. I want to unpack  
14 this with you, Mr. Secretary. Prior to President Trump's  
15 election, the military was struggling with the worst  
16 recruitment crisis in 50 years. That all seemed to have  
17 changed overnight, on one specific day, and the chart shows  
18 it. The Army doubled its recruitment from November of 2024  
19 to the previous November. The Navy, the same thing. The  
20 Navy's recruitment skyrocketed 80 percent from November of  
21 2024 to the previous year.

22 Mr. Secretary, what changed?

23 Secretary Hegseth: There was an election, Senator.

24 Senator Banks: Why does that matter?

25 Secretary Hegseth: Because leadership matters, sir.

1 Belief in your country matters. Having the back of your  
2 troops matters. Setting a clear mission matters. Ensuring  
3 that if troops are used it is for a clear, defined mission.  
4 It is funding them properly. It is giving them the proper  
5 authorities to execute.

6 Americans watch what happens with their political and  
7 military leadership. In President Trump they understand  
8 they have a Commander in Chief that has their back, that  
9 loves the country, that loves them. Our job has been to  
10 reflect that through the Department, by getting rid of all  
11 the distractions, by enforcing the basics, by getting back  
12 to standards and readiness. And, as a result, we have seen  
13 a generation of young people stand up and say they want to  
14 serve under President Trump.

15 Senator Banks: These numbers have steadily increased.  
16 As you said, you called it a tsunami. I mean, I call it  
17 the Trump bump because it did begin on one day, but every  
18 month since we have seen those recruitments for the Army  
19 and the Navy, especially, the best Navy recruitment in 20  
20 years, the best Army recruitment in 15 years. How do we  
21 keep that up?

22 Secretary Hegseth: Well, sir, I think we keep that up  
23 by staying true to what we said we would do to those young  
24 Americans and their families. I wrote a book before I  
25 started this process, talking to a lot of vets and their

1 families who were wondering whether they would recommend  
2 military service to the next generation. I hear from them  
3 and others who say, "Now we are willing to do that under  
4 this President's leadership."

5 Staying true to who we are, staying true to the basic,  
6 the Constitution, their core mission, keeping them ready,  
7 funding them and supplying them properly, and then having  
8 their back, truly, matters. And I think by doing that, and  
9 then emphasizing recruiting and the basic, I think we will  
10 continue to be able to be on the right trajectory.

11 Senator Banks: Mr. Secretary, I have never seen a  
12 Secretary of Defense that is so in tune with our soldiers,  
13 our sailors, our airmen, and marines as you. You have gone  
14 out, and you are visiting with them, you are talking to  
15 them every single day. What kind of stories are you  
16 hearing, especially from our newest recruits? What are  
17 they telling you? What are they telling you specifically  
18 about why it matters?

19 Secretary Hegseth: Well, I will start with those that  
20 are reenlisting or they have been in for a while, who say  
21 it has all changed. The entire environment has changed,  
22 the morale and the spirit.

23 Senator Banks: They see the change.

24 Secretary Hegseth: They feel the change. They feel  
25 the idea that if I am given a job to do, I will be given

1 everything necessary to do it, the authorities to do it. I  
2 am not being micromanaged. I know that my commander will  
3 have my back. And then the young people, it is the  
4 excitement about the possibility of serving under President  
5 Trump, being a part of something greater than themselves,  
6 and knowing that in the White House they have got a  
7 commander who will defend their interests.

8 Senator Banks: It is really about the, as I said, I  
9 mean, as my colleague was talking about apolitical  
10 military, I mean, the wokeness, the radical transgender  
11 movement, the abortion travel mandates, the way the last  
12 administration politicized the military.

13 There was a survey in 2023 that pointed this out, and  
14 the Army released the survey in 2023, that claimed that  
15 young Americans' fear of discrimination drove away more  
16 recruits than wokeness. And wokeness was a big indicator,  
17 too, in that survey.

18 Do you think those arguments still stand up today?

19 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, you make a great point.  
20 Every American wants to be treated like an individual, not  
21 because they are Black or white or male or female, rich or  
22 poor, or because of some calculation of what we need more  
23 of or need less of. But simply can you rise to the  
24 challenge of this job, of service to your nation? That  
25 challenge inspires young people, and that is what we have

1     seen.

2             Senator Banks: I think the Commander in Chief  
3 matters. Mr. Secretary, you matter. General, you matter.  
4 Thank you for your leadership. The facts speak for  
5 themselves.

6             Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

7             Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Banks. Is there  
8 objection to putting representation of the chart in the  
9 record at this point? Without objection, it will be  
10 ordered.

11            [The information follows:]

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1 Senator Reed: May I ask a question, Mr. Chairman?

2 Chairman Wicker: Senator Reed.

3 Senator Reed: I note that the chart starts in  
4 November of 2023 and goes to November of 2024, and  
5 President Biden was President through the entire period.  
6 So you are suggesting that the significant ramp-up took  
7 place immediately after Election Day, which would have been  
8 20 days of November 2024?

9 Senator Banks: That is exactly what I am suggesting,  
10 Senator. The numbers speak for themselves.

11 Senator Reed: Do you have any data to suggest that?

12 Senator Banks: The General of the Army told me so,  
13 and if you ask for those numbers from the Army, you will  
14 see the same dynamic that I have. The election of Donald  
15 Trump, the election of him and the indication to those  
16 recruits around the country that he is going to become the  
17 Commander in Chief actually mattered. And those numbers  
18 have risen dramatically ever since Election Day.

19 Senator Reed: There was no impact of the  
20 Administration's activities over several years before that,  
21 and also through the period of November 2023, which  
22 encompassed the Biden administration. It is funny you get  
23 a Trump bump while Biden is President of the United States.  
24 So I would be curious to see that data.

25 Senator Banks: I think it is incredible, as well,

1     sir.

2             Senator Reed: Unbelievable might be a better word.

3             Chairman Wicker: Are there further questions? We are  
4     sort of now into the second round of questioning.

5             Without objection, we will close this portion, and if  
6     our members and witnesses could join us in the Visitor's  
7     Center SCIF in 15 minutes, we would appreciate it. Until  
8     then, we are in recess.

9             [Whereupon, at 12:17 p.m., the hearing recessed, to  
10    reconvene in a closed hearing.]

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