

Stenographic Transcript  
Before the

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

# **UNITED STATES SENATE**

NOMINATION HEARING

Thursday, September 12, 2024

Washington, D.C.

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Thursday, September 12, 2024

U.S. Senate

Committee on Armed Services

Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:29 a.m. in Room SH-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Hon. Jack Reed, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Committee Members Present: Senators Reed [presiding], Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Kaine, King, Peters, Kelly, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Sullivan, Cramer, Scott, Tuberville, Budd, and Schmitt.

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

3           Chairman Reed: The hearing will come to order. Good  
4 morning. The Committee meets today to consider the  
5 nomination of Lieutenant General Steven Nordhaus for  
6 promotion to General and to be the chief of the National  
7 Guard Bureau and the nomination of Vice Admiral Alvin Holsey  
8 for promotion to Admiral and to be commander of U.S.  
9 Southern Command.

10           General Nordhaus, congratulations on your nomination.  
11 I would like to thank your family and loved ones who have  
12 supported your service and are proudly watching right now.  
13 Admiral Holsey, I would like to welcome your wife,  
14 Stephanie, thank you, and your son Jordan, soon to be Dr.  
15 Holsey, and also recognize that your eldest son, Lieutenant  
16 Commander select Joshua Holsey could not be here today  
17 because he's preparing for an upcoming deployment. And we  
18 thank him for his service and wish him luck. Thank you.

19           Let me also recognize outgoing leaders at the National  
20 Guard Bureau in Southern Command General Daniel Hokanson  
21 recently retired as chief of the National Guard Bureau after  
22 38 years of distinguished service to the nation. General  
23 Hokanson led the National Guard through one of the most  
24 consequential periods in its history, and we are grateful  
25 for his steady hand.

1 I would also like to thank General Laura Richardson as  
2 she prepares for retirement after nearly four decades in the  
3 Army. She has led Southern command with skill and  
4 distinction and our forces there are postured for success  
5 thanks to her leadership.

6 General Nordhaus, you were well qualified to serve as  
7 chief of the National Guard Bureau or NGB. A fighter pilot  
8 by training, you have led airmen and soldier at every level,  
9 including in your current post as commander of continental  
10 U.S. NORAD, and previous command of First Air Force and  
11 leadership as director of operations and logistics for the  
12 NGB joint staff. If confirmed, you'll serve on the Joint  
13 Chiefs of staff as the principal advisor of the Secretary of  
14 Defense, and the Chief of Staff of the Army and the Air  
15 Force on matters related to the National Guard.

16 This is a challenging but important time for the  
17 National Guard. The Guard has always been our military's  
18 core combat reserve force, especially over the past two  
19 decades, and its war fighting capabilities will continue to  
20 be relied upon. Right now, there are tens of thousands of  
21 National Guard soldiers and airmen mobilized around the  
22 world carrying out vital missions. At the same time, the  
23 National Guard's role on American soil is also more  
24 important than ever, and its leaders must be thoughtful  
25 about how the force is used and resourced.

1           In particular, National Guard's civil support missions  
2 are becoming more complicated, responding to natural  
3 disasters such as hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes, and  
4 flooding, as well as health and humanitarian crises like  
5 COVID-19 often require the skills, manpower, and logistics  
6 that only the National Guard can provide. Such challenges  
7 will continue to strain local communities and authorities,  
8 and the National Guard will have a critical role to play in  
9 responding to them.

10           General Nordhaus, I would like to know your thoughts on  
11 the proper employment and limits of using the National Guard  
12 in support of civilian authorities, including when it is  
13 operating in either a state or federal status. In addition,  
14 you'll be responsible for improving the National Guard's  
15 recruiting and retention strategies.

16 The Guard has fared better than the active components in  
17 this regard, but the recruiting environment continues to be  
18 historically challenging. I would like to know how you  
19 would address this issue, especially in regard to retaining  
20 highly skilled personnel with transferable civilian  
21 training.

22           Turning to Southern Command Admiral Holsey, you bring  
23 36 years of experience as a naval aviator to this position.  
24 You have served at sea and ashore across the globe and in  
25 every level of leadership. Your current position as

1 military deputy commander of SOUTHCOM and previous  
2 experience, including as Commander of Carrier Strike Group  
3 one will serve you well. If confirmed As commander of  
4 SOUTHCOM, you'll be facing growing challenges from China and  
5 Russia and Latin America.

6 The political and economic instability in the region  
7 presents a situation that our adversaries are seeking to  
8 exploit to increase their own influence. China in  
9 particular is expanding its presence in the region,  
10 including through investments in strategic infrastructure,  
11 such as the Port of Balboa in Panama, 5G telecommunications,  
12 and an expanding network of space tracking installations.

13 Admiral, I'm interested in your assessment of the  
14 challenge from near peer competitors in Latin America, and  
15 how we might work strategically with our partners in the  
16 region to build resilience against these activities.

17 Further, we know that violence and economic problems  
18 are contributing to the instability in the SOUTHCOM area of  
19 responsibility. In particular, Venezuela's President  
20 Maduro's failure to provide transparency following the July  
21 general election has thrown his nation into greater  
22 political and economic chaos. And earlier this spring, the  
23 deteriorating security conditions in Haiti prompted the U.S.  
24 forces to augment security at the U.S. Embassy in Port au  
25 Prince and evacuate non-essential personnel.

1           Finally, transnational criminal activity and corruption  
2 continue to harm other areas, especially in the northern  
3 triangle countries of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador.  
4 Admiral, I would like to know your views on what more can be  
5 done to help improve the situation and strengthen security  
6 throughout the region.

7           Gentlemen, these complex challenges will require the  
8 full complement of your skills. Thank you for your  
9 willingness to continue your service and lead the nation,  
10 particularly the National Guard and SOUTHCOM at this  
11 critical moment. I look forward to your testimonies.

12           Let me now recognize Ranking Member, Senator Wicker.

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1           STATEMENT OF HON. ROGER F. WICKER, U.S. SENATOR FROM  
2           MISSISSIPPI

3           Senator Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4           I want to thank our witnesses for being here today.  
5           You've already recognized family members, but I do want to  
6           congratulate Vice Admiral Holsey on persuading a young lady  
7           from Claiborne County to be his bride some years ago.

8           Admiral Holsey, as the deputy commander at SOUTHCOM,  
9           you know, as well as anyone how effective the Chinese  
10          Communist Party has become in the region. The CCP has been  
11          engaging in predatory economic and diplomatic practices in  
12          the region, threatening our interests there. Our neighbors  
13          to the South rightly seek economic security for their  
14          people.

15          The Chinese exploit this goal by aggressively lobbying  
16          leaders across the hemisphere, pedaling dubious promises of  
17          infrastructure, local job creation. Instead of honoring  
18          their promises, they often follow through with predatory  
19          practices. The CCP leaves those nations worse off by  
20          constructing infrastructure exclusively with Chinese labor  
21          and by creating facilities that are either poorly built or  
22          incomplete.

23          Simultaneously through its state-owned enterprises,  
24          China sets conditions to enhance its military presence,  
25          gather intelligence, and attempt to limit U.S. access and



1 influence.

2 This July, the Center for Strategic and International  
3 Studies published a report in which they outlined no fewer  
4 than four separate Chinese electronic surveillance  
5 operations on the island of Cuba. These operations may even  
6 be able to collect signals intelligence well into U.S.  
7 territory.

8 This summer, the Russian Navy sent warships and  
9 submarines to exercise with the Cuban Navy. In other words,  
10 Great Power Competition is happening right here in the  
11 Americas. Now is the time for us to enhance our  
12 relationships and economic investment with our Southern  
13 neighbors. Yet our current approach is failing.

14 SOUTHCOM has continued to rely primarily on security  
15 assistance and cooperation, which is prohibitively  
16 expensive. It's time to use capital investments to achieve  
17 national security goals in this theater. Traditionally, we  
18 have not thought of investment strategy as a tool in DODs  
19 belt, but it can be highly effective when properly employed,  
20 and you and I have discussed this.

21 We should use it more frequently to promote U.S.  
22 influence and defense interest. And SOUTHCOM can lead the  
23 way. It should work with entities such as the DODs Office  
24 of Strategic Capital, the Development Finance Corporation,  
25 and the Export Import Bank. Their collaboration could pair

1 U.S. private capital with strategic investment opportunities  
2 in the region, yielding economic and national security  
3 benefits for the United States.

4 Admiral Holsey, I look forward to hearing how you  
5 intend to change SOUTHCOM's approach so it can do a better  
6 job of countering the malign influence of our adversaries  
7 and expand U.S. credibility in the region.

8 Now, Lieutenant General Nordhaus, if confirmed to serve  
9 as the chief of the National Guard Bureau, you'll be the  
10 principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense on National  
11 Guard Matters. The National Guard experiences constant  
12 tension between its federal and state missions. The federal  
13 government provides the vast majority of funds for the  
14 National Guard, and it's entitled to set the terms and  
15 conditions for how those resources are used.

16 In addition, the National Guard performs vital tasks  
17 for local communities, but these services cannot come at the  
18 expense of the Guard's military readiness responsibilities.  
19 If confirmed, perhaps your most challenging task will be  
20 striking a balance between these often competing federal and  
21 state missions. These competing priorities have led to  
22 avoidable conflict. Only recently, the National Guard  
23 cannot be the solution to every local labor shortage. In  
24 two extreme examples, some governors have used the National  
25 Guard to drive school buses and staff nursing homes. These

1 decisions erode military readiness and they improperly take  
2 service members away from their families and their civilian  
3 employment, not to mention their statutory mission.

4 If confirmed, I expect you to use your influence to  
5 ensure the National Guard personnel are properly focused on  
6 readiness and used appropriately to support the Department  
7 of Defense and our nation in times of emergency or conflict.

8 Finally, I would like to congratulate the 155th Armored  
9 Brigade combat team of the Mississippi Army National Guard  
10 on a successful deployment. They took command of the joint  
11 multinational training group, Ukraine, located in Germany,  
12 and had responsibility for training and mentoring the  
13 Ukrainian Armed forces.

14 This mission remains critical to our national security,  
15 and I'm proud of the Mississippi National Guard for  
16 conducting such an important role, and I felt I should  
17 mention it this morning.

18 So, thank both of you for being here. I look forward  
19 to a very interesting hearing. Thank you, sir.

20 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Wicker.

21 General Nordhaus, you're recognized.

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1           STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL STEVEN S. NORDHAUS,  
2           UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

3           General Nordhaus: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member  
4           Wicker, and distinguished members of the committee. I'm  
5           truly honored to be here and thank you for your longstanding  
6           support of the mission and men and women of the National  
7           Guard.

8           I also want to thank President Biden, secretary Austin  
9           and General Brown for their trust and confidence in  
10          nominating me to be the next chief of the National Guard  
11          Bureau. I am privileged to testify alongside Vice Admiral  
12          Holsey an incredible officer and teammate. I'd also like to  
13          recognize General Hokanson and his wife Kelly for their  
14          enduring impact they left on the National Guard.

15          I would not be here today if it were not for my family,  
16          and I would like to recognize them for their sacrifices  
17          they've made to allow me to do what I love. My wife  
18          Shannon, is the love of my life, the rock of our family, and  
19          my faithful spouse for over 35 years. Her commitment and  
20          advocacy for family and soldiers and airmen who serve, has  
21          been nothing short of amazing.

22          Together, we have five children, six grandchildren, and  
23          430,000 guardsmen we consider family. Shannon is the oldest  
24          daughter of Paul and Brenda Lawrence. Paul is a retired air  
25          traffic controller who served in Southeast Asia during

1 Vietnam. My father Don served in the Navy. He, along with  
2 my mom, Sandy, are responsible for my passion and love of  
3 flying and joining the Air Force. Our son Clay, is a  
4 captain in the Space Force and the others are patriots in  
5 their own way. Whitney is the oldest, and Luke are working  
6 within their communities. Our twins, Noah and Austin, are  
7 currently attending college studying business and music at  
8 the universities of Dayton and Michigan.

9 Over the past 35 years I've been shaped by incredible  
10 leaders and service members who I've served with at home and  
11 abroad during multiple U.S. and coalition deployments. I've  
12 held five commands, served at NORAD and U.S. NORTHCOM, and  
13 on the NGB staff as Director of Ops and Logistics. I have  
14 served both in the active duty and the National Guard as a  
15 traditional Guardsman, a temporary technician, and an active  
16 Guardsman.

17 These unique leadership experiences have made me  
18 acutely aware of the security challenges we face and the  
19 tough decisions ahead. I come to you today at an important  
20 time in our nation's history, with the rise of strategic  
21 competitors, a complex geopolitical environment, and roughly  
22 42,000 National Guard soldiers and airmen engaged globally.  
23 We face persistent threats both in the homeland and abroad,  
24 and the next chief of the National Guard Bureau must work  
25 closely with the 54 states, territories, and the District of

1 Columbia, as well as with the services, the Joint Force, and  
2 our allies and partners to meet these challenges.

3 In this vein, I believe the state partnership program  
4 is critical to our success and makes us stronger together  
5 and stronger tomorrow. If confirmed, I will ensure the  
6 National Guard airmen and soldiers are manned, trained, and  
7 equipped to continue to meet any mission anywhere. I will  
8 work tirelessly with this Committee and all the stakeholders  
9 to defend our nation.

10 I firmly believe the National Guard is an elite and  
11 ready war fighting force, serving as the primary combat  
12 reserve to the United States Army and Air Force, providing  
13 robust capability, capacity, and strategic and operational  
14 depth.

15 This investment serves as a force multiplier, enabling  
16 the National Guard to concurrently respond to our  
17 community's needs while serving under the control of the  
18 governor's and the military needs during times of conflict.  
19 You have my solemn promise to maintain an open line of  
20 communication with this Committee and Congress.

21 For the last 388 years, the incredible men and women of  
22 the National Guard have risen to every challenge and proven  
23 themselves on the battlefield and in our communities. They  
24 are and always will be my highest priority. They must  
25 balance their military careers, their family careers, their

1 civilian careers, so we can keep our promise as Americans to  
2 be always ready and always there.

3 In closing, I would like to thank you again for this  
4 opportunity to be before this committee. I look forward to  
5 your questions.

6 [The prepared statement of General Nordhaus follows:]

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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you, General.

2 Admiral Holsey, please.

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1 STATEMENT OF VICE ADMIRAL ALVIN HOLSEY, UNITED STATES

2 NAVY

3 Admiral Holsey: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker,  
4 and distinguished members of the committee. I'm honored and  
5 humbled to appear before you today as the nominee to lead  
6 United States Southern Command. I'd like to thank President  
7 Biden, Secretary Austin, and General Brown for their trust  
8 and confidence.

9 I'm honored to testify alongside Lieutenant General  
10 Nordhaus as the National Guard State Partnership program is  
11 a key enabler when it comes to building partner nation  
12 capability and capacity throughout the region. I'd also  
13 like to recognize and thank General Richardson, the current  
14 SOUTHCOM commander and her husband Jim, for their loyal and  
15 dedicated 70 plus years of service to our nation. General  
16 Richardson's guidance to SOUTHCOM and the impact she has  
17 made in the region has been inspiring.

18 If confirmed, I'll build on her efforts and work across  
19 the whole of government, our allies, and partners, to ensure  
20 we address security challenges and expand opportunities to  
21 truly realize SOUTHCOMs vision of a secure, free, and  
22 prosperous Western hemisphere.

23 I'd like to thank my family for their love and support  
24 throughout my military career. With me today is my wife of  
25 34 years, Stephanie, and our youngest son Jordan. Stephanie

1 is my best friend, a wonderful mother, an educator turned  
2 dentist, who has practiced in five states based off of our  
3 multiple moves as a family. Our oldest son, Joshua, cannot  
4 be here today. He's charting his own path in naval  
5 aviation, and is preparing for an upcoming deployment.  
6 Together we have a combined 45 years of service, and I like  
7 to think that we've made a difference.

8 Jordan is in his third year at the University of  
9 Virginia Medical School, conducting his clinicals at NOVA  
10 Fairfax. I cannot be prouder of the young men they have  
11 become. I'd also like to thank my parents, the late Charles  
12 Holsey Senior, an engineer, and my mother Rosa Holsey, a  
13 retired educator. They raised four sons and taught us the  
14 importance of faith, family, education, and service.

15 My father served in the army during the Korean War and  
16 his three brothers all served in the Navy. Go Navy. Three  
17 of my mother's four brothers served in the Army during  
18 Vietnam. Service is not just what we do, it is who we are  
19 as a family.

20 My first deployment to SOUTHCOM area of responsibility  
21 was over 33 years ago, conducting counter-drug missions  
22 flying off a Knox Class frigate, but this region, our  
23 neighborhood is so much more. It's on the front line of  
24 strategic competition. Most focus to the East and West when  
25 they think of Great Power Competition. But a look to our

1 South reveals that our adversaries have established a strong  
2 presence, jeopardizing security, and stability across the  
3 Americas. The PRC and Russia are strategic competitors who  
4 seek to undermine democracy while gaining power and  
5 influence in the region.

6 Transnational criminal organizations create and exploit  
7 the permissive environment, undermining the rule of law and  
8 disrupting legitimate government functions. Additionally,  
9 transboundary threats demand our attention as well, from  
10 irregular migration, climate change, eroding democracies, to  
11 food and water insecurities. Our time is now. If we don't  
12 take deliberate and meaningful steps over the next 5 to 10  
13 years, this region will change forever.

14 To be clear, partnerships are our best deterrence to  
15 counting shared security and economic concerns, and for now,  
16 we remain the trusted partner. But we can't take that for  
17 granted. Over the past 19 months as a deputy commander,  
18 I've personally seen the importance of our enduring presence  
19 in the region and how partners seek us as an alternative to  
20 the PRC, Russia, and others.

21 Rapidly responding to crises is not just a phrase in  
22 our mission statement. For the past several years, SOUTHCOM  
23 has responded, and we will respond again, to earthquakes,  
24 floods, wildfires, volcanoes, hurricanes, and droughts. To  
25 be a trusted partner, we must be credible, present, and

1 engaged. Our main campaigning tool in this region is  
2 security cooperation. If confirmed, I'll work tirelessly  
3 with our partners to understand the requirements, then work  
4 across the whole of government to deliver at the point of  
5 need, and build partner nation capability and capacity to  
6 respond to our shared threats in our neighborhood.

7 I also look forward, if confirmed, to working with  
8 Congress who are central partners in the defense of our  
9 nation.

10 Thank you again, Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker,  
11 members of the committee, for this opportunity. I look  
12 forward to your questions.

13 [The prepared statement of Admiral Holsey follows:]

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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Admiral. I have a series of  
2 questions required of all nominees. You may answer in  
3 unison. Have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations  
4 governing conflicts of interest?

5 Admiral Holsey: Yes.

6 General Nordhaus: Yes.

7 Chairman Reed: Have you assumed any duties or taken  
8 any actions that would appear to presume the outcome of the  
9 confirmation process?

10 Admiral Holsey: No.

11 General Nordhaus: No.

12 Chairman Reed: Exercising our legislative and  
13 oversight responsibility makes it important that this  
14 committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate  
15 committees of Congress, receive testimony, briefings,  
16 reports, records, and other information from the executive  
17 branch on a timely basis. Do you agree, if confirmed, to  
18 appear and testify before this committee when requested?

19 Admiral Holsey: Yes.

20 General Nordhaus: Yes.

21 Chairman Reed: Do you agree when asked before this  
22 committee to give your personal views even if your views  
23 differ from the administration?

24 Admiral Holsey: Yes.

25 General Nordhaus: Yes.

1 Chairman Reed: Do you agree to provide records,  
2 documents, and electronic communications in a timely manner  
3 when requested by this committee, its subcommittees, or  
4 other appropriate committees of Congress, and to consult  
5 with the requester regarding the basis for any good faith,  
6 delay, or denial in providing such records?

7 Admiral Holsey: Yes.

8 General Nordhaus: Yes.

9 Chairman Reed: Will you ensure that your staff  
10 complies with deadlines established by this committee for  
11 the reduction of reports, records, and other information,  
12 including timely responding to hearing questions for the  
13 record?

14 Admiral Holsey: Yes.

15 General Nordhaus: Yes.

16 Chairman Reed: Will you cooperate in providing  
17 witnesses and briefings in response to congressional  
18 requests?

19 Admiral Holsey: Yes.

20 General Nordhaus: Yes.

21 Chairman Reed: Will those witnesses and briefers be  
22 protected from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

23 Admiral Holsey: Yes.

24 General Nordhaus: Yes.

25 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, gentlemen.

1           Admiral Holsey, could you give a brief outline of  
2       SOUTHCOM's current priorities and initiatives to counter the  
3       acute threat of Russia and China and other malign nations?  
4       You might bring that microphone a little forward, sir.

5           Admiral Holsey: Yes, Senator.

6           Chairman Reed: Okay.

7           Admiral Holsey: Thank you. Yes, for the current  
8       priorities are to strengthen partnerships, counter threats,  
9       and to build our team. So, as we look at the SOUTHCOM AOR,  
10      strategic competition's real. As I mentioned, the PRC and  
11      Russia continue to try to undermine democracy and seek to  
12      gain power and influence in the region. When I look at the  
13      transnational criminal organizations, they continue to  
14      create chaos throughout the region.

15           The transnational criminal organizations and the  
16      violent extremist organizations remain the primary threat to  
17      instability in the region. You also have a third of their  
18      funding that they pick in each year is kind of drug mission  
19      from drug ops or illicit drugs. So, we're watching it very  
20      closely. Then finally, I'm concerned about the unrest in  
21      Haiti, Venezuela, and Cuba as it stands right now, that also  
22      contributes to the irregular migration that we're seeing.

23           Chairman Reed: And in particular with respect to  
24      Russia and China's influence?

25           Admiral Holsey: Yes, sir. So with regard to Russia,

1 China first. China remains a long-term strategic  
2 competitor. They're a pacing challenge and they're setting  
3 the theater. In my view PRC approach to the region is  
4 primarily driven by economics, which provides access,  
5 influence, and the opportunity to coerce our partner nations  
6 into unfavorable terms.

7 In short, they see unchecked opportunity. I think  
8 they're playing the long view to using economic state craft  
9 to advance their foreign policy goals. So that's the quick  
10 piece there from an economic side, but it's more than that.  
11 I think there are efforts to develop and build dual use  
12 sites and facilities in the region is concerning, from  
13 space, land, infrastructure to ports and 5G infrastructure  
14 as well.

15 From a Russia standpoint, they're a more acute  
16 challenge. They seek to undermine democracy. They like to  
17 compete with the United States, I believe, on a global  
18 scale, and they look for low cost opportunities to exert  
19 their influence and take advantage of the chaos in the  
20 region to build their partnerships and undermine ours. They  
21 generally look to again, maintain partnerships. They seek  
22 to provide presence, and they try to shape their information  
23 space. So, all that's very challenging.

24 I think we can get after that, sir, through our  
25 security operation, our partnerships, working the whole of



1 government to make sure we can stay on the field and engage.

2 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much. General Nordhaus,  
3 you have been at every level of service in the National  
4 Guard and with the Air Force. Can you give us sort of your  
5 lessons learned from the numerous post 9/11 contingency  
6 operations that the Guard has been assigned, and they've  
7 carried them out magnificently. I was a few months ago in  
8 Kosovo with my National Guard as they're fulfilling their  
9 mission. So, the lessons you think are most critical.

10 General Nordhaus: Thanks, Chairman. Appreciate the  
11 opportunity. The National Guard and our airmen and soldiers  
12 are completely integrated and interoperable with our active  
13 army and Air Force. And that lesson as we look into the  
14 future needs to continue. As we look at priorities as I go  
15 forward, if confirmed, our people are the most critical.  
16 So, recruiting and retention and making sure that we have  
17 those and continue that the lessons learned there to make  
18 sure that we always have our force structure full, organized  
19 training, equipped, to be that combat reserve to the Army  
20 and the Air Force.

21 Then, really, readiness. I think readiness is  
22 something that we have to continue to build, and as we look  
23 at Great Power Competition that we're in, we have to  
24 accelerate that and make sure that readiness for our airmen  
25 and our soldiers are ready to be deployable, interoperable,

1 and sustainable.

2 And then the partnerships that you mentioned. As we  
3 look at the 106 state partners around the globe today, those  
4 partnerships are critical and are asymmetric advantage for  
5 our nation.

6 And then modernization. We need to stay concurrent  
7 with modernization with our services so that we can always  
8 be ready and there for them.

9 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, General. Thank  
10 you both for your service to the nation.

11 Senator Wicker, please.

12 Senator Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral  
13 Holsey, in my opening statement, I mentioned how  
14 prohibitively expensive security assistance is in the  
15 region, and suggested other ways in which we could perhaps  
16 emphasize our friendship and strengthen our ties with our  
17 friends in SOUTHCOM. I mentioned office of Strategic  
18 Capital, Development Finance Corporation, and the Export  
19 Import Bank. Do you agree and what do you think about that?

20 Admiral Holsey: Senator, I absolutely agree. Economic  
21 security is national security. And what we're seeing from  
22 my partners we have to be to respond at the point of need at  
23 the point of relevance. And so we're realizing as we work  
24 through the foreign military, foreign financing process, it  
25 can be slow at times. So, we're looking for opportunities,

1 and some countries are high income countries, and so we're  
2 trying to find ways to deliver quicker.

3 So, we are exploring right now with EXIM Bank. We'll  
4 get a chance to go out to the Inter-American Development  
5 Bank and other opportunities. We're looking at talking to  
6 American Chamber of Commerce. So, we're trying to get our  
7 story out there and kind of get the synergy with our  
8 partners to understand that here's the opportunities for you  
9 to actually go after. So, we're really pressing real hard  
10 on that and we'll continue to do so, sir, if confirmed.

11 Senator Wicker: Okay. You talked about us being the  
12 trusted partner in the great majority of the nations in  
13 SOUTHCOM. And I think you mentioned three particular areas  
14 where there's a problem that of course would be Cuba,  
15 Venezuela, and I believe you said Haiti. In the other  
16 countries, other than those three, isn't it a fact that even  
17 though we are the trusted partner, the People's Republic of  
18 China is right in there paying for infrastructure, spreading  
19 their money around. And is that correct? Am I correct in  
20 that? And if you could elaborate on that for us please.

21 Admiral Holsey: So, Senator, the PRC continues to  
22 -- right now you have 22 countries of 31 who are signatories  
23 of Belt and Road Initiative. And so what they do with the  
24 Belt and Road Initiative, they portray that as expanding  
25 economic, financial, and trade opportunities. I think we

1 see it a bit differently. I think by the times our  
2 countries realize they've been deceived, they found  
3 themselves with more debt, high interest rate loans, poorly  
4 constructed infrastructure projects, data insecurity,  
5 resource extraction, and environmental concerns.

6 So, you're right, I think there are countries there  
7 -- and not all of them -- but all of them are looking for  
8 opportunities. So I think we have to find ways working  
9 throughout the whole of government, the department of  
10 Commerce and others, and to be able to find ways and find  
11 solutions where we can deliver at the point of need.

12 Senator Wicker: How has that negative experience over  
13 some years now with Belt and Road affected our friends'  
14 willingness to initiate other projects assisted by Belt and  
15 Road?

16 Admiral Holsey: So, I think our partners look at us  
17 from a standpoint, from a mill to mill. They're solid.  
18 They want to work with us, they want to be of us. There are  
19 some nations as, you look at --

20 Senator Wicker: But are they beginning to be reluctant  
21 to accept China's help because of the negative practices so  
22 far?

23 Admiral Holsey: Yes, sir.

24 Senator Wicker: All right. Let me just ask you one  
25 other thing. President Xi has told his Congress in China

1 that they need to be prepared to retake Taiwan by 2027. If  
2 that occurs, what can we expect China to be doing in your  
3 area as that occurs?

4 Admiral Holsey: Senator, as the deputy commander, I've  
5 had a chance to -- I've been around for 18 months, 19 months  
6 now, and I'll share with you that we continue to work in  
7 accordance with our guidance to defend the Panama Canal and  
8 make sure we can provide our best military advice to the Sec  
9 Def and Chairman. And that's what we'll do.

10 Senator Wicker: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Wicker.

12 Senator Shaheen, please.

13 Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

14 Congratulations to both of you and thank you to both of  
15 you for your service and to your families for their service  
16 as well, and welcome.

17 General Nordhaus, I really appreciated your time in my  
18 office this week. As you know, I'm very concerned about the  
19 National Guard Bureau's decision to level personnel at the  
20 157th Air Refueling Wing at Pease Air Guard Base in New  
21 Hampshire. I believe this was a shortsighted decision, that  
22 it was done with consideration to neither the capacity of  
23 the 157th in New Hampshire, nor the need of the KC-46 to  
24 meet its global refueling requirements.

25 And just to give you some background on the 157th, I

1 assume you know all of this, but I think it's worth  
2 repeating. The 157th was the first Air National Guard Unit  
3 to receive the KC-46 refueling tanker. They were selected  
4 because of their success in operations and their strategic  
5 location.

6 It was the first refueling wing in the country to  
7 achieve initial operating capacity of the five active duty  
8 Guard and reserve wings flying the KC-46. They were the  
9 first air refueling wing to conduct a long-range exercise,  
10 and for that, they received recognition from Top Air Force  
11 leadership. And now they're the first KC-46 Air Refueling  
12 Wing in the entire Air Force to deploy the KC-46 overseas.

13 I was just in New Hampshire on Sunday, as we discussed.  
14 I addressed the 300 airmen and women about to deploy. They  
15 are excited about this milestone, but they are unfortunately  
16 very worried about what the releveling would mean for their  
17 ability to do their jobs. This decision, I think, is  
18 problematic, not just for New Hampshire, but for the KC-46  
19 to meet its operational requirements globally. The proposed  
20 leveling will cause a reduction in force at Pease by 12  
21 full-time positions. It will revert 22 positions from full-  
22 time, active guard reserve to technician, resulting in the  
23 loss of experienced maintainers and aviators.

24 The Guard projects its ability to support TRANSCOM will  
25 decrease by 23 percent. And this at a time when we know

1 that aerial refueling capacity is among the top concerns for  
2 strategic command and transportation command. We heard that  
3 from their commanders before this committee. In the context  
4 of the National Defense Strategy, as you were just  
5 discussing with the Chair and Ranking Member, aerial  
6 refueling will be necessary to resupply U.S. forces in the  
7 Indo-Pacific.

8 So, if confirmed, I hope you will visit New Hampshire,  
9 you will meet with the 157th, and you will provide an  
10 opportunity to look at the importance of their mission to an  
11 exemption for this policy. I know that that has been done  
12 in some other states, in Alaska, because of the critical  
13 mission that they operate, and I believe that you will find  
14 that that's the case in New Hampshire as well.

15 Will you commit to doing that and looking at the whole  
16 releveling issue with respect to New Hampshire and the  
17 157th?

18 General Nordhaus: Senator, thank you for the question  
19 and for being on the National Guard Caucus. The 157th also,  
20 I'll just throw out, you named a lot of great things that  
21 the 157th is doing currently as the NORAD Continental Region  
22 Commander. They also support air refueling for POTUS  
23 support and other things across the United States. So I  
24 understand the great capability.

25 Understand that General Hokanson said that any state

1 that had a concern that he would consider a one-year  
2 exemption. My understanding is Pease, New Hampshire, asked  
3 for that and that's been granted. He also said that they'd  
4 conduct an assessment. It's my understanding that  
5 International Guard within the next couple of weeks will  
6 visit New Hampshire. If confirmed, I do promise to make  
7 sure we take a full transparent look at this and to make  
8 sure that we're meeting mission requirements with full-time  
9 requirements.

10 And I look forward to visiting the Pease 157th if  
11 confirmed, and look forward to giving this my full  
12 attention.

13 Senator Shaheen: Thank you very much.

14 Mr. Chairman, I would like to submit for the record the  
15 assessment that we have done -- that the National Guard has  
16 done on what the impact would be of that releveling in New  
17 Hampshire.

18 Chairman Reed: Without objection. So, ordered.

19 [The information referred to follows:]

20 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

21

22

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24

25



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

2 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

3 Senator Fischer, please.

4 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome,  
5 General. Welcome, Admiral. Good to see you.

6 Admiral Holsey, I share your concern about the growing  
7 influence of China in some countries within SOUTHCOM's AOR.  
8 If confirmed, how would you continue or bolster efforts to  
9 ensure that the United States is going to be viewed as a  
10 partner of choice?

11 Admiral Holsey: Senator, as I look at the way forward,  
12 if confirmed, I think our strength lies in our security  
13 cooperation. I think we continue to do the security  
14 cooperation. And then under that level that we have several  
15 levers we can use, state partnership program, the  
16 humanitarian assistance program, a joint exercise program,  
17 which is a very powerful tool.

18 Today, right now we have the UNITAS ongoing, 24 nations  
19 serving a ship side-by-side, F-18s, ships, submarines. So  
20 we're doing real world ops right now, and what that does, it  
21 provides the training, interoperability, trust, and  
22 confidence in our partners. So that's something that we can  
23 do and we continue to do. So I think we'll continue to work  
24 on the security operation and again, whole of government  
25 approach, diplomacy in the lead, and then make sure we

1 integrate those efforts with the economic and military as  
2 well.

3 Senator Fischer: This committee, we consistently hear  
4 that we have to be more effective in a whole of government  
5 approach, especially when we're trying to engage with our  
6 partners. If confirmed, can you give me some specific  
7 examples with how you would work, maybe with the Department  
8 of State, with the Department of Commerce, any other  
9 agencies that are out there, so that we can become even  
10 better partners in Latin America?

11 [Off mic response.]

12 Senator Fischer: I think you need your mic on.

13 Admiral Holsey: The civilian deputy at U.S. Southern  
14 Command is actually an ambassador. She served in Guyana, so  
15 she's there in the office right now. We have Department of  
16 Commerce, L&O in our -- one of our 13 L&Os we have in our  
17 command. So, there's avenues to reach in and utilize our  
18 talents, and we have to do that. I think when we convene  
19 our conferences, Chief of Mission Conference, we bring all  
20 the ambassadors to SOUTHCOM, and we invite all the  
21 Department of State, Commerce, and have these discussions.

22 That's how we learned about the great opportunity with  
23 EXIM Bank by inviting the President down to the conference.  
24 So, we'll continue to look for those avenues to understand  
25 better what options we have. Yes, ma'am.

1 Senator Fischer: Okay, thank you.

2 General, we look at a significant amount of Total Force  
3 logistics and airlift capability. And we know that that  
4 resides with our National Guard. In a potential conflict,  
5 especially with a peer adversary, especially when one may  
6 happen with limited notification, limited warnings to our  
7 country, National Guard forces are going to have to really  
8 mobilize quickly.

9 What do you see as opportunities to increase  
10 integration and collaboration with the Total Force,  
11 especially in terms of planning and exercise, so that we can  
12 have a much quicker deployment?

13 General Nordhaus: Senator, over the last decade, I've  
14 really seen an incredible integration of the National Guard  
15 with all operations across the Army and the Air Force. As  
16 we look at transformation that's going on with the Army and  
17 optimizing for Great Power Competition in the United States  
18 Air Force, our National Guard on both sides are fully  
19 integrated into their plans.

20 And then as we do exercises, large scale exercises that  
21 really prepare for that type of conflict if it were to come,  
22 I think we're well integrated across the board. If  
23 confirmed, I will work with General George and General Alvin  
24 to make sure that we continue that and make sure that we're  
25 always ready and always there and we can mobilize quickly to

1 meet the needs of our nation.

2           Senator Fischer: You know, we've heard this morning,  
3 the State Partnership Program, it's been mentioned a couple  
4 of times, the Admiral just did that. Do you see  
5 opportunities out there that we can continue to build upon  
6 this program? I believe that most states are involved in  
7 it, Nebraska has a couple of partners, and I know that our  
8 Guard feels that that's a valuable program not just for our  
9 country, but in the countries that we serve with as well.  
10 Any opportunities out there to grow this?

11           General Nordhaus: Absolutely, Senator. We will work  
12 with combatant commands to make sure that we take a look at  
13 all the opportunities that are out there and through the  
14 State Department. We recently just added Finland and  
15 Sweden, and so we will continue to look at that program. I  
16 think it is the incredible asymmetric capability of our  
17 nation with our allies and partners to be that great force  
18 for our nation and for freedom.

19           Senator Fischer: Okay, thank you. Thank you, Mr.  
20 Chair.

21           Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Fisher.

22           Senator Kaine, please.

23           Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And  
24 congratulations to the witnesses for your nominations.

25           General Nordhaus, I'd want to begin where Senator

1 Fisher left off on the State Partnership Program. Virginia  
2 has a partnership with Tajikistan that goes back to 2003,  
3 and we're very proud that this year we formed an additional  
4 state partnership with Finland. Finland joining NATO  
5 combines nicely with the fact that we're standing up in NATO  
6 command in Norfolk to focus on the North Atlantic and the  
7 Arctic. And Finland, as a state partner, I think will be a  
8 very valuable one for us.

9 So, I just want to encourage the work that you will  
10 continue to do when you are confirmed to strengthen these  
11 programs and look at the way the state partnership programs  
12 can evolve to help us face challenges of the future.

13 I have a very specific question for you, General  
14 Nordhaus. The Blended Retirement System was developed in  
15 the 2016 NDAA to include incentives like mid-career  
16 continuation pay to encourage retention. Talk a little bit  
17 about how the National Guard has been impacted by this new  
18 system, and is there anything additional Congress can do to  
19 provide support for National Guard members through programs  
20 like Blended Retirement?

21 General Nordhaus: Senator, thanks for the question and  
22 the comments on the State Partnership Program. As we look  
23 at our National Guard and we continue to see really high  
24 retention rates, I think that's one of the things that we'll  
25 have to continue to look at to see what impacts Blended

1 Retirement System has.

2 As I said in my opening statement and talked about with  
3 the chairman, people are my number one priority. And so, we  
4 have to understand what they need, what the requirements are  
5 to make sure that they're organized, trained, equipped to be  
6 able to do the mission, but they also have the appropriate  
7 pay and benefits to make sure that the National Guard is a  
8 great place to work and then have that in longevity.

9 Senator Kaine: I understand going forward, we need to  
10 assess that all the time. Do you have a kind of -- this has  
11 been in place for a couple of years, do you have a sense for  
12 how it's working? I mean, are we too hot, too cold, just  
13 right, or how would you assess it thus far?

14 General Nordhaus: Senator, my early assessment from my  
15 time, I haven't seen a significant change, but if confirmed,  
16 I will definitely make that something I'll take a look at to  
17 understand the impacts. If I see anything negative, I'll,  
18 I'll be sure to come back to the committee.

19 Senator Kaine: Okay. Thank you for that.

20 Admiral Holsey, I chair the Americas Subcommittee on  
21 Senate Foreign Relations, and I'll pick up on some questions  
22 in line of inquiry from Senator Wicker. He was asking you  
23 whether partners in the Americas or seeing or developing  
24 skepticism based upon some of their interactions with China.  
25 And I think you're right that the answer is yes, and yet

1 what I hear, what I travel in the region is, "But you can't  
2 beat something with nothing."

3 They may put deals on the table that could trap us in  
4 debt. They may want to do development projects that will be  
5 performed in a substandard way. Sometimes those projects  
6 are performed with Chinese workers, not workers from the  
7 countries in question. There are environmental challenges.  
8 They're worrying about data security. I hear that  
9 everywhere.

10 And yet they usually conclude by saying, and yet  
11 they're putting significant investments on the table that  
12 they're willing to do, and they don't necessarily see the  
13 same attention, resources from the United States. If you  
14 include U.S. private company investment, and we should  
15 always talk about that as part of what we do, then it  
16 equalizes a little bit more. But they tend to see China  
17 coming with a checkbook that's nearly, you know, blank  
18 checks that they're willing to fill in whatever the number  
19 is, and they don't really see that from us.

20 And some of the programs that we have, frankly, for  
21 nations in the Americas, as soon as they achieve some level  
22 of success, like a Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, we say,  
23 "Well, now you're a well-off nation, and so these programs  
24 can't serve you anymore." I think we need to do an awful  
25 lot more to help those nations in the Americas that are

1 allies who are successful, to succeed even more.

2 And what they often say to us is, "As soon as we're  
3 successful, you don't pay attention to us, and you spend  
4 your time on the headaches." Obviously, we need to spend  
5 some time on the headaches, but I think we're getting out  
6 competed in the Americas. And that's my sense. General  
7 Richardson, I think did a wonderful job. I know you and she  
8 have worked closely together in, in strengthening the mill-  
9 to-mill partnerships, but it does need to go beyond that.

10 So, if you could maybe share with the committee what  
11 risks do we assume as a country if we fail to devote the  
12 necessary resources, military or otherwise, and attention to  
13 the challenges we're seeing in Latin America.

14 Admiral Holsey: Thank you, Senator. Just one quick  
15 thing I'll share. When you look at the 5G standpoint, and  
16 so from 5G, if you have a Huawei system or PRC system, now  
17 our partners have that data and security risk. It's  
18 connected to your network system. Now, how do you continue  
19 to work with us, right? So, we're trying to make sure we  
20 have opportunities and options for them, and we just have to  
21 move a whole lot faster. Yes, sir.

22 Senator Kaine: Thank you. I yield back.

23 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Kaine.

24 Senator Cotton, please?

25 Senator Cotton: Thank you. Gentlemen, congratulations



1 on your nomination and congratulations and thank you to your  
2 families and your mentors and the NCOs across the course of  
3 your career who brought you to this point.

4 General Nordhaus, obviously the National Guard plays a  
5 very critical role for our nation. We see them at home  
6 responding to national disasters or crises but we also rely  
7 on them for our national security. As some of the other  
8 senators have said about their National Guard, the Arkansas  
9 National Guard was just last year in Germany providing  
10 critical support and training to Ukraine's armed forces  
11 where I visited with them.

12 And just next week we'll have a ribbon cutting ceremony  
13 at Ebbing Air Force Base for the new foreign training  
14 mission for the F-35. These are vitally important, not just  
15 for the Arkansas National Guard, but also for our nation  
16 security. And I know that I have your commitment to support  
17 that just as much as your predecessors have, correct?

18 General Nordhaus: Yes, sir. I support those important  
19 programs that you talked about.

20 Senator Cotton: Thank you. I want to turn to an issue  
21 that's kind of at the intersection of your current role at  
22 NORAD, and that might be in your role at the National Guard  
23 Bureau. You're familiar, obviously with the high tempo of  
24 drone incursions over our military installations not just in  
25 places like Iraq and Syria, but here in the United States to

1 include National Guard bases.

2 What's your view of the National Guard's role in  
3 defending installations and domestic infrastructure from  
4 such drone incursions?

5 General Nordhaus: Senator, you raised an important issue.  
6 Counter small UAS and protecting our bases is absolutely  
7 vital. We are seeing increased incursions through NORTHCOM  
8 commander General Guillot, which sets the force protection  
9 across the United States bases have that responsibility to  
10 defend and secure and protect their bases. The same would  
11 be for the National Guard in the bases. And so I'd work  
12 whole of government approach and certainly with the Services  
13 that has taken this issue very seriously and on weekly  
14 meetings to make sure we get after the problem.

15 Senator Cotton: Okay. Do you have the relevant  
16 authority you need right now to support DHS and DOJ when we  
17 see drone incursions violating U.S. airspace, controls over  
18 U.S. military installations?

19 General Nordhaus: Senator, authorities are different  
20 in the United States than they are overseas. And so I know  
21 General Guillot nor NORTHCOM as the synchronizer for the  
22 Department of Defense. Certainly, looking at those and  
23 working those authorities to make sure if additional ones  
24 are needed, that that's brought forward. We want to make  
25 sure that we have the right capability, both either kinetic

1 or non-kinetic to understand and domain awareness so that we  
2 can sense the incursions, and then that we have the problem  
3 set right and the authorities to use whichever need to  
4 protect our people and our equipment.

5 Senator Cotton: Thank you. Any thoughts on what you  
6 might do if confirmed about the long-term procurement and  
7 sustainment of capabilities needed for a Homeland Counter  
8 drone mission?

9 General Nordhaus: For the counter drone mission, yes  
10 Senator. We'll work with our services who are the  
11 procurement authority. So I'll certainly work with General  
12 Alvin and General George as we look forward to the best way  
13 to defend our bases and protect our people.

14 Senator Cotton: Okay. Thank you.

15 Admiral Holsey, I want to talk a little bit about  
16 Haiti. There's a current UN plan and a multinational  
17 security support mission to deploy around 2,500 personnel to  
18 Haiti, mostly from Kenya and Benin, but also some Caribbean  
19 nations. I have to say, this strikes me as a totally  
20 harebrained scheme. Port-Au-Prince, for instance, has 1.2  
21 million people. It's overrun by gangs and militias, and it  
22 lacks a functioning government.

23 I know that in your current role or your future role,  
24 you don't shape policy as it relates to Haiti, but I do want  
25 to know from your military expertise and your role as the

1 current deputy commander in SOUTHCOM, what do you think is  
2 the prospect of success for a force of 2,500 personnel to  
3 stabilize a city of 1.2 million people without an effective  
4 government?

5 Admiral Holsey: Senator, thanks for that question. As  
6 I look at the current layout right now, we're planning for  
7 approximately 1000 at this point, is what we're looking at.  
8 So it's a very challenging problem set, right? But I will  
9 share with you, as I look at at least one metric right now  
10 we have the about 350, almost 380 or so Kenyans on the  
11 ground. When I look at the number of Haitians coming  
12 through the Darien, and I've seen that number trending down  
13 for the last couple months, I think that's somewhat sending  
14 a signal to at least the Haitians that they're willing to  
15 wait and see how this plays out. But it will be a very  
16 challenging problem set, sir.

17 Senator Cotton: Yeah, I think it'll be challenging as  
18 well. And what concerns me most is there's a fairly long  
19 history of our interventions or the UN's interventions in  
20 Haiti, and they don't have very good end stories, especially  
21 the United Nations and what some of its officials have done  
22 in Haiti. I just worry very much that other nations are  
23 biting off more than they can chew under a hair-brained UN  
24 scheme, and where are they going to turn in a crisis?

25 They're going to turn to you and to the United States

1 and our personnel, and we might end up in a situation where  
2 we have to put American forces at least into the ports to  
3 help evacuate people. And I think that would be very, very  
4 unwise for our nation. So I agree that 2,500 troops, or  
5 even a few more than that, is unlikely to do much in Haiti  
6 and puts our own personnel potentially at great risk in the  
7 future.

8 Thank you. Congratulations both.

9 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Cotton.

10 Senator King, please.

11 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral  
12 Holsey, you're serving in a war zone. Since we've been  
13 sitting here this morning, 10 Americans have died as a  
14 result of the work in that war zone. I'm talking about  
15 overdose deaths, over a hundred thousand in the country,  
16 almost one a day in my state of Maine. Americans are dying,  
17 and here's what's the problem or a problem, a part of the  
18 problem.

19 We are only interdicting 25 percent of the drug  
20 shipments by sea that are coming to this country that we  
21 know of, that intelligence tells us are coming and where  
22 they are. And yet, 75 percent of them get through. That's  
23 inexcusable. There's something crazy about that. We're  
24 talking about perspective issues with other countries in the  
25 region, this is a real live war zone where people are being

1 killed. And I just don't understand it. This has been  
2 going on for years, I've been asking this question.

3 So I want to understand why we're able to only  
4 interdict 25 percent of the drug shipments that we know  
5 about. And if it's a lack of ships, let's find them. The  
6 Navy, the Coast Guard, neighboring countries. How about  
7 this? The boats that we do interdict, let's get the people  
8 off and the drugs off and turn them into -- arm them, and  
9 then they can be part of the fleet to interdict other  
10 shipments.

11 But we've got to think creatively about this. I'm tired of  
12 coming to this hearing every couple of years and hearing  
13 this same figure of 25 percent interdiction of what we know  
14 of. Will you commit to me to do two things?

15 Number one, to look for the resources and the assets  
16 that are necessary to execute this mission. And number two,  
17 to look at the organization of the mission. There are lots  
18 of U.S. government agencies involved, intelligence, DHS,  
19 drug interdiction, Navy, Coast Guard. My sense is nobody's  
20 in charge. And I'd like you to come back to this committee  
21 with an organizational chart that shows that somebody is in  
22 charge. And I never like to hear the phrase, "all of  
23 government." Every time I hear that phrase, what I hear is,  
24 nobody's in charge.

25 Will you make those two commitments, Admiral?

1           Admiral Holsey:  Senator, I understand your concern.  
2   And even one life is precious.  And so it doesn't matter how  
3   many, right?  One is precious.

4           I'll share with you that I'll commit to looking at this  
5   very closely.  I believe that we have areas that we can  
6   improve.  I will advocate for adequate resourcing air and  
7   maritime assets to bolster our presence and to be able to  
8   effect interdiction.  I think we have to do that.  We have  
9   to continue to work with intelligence as well.  But again,  
10  it's a very challenging problem set.  We'll continue to  
11  support the lead federal agency, the DEA.  Again, we have  
12  all those resources, but now we have to bring them together.

13          Senator King:  But if you don't have the assets, if you  
14  don't have those ships, let us know.  That's the business  
15  that we're in.  Let us know so that we can try to solve this  
16  problem.  But I want you, as you're flying back today, bear  
17  in mind that one American, every five minutes, 24 hours a  
18  day is dying --

19          Admiral Holsey:  Yes, sir.

20          Senator King:  -- as a result of this crisis.

21          General, congratulations on your appointment.  I should  
22  have said that to you as also Admiral Holsey.  We want KC-  
23  46s at Bangor at the 101st Air Refueling Wing, and I hope  
24  that that's going to be on your list.  That's, as you know,  
25  during the Gulf War, during anything that's going on in

1 Europe, Ukraine, the 101st Air Refueling Wing is critical  
2 because what they work is the North Atlantic.

3 So, will you commit to me that they will get a good,  
4 close, serious consideration for the next round of  
5 deployment of KC-46s?

6 General Nordhaus: Senator, like you raised, KC-46 is  
7 an incredible platform for us. I also visited Bangor up  
8 there within the last six months or so. And sir, you have  
9 an incredible unit up there. And certainly, with the states  
10 and opportunities for KC-46, that'll be a very critical  
11 process that we're going through right now. Certainly, all  
12 the states that have the opportunity, I believe there's 15  
13 of them, we'll have a full look with the criteria that's  
14 been acknowledged by the states, also approved by the wing  
15 commanders and the tags, and then that'll come up through a  
16 process and be open and transparent for that.

17 Senator King: Thank you. I was going to suggest you  
18 could, as you visit Bangor, you could visit Pease by flying  
19 over it on the way to Bangor. I suggested that to Senator  
20 Shaheen.

21 Quick note, a lot of people have mentioned  
22 partnerships, these international partnerships. We have one  
23 with Montenegro, very successful. We came to their defense  
24 in 2022 on a cyber incident. It made a huge difference for  
25 them. I'm very proud of our cyber warriors in Maine, as



1 well as the MAINEiacs of the 101st. Thank you.

2 Senator Wicker: Mr. Chairman.

3 Chairman Reed: Senator Wicker.

4 Senator Wicker: I yielded back 14 seconds earlier. I  
5 wonder if I could ask Admiral Holsey, what do we do with  
6 those boats that we seize and interdict, and what do you  
7 think about that suggestion?

8 Admiral Holsey: So, sir, we actually do seize boats.  
9 In fact, part of our JIATF South and as well as our nav  
10 south hybrid fleet we're using some of these boats as  
11 drones, as targets. And so we do that. And then if it's  
12 unseaworthy, then the ship duly sinks it or scuttles it if  
13 it's not seaworthy.

14 Senator Wicker: I think it's a worthwhile suggestion  
15 that Senator King has made.

16 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Wicker. Thank you,  
17 Senator King.

18 Senator Scott, please.

19 Senator Scott: Thank you, Chairman. First  
20 congratulations on your nominations. Thank you for your  
21 willingness to serve. Thank you for the sacrifice of your  
22 families.

23 So I'm from Florida, so we follow closely what's going  
24 on in Latin America. So you can look at Cuba, Venezuela,  
25 and Nicaragua, Columbia. Look at all these places. Even

1 some issues that are going on in Brazil. So, Admiral  
2 Holsey, let's take Venezuela. Maduro's trying to steal the  
3 election. I'm very disappointed the Biden and Harris  
4 Administration won't recognize Gonzalez as the President-  
5 elect.

6 The election was clearly stolen. We're still fighting  
7 to make sure that Maduro leaves power. So, what if Maduro  
8 doesn't leave power? What concerns do you have and what  
9 will happen in Venezuela and how does it impact our national  
10 security?

11 Admiral Holsey: So, Senator, I understand your  
12 concern. I think if Maduro doesn't leave, I think the  
13 instability will continue. The economy has worsened since  
14 2013, you had over 8 million migrants leave the country.  
15 You've had the economy, there's a lack of food, water  
16 supply, services. So again, I see a potential where the  
17 mass migration continues through the Darien. And, if  
18 confirmed, I'll continue to work with my allies and partners  
19 in the region to try to mitigate the instability caused by  
20 the migration.

21 Senator Scott: So, communist China, or communist  
22 regime in Cuba, do you think they're a national security  
23 threat to the United States?

24 Admiral Holsey: I think right now Senator, in Cuba, as  
25 I think they're being supported by both Russia and China,

1 from a security cooperation, deepen their relationship with  
2 them. And if confirmed, I continue to make sure we remain  
3 keenly aware of any defense cooperation in sales collection  
4 or military deployments, and make sure I can provide options  
5 as required.

6 Senator Scott: Do you believe Columbia is a trusted  
7 military partner?

8 Admiral Holsey: In my 18, 19 months in the job now I  
9 see no reason why they're not. I think they're very engaged  
10 with us. They're taking losses every day. They're in the  
11 fight against the TCOs, and they're looking for our support,  
12 and I think we need to continue to support them.

13 Senator Scott: Does it concern you that Petro has  
14 alliances with Cuba, with Maduro, and with communist China?

15 Admiral Holsey: Right now, sir from my standpoint, I  
16 really work with the military. I think kind of a bigger DOD  
17 or a bigger policy question. But I think our role as a  
18 military organization, our alignment with the military  
19 folks, we have to make sure that stays pretty tight. And  
20 I'll continue to do that.

21 Senator Scott: Free speech is under assault in Brazil  
22 after it banned the use of X, which is blatant censorship of  
23 the Brazilian people by the Socialist Lula government. What  
24 challenges do restrictive censorship policies like these  
25 have in our ability to maintain productive U.S. military

1 relationships?

2 Admiral Holsey: I think right now, Senator, the  
3 relationship we have with at least the military is pretty  
4 solid. And they've supported us and we continue to support  
5 them. Even when they visit us, they still talk about when  
6 they supported us in World War II. I think they're there as  
7 reliable, trusted partners from Brazil. I think we should  
8 support them as well. Clearly, I think from a department of  
9 state interagency standpoint, whole of government, we take a  
10 look at policies restricting free speech.

11 Senator Scott: Admiral Holsey, many civilians work at  
12 SOUTHCOM, and we have an election coming up around the  
13 corner. If one of those civilians was found to have  
14 violated the Hatch Act, how would you hold them accountable?

15 Admiral Holsey: I would hold them accountable, sir,

16 Senator Scott: What would you do?

17 Admiral Holsey: Well, have it investigated, and  
18 properly.

19 Senator Scott: Could I ask both of you what you think  
20 the importance of Homestead Air Force Base is?

21 Admiral Holsey: Yes, sir. Currently from a SOUTHCOM  
22 perspective, it's a solid resource for us. We used it in  
23 our recent Haiti operations. We've used it in exercises.  
24 It's the home of our SOC South headquarters, which is our  
25 headquarters component, head component for our compete PRC.

1 So, we like their location and what they're doing for us.

2 General Nordhaus: And Senator from my current position  
3 for Conr 1st Air Force, certainly they do a roll down from  
4 Homestead with the aerospace control alert. They're a  
5 incredible unit down there with the 125th that flies out of  
6 Homestead at times. So, it's very important to us.

7 Senator Scott: All right, thanks.

8 Admiral Holsey, do you need more assets? Going back to  
9 what Senator King brought up, do you have the assets? I  
10 mean, what surprises me is we spend all this money in the  
11 Middle East and all over the world, and it seems like we  
12 treat you guys like a stepchild when we have all these  
13 issues going on in Latin America.

14 Admiral Holsey: So, Senator, we are a posture limited  
15 theater. I think we're working with the assets we have.  
16 But again, if confirmed, I'll take a look at our current  
17 mission set and I'll certainly ask for more assets I'll need  
18 going forward. Yes, sir.

19 Senator Scott: Thank you, Chairman.

20 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Scott.

21 Senator Peters, please.

22 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 Thank you, gentlemen for being here and for all your  
24 work and service to our country. We appreciate you.

25 General Nordhaus, I want to first off, just thank you.

1 Thank you for coming to the office yesterday we had an  
2 opportunity to discuss a variety of issues. And I  
3 appreciated that opportunity. And as we discussed at length  
4 yesterday, Selfridge Air National Guard Base in Michigan  
5 which I know you're very familiar with, and you've actually  
6 flown in and out of as a fighter pilot, is the largest Air  
7 National Guard base in the country.

8 It has very unique base operational mission  
9 requirements and is the sole host requiring additional  
10 personnel. And to be clear, it is like an active-duty base.  
11 It's not a Air National Guard facility that shares a  
12 civilian airfield and is a part of it. It is the airfield,  
13 it is the base. It really is for all intents and purposes  
14 an active-duty base. The only one in the Air National Guard  
15 system.

16 But I'm very concerned about some potential personnel  
17 decisions at Selfridge indicating that the base is going to  
18 lose up to 117 full-time civilians, including 15 contracting  
19 personnel. So, my question for you General is, if  
20 confirmed, I understand you have the authority to pause  
21 these cuts, and can I get your commitment that you will  
22 pause these personnel cuts until an independent third-party  
23 manpower study comparing Selfridge personnel needs to active  
24 duty bases, not the other Air National Guard bases that are  
25 adjacent to a civilian airfield and share those facilities,

1 but like an active duty base.

2 Would you commit to having that independent third-party  
3 study so we're really truly comparing apples to apples, not  
4 apples to oranges.

5 General Nordhaus: Senator, like you said, I'm from  
6 Toledo. So, my time up in that area has been incredible and  
7 to see Michigan and Selfridge. So, I've been there many  
8 times. I understand the base very well. Certainly, want to  
9 work with your team, if confirmed, to go back and forth to  
10 make sure that we can get to right and what that looks like.  
11 And if we can't get to an agreement what the appropriate  
12 thing to do is, you certainly have my commitment to look at  
13 a third party to make sure that we can look at all the  
14 numbers to make sure that we meet mission to requirements  
15 and take care of our people in the mission. And I know how  
16 critical it is up in the state of Michigan.

17 Senator Peters: Well, that's wonderful. That's great.  
18 I'll look forward, if confirmed, to working with you and  
19 your commitment today that if necessary to have a third  
20 party having a fresh set of eyes looking at it, you're open  
21 to that?

22 General Nordhaus: Yes, sir. I'm definitely open to  
23 that.

24 Senator Peters: Great. Thank you. Also, General  
25 Nordhaus, last month more than 6,300 military personnel from

1 32 states as well as many key allies and partners gathered  
2 in Michigan at the National All Domain War Fighting Center  
3 during exercise Northern Strike. This exercise allows  
4 participants to hone their expeditionary sustainment and  
5 joint integrated fires training, and year after year more  
6 and more units request to join this truly premier training  
7 event in an amazing place in northern Michigan.

8 So, General, given this increasing demand how do you  
9 envision expanding Northern Strike during your tender? And  
10 will you commit to working with me to expand both active  
11 duty as well as reserve components, as well as our allies  
12 and partners, to be a presence at Northern Strike to fully  
13 utilize this facility and its outstanding training  
14 capabilities that exist there?

15 General Nordhaus: Senator, likewise, I've flown out of  
16 Alpena many times. I understand the incredible airspace and  
17 all the opportunities around there to include Grayling in  
18 the other areas. Certainly, doing these large-scale  
19 exercises are critical to how we get after Great Power  
20 Competition. You have my commitment that I will do  
21 everything I can to make sure that we stay after the  
22 capabilities that we need to be interoperable and  
23 integrative with our joint partners, allies, and partners,  
24 and with the joint team.

25 Senator Peters: Great. Good to hear that, General.



1 My last question, General, as we discussed yesterday in my  
2 office, I remain committed to securing a future fighter  
3 replacement mission for our retiring A-10 fighter jets that  
4 are currently at Selfridge. I know you share my concerns  
5 about deactivating the fighter squadron and the resulting  
6 degradation of Air Guard and Air Force readiness. As a  
7 result of that, Selfridge Air Guard pilots have as you're  
8 well aware, a wealth of experience, which will be lost.  
9 It'll be lost if the Air Force does not recapitalize their  
10 fighter mission.

11 So, my question for you, General, as an experienced  
12 fighter pilot with over 3000 flight hours, can you share  
13 with me and the committee, the value of Selfridge's Air  
14 Guard fighter pilots and their experience, and how necessary  
15 that is for the Total Force?

16 General Nordhaus: Senator, certainly when we see times  
17 of pilot shortages and maintenance shortage and the  
18 capabilities of fighters to meet the global demand from our  
19 combatant commands, I want to work with General Alvin to  
20 make sure that we get after the right fighter force  
21 structure across the Air Force and the Air National Guard.

22 Senator Peters: Thank you, General. Thank you, Mr.  
23 Chairman.

24 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Peters.

25 Senator Tuberville, please.

1 Senator Tuberville: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 Gentlemen, thanks for being here. Congratulations. Thanks  
3 for your service and your lifetime of sacrifice. Both of  
4 you done a great job.

5 General, do you have any numbers on recruiting in  
6 National Guard over the last couple of years?

7 General Nordhaus: Senator, as I prepped for the  
8 hearing to get with both the Army National Guard and the Air  
9 National Guard, that was one of my questions was, where are  
10 they at and this year for meeting and strength. It's my  
11 understanding from them that they're both going to miss it  
12 by roughly about 700 to 800. My understanding also is that  
13 they've turned the corner coming out of the global pandemic  
14 where they weren't able to get into schools and other things  
15 where they normally recruited from. So they're starting to  
16 see a great positivity there.

17 The Future Army Soldier Preparatory Course that the  
18 Army has done is my understanding, the Army has brought in  
19 25,000, and I believe 4,500 of those are going into the Army  
20 National Guard, production recruiters, finding assistance,  
21 ways to help the production recruiters get after recruiting  
22 back in the schools, getting to junior colleges and those  
23 things.

24 I'm committed, if confirmed, from my time at the  
25 Readiness Center, where every day I was focused on

1 recruiting and retention, because we have to hire the best,  
2 and then we have to organize and train them, equip them to  
3 do our nation's capabilities for war time and peace time.

4 Senator Tuberville: Yeah, I think it's so important  
5 because we're not reaching our goals and in full-time  
6 military, and I think it's very important for us to, you  
7 know, fill up or even exceed what we do in recruiting in  
8 National Guard. Would you agree?

9 General Nordhaus: I would agree, Senator.

10 Senator Tuberville: Yeah. Thank you.

11 Admiral, I spent some time down in Panama last couple  
12 of years, done a little research. We're fortunate to have a  
13 new president there in Mulino. He thinks like we do. He  
14 wants us and to have more presence there. With the, I don't  
15 know what I've looked at and studied, probably one of the  
16 most asinine decisions is us fully pulling out of the Panama  
17 Canal. You know, since 1999, making that decision in the  
18 early 80s just talking to people down there, they're hurting  
19 economically. And when you're in that point, you're very  
20 vulnerable to Russia, China.

21 China had their foothold in till we got this president  
22 in down there, and we need to make a -- and I know you  
23 understand this, we need to be able to hold onto the Panama  
24 Canal, because as what we're hearing, if something were to  
25 happen in the Pacific, how in the hell are we going to get

1 things to the Pacific especially from the East coast, if we  
2 have to go all the way down to the bottom of South America  
3 and not be able to go through the Panama Canal, if China  
4 were to be able to block that thing off, or do something,  
5 damage it, or whatever? You agree with that?

6 Admiral Holsey: Yes, Senator.

7 Senator Tuberville: The problem that they're having  
8 down there again is, you being the deputy, how many people  
9 do we actually have down in the Panama area that helps with  
10 the Panamanians, with the canal? Or do we have any input at  
11 all with it?

12 Admiral Holsey: Senator, we generally have our SFAB  
13 Teams, which are really advising and assist teams down  
14 there. But I was share with you just recently, we just  
15 completed PANAMAX Exercise where we had hundreds of troops  
16 working together, maritime assets, aviation assets, ground  
17 assets. And again, that builds that interoperability and  
18 that trust and competence to kind of take on malign actors.  
19 So again, and plus it sends a strong signal that we're  
20 working together as a team, so we have to continue to do  
21 those type of actions.

22 Senator Tuberville: Yeah, I'd really love to see this  
23 President come up and visit with our people in the White  
24 House and the Pentagon because I think this is a huge  
25 national security issue if we don't take care of it with

1 this president. Because it could change very quickly, you  
2 know, if they have another regime change, their economy is  
3 really, really struggling.

4 To another point, tell me about the cell drone that we  
5 use in the Caribbean and in your AOR. Do you think that  
6 they're adequate and they're doing the job that they need to  
7 do?

8 Admiral Holsey: Yes, sir. I'd like to thank the Navy.  
9 I think last year or a couple years, we got a chance to  
10 bring cell drones to our hybrid fleet. It's a new process  
11 by the Navy to actually get after with our limited assets.  
12 And one thing the partners always ask for is maritime domain  
13 awareness. So, these cell drones, we've been able to use  
14 them from an ex experimental standpoint and operational, and  
15 they're showing promise. So, I think we have to continue to  
16 work and figure out how we can use them more so into our  
17 scheme. But we do have them located throughout the AOR.  
18 Yes, sir.

19 Senator Tuberville: Were they used when the Russians  
20 brought their ships in and submarines?

21 Admiral Holsey: I can talk to you later, sir. But  
22 it's a great opportunity. We've used them operationally.  
23 Yes, sir.

24 Senator Tuberville: How many do we have in the  
25 Caribbean? You know, do we have a dozen, two dozen?

1 Admiral Holsey: Less than a dozen, sir.

2 Senator Tuberville: Yeah. Okay. You need more?

3 Admiral Holsey: Yes, sir. We could use more. Yes,  
4 sir.

5 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. Thank you, Mr.  
6 Chairman.

7 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Tuberville.

8 Senator Kelly, please.

9 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral,  
10 General, congrats on your nominations.

11 General, Senator Peters asked a question about that was very  
12 specific to Selfridge Air Force Base and recapitalization of  
13 the fighter jets there. I read some language in the Fiscal  
14 Year '25 Senate NDAA on fighter force preservation and  
15 recapitalization, which would require the Secretary of the  
16 Air Force to come up with a plan and then implement a plan  
17 to sustain and recapitalize all 25 fighter squadrons in the  
18 Air National Guard.

19 So, what do you think is the right balance between  
20 modernization and keeping our fourth gen fighters?

21 General Nordhaus: Senator, from my time as being the  
22 director of Ops for the National Guard and sitting on ops  
23 steps it was great to see the capability not only across the  
24 Air Force and in the National Guard, but the requirements  
25 across the globe for fighter demand. If confirmed, I want

1 to work with General Alvin to make sure that we understand  
2 what that right balance is between fourth gen and fifth gen  
3 to make sure that we can be there not only for the combat  
4 commands but also for Homeland Defense.

5 Senator Kelly: And what kind of weight do you give  
6 like a conflict in the Western Pacific compared to European  
7 theater when making these kinds of decisions?

8 General Nordhaus: Senator, as we look at China,  
9 certainly they're trying to gain advantage in land, air,  
10 sea, cyber, and space. And so over in the Indopacom Theater  
11 China is our pacing threat. And so we want to make sure  
12 that we have the right capabilities and fifth gen can be  
13 balanced with fourth gen and other things that the Air Force  
14 is working. So, once again, if confirmed, I want to work  
15 with General Alvin to get after that problem set.

16 Senator Kelly: All right, thank you, General.

17 Admiral, we are in the midst of a global strategic  
18 competition with both Russia and China. And China  
19 especially, continues to influence a lot of effort there to  
20 influence in the Western hemisphere, you know, economic  
21 engagement that they use to gain access to natural resources  
22 and influence in the politics of countries, especially in  
23 Latin America and the Caribbean are having an effect. And  
24 we continue to see inroads that China's making in South  
25 America.

1           22 countries in SOUTHCOM have joined the Belt and Road  
2 Initiative as China seeks to sign them up for some pretty  
3 bad deals and then exploit them for their natural resources.  
4 So, Admiral, how can we or you SOUTHCOM highlight to  
5 countries in Latin America and South America about the  
6 dangers of working with China?

7           Admiral Holsey: Senator, I share your concern. I  
8 think we have to continue to expose malign activity as we  
9 see it. That's done a lot by our engagement from the  
10 diplomatic standpoint. When we do our military exercises,  
11 our mill to mill exchanges we've been able to -- one thing  
12 our partners are asking for us now is cyber. So, we have  
13 been able to go and do joint combat command, cyber assess  
14 team. So, we go and look at their systems and help them  
15 out, cyber hygiene to ask for space support too.

16           So, again, I think it's really a whole of government  
17 effort is kind of show the malign activity and make sure our  
18 partners are aware of it, and we have to continue to do that  
19 with speed.

20           Senator Kelly: Beyond cyber, can you talk a little bit  
21 about the impact that foreign military sales in SOUTHCOM  
22 have and the benefits of building strong relationships with  
23 our partners in the area, in light of the fact that, you  
24 know, China often goes in there and gives them some pretty  
25 good deals on equipment that is not first rate.



1           Admiral Holsey: So, to be clear, our partnerships are  
2 best determinants in theater. And again, our major lever as  
3 a posture limited theater is a security operation. And so  
4 via the foreign military sales process, foreign military  
5 financing is a key enabler for us. But we have to deliver  
6 faster though. And that's kind of the thing we've seen as  
7 we kind of go forward as we're watching this process the  
8 last year.

9           So, we're trying to find the ways to deliver quicker,  
10 to get our partners meet them at a point of need, to get  
11 them the assets they need. But again, they want the  
12 maritime domain awareness, they want the cyber, they want  
13 the patrol craft. So again, if we do that, then we have to  
14 deliver so that PRC doesn't have a chance.

15          Senator Kelly: Is there one country in particular that  
16 you're concerned about in, you know, their interest in  
17 buying PRC military hardware?

18          Admiral Holsey: So, they have a lease -- Venezuela's  
19 one for sure. Cuba's one for sure as well. But as far as  
20 -- I was happy to see our designs get the F-16 vice, the JF-  
21 17. We did not want that in this theater. But again,  
22 they're very subtle. They engage and they won't stop. So  
23 we have to stay on top of it. Yes, sir.

24          Senator Kelly: Yeah, that JF-17 issue was one that  
25 I've been tracking since I got here, and it is good to see

1 that they'll be flying F-16s instead. Better plane for them  
2 too.

3 Thank you.

4 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Kelly.

5 Senator Budd, please.

6 Senator Budd: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good to see  
7 you all again. I enjoyed our conversations earlier this  
8 week in my office.

9 The National Defense Strategy, it's clear that  
10 protecting our homeland is our military's number one  
11 priority. And one of the greatest threats to the security  
12 of the American people is the crisis at the southern border.  
13 Now as we talked about, although DOD is not the lead federal  
14 agency responsible for securing the border or enforcing  
15 immigration laws, if confirmed, you'll both play a critical  
16 role in stemming the flow of illegal immigration and  
17 combating drug cartels plaguing our country with fentanyl.

18 So General, if confirmed, you would oversee training  
19 and mobilization of more than 2,500 National Guardsmen  
20 supporting the Customs and Border Patrol at the Border.

21 Admiral, if confirmed, you would be responsible for  
22 SOUTHCOMS efforts to combat transnational criminal  
23 organizations profiting from human trafficking and drug  
24 trafficking, and that ultimately harms our communities  
25 across the country, including communities in my home state

1 of North Carolina.

2 So, my question is this, if confirmed, will you both  
3 make these efforts a top priority? I'd appreciate a simple  
4 yes or no answer. General?

5 General Nordhaus: Yes, Senator.

6 Senator Budd: Admiral?

7 Admiral Holsey: Yes, Senator.

8 Senator Budd: Thank you both.

9 General, in your advanced policy questions, you state that  
10 you're proud of the National Guard support of the Border  
11 mission. Their support of it, right? But yet you make it a  
12 point that it doesn't add readiness value. Can you help me  
13 understand that a little better?

14 General Nordhaus: Senator, first off, I'd like to  
15 thank the committee for the funds that they provide for our  
16 counter drug program. 2,500 of our folks are out there  
17 doing and supporting across the United States, and in 2023,  
18 \$10 billion worth of illegal drugs were taken off the  
19 street. So, thank you for the efforts on our counter drug  
20 program.

21 As we go to the Southwest border, we want to make sure  
22 that the readiness is not getting added. So, while they're  
23 on the Southwest border, they're doing advise and assist,  
24 monitoring, they're in support of Customs and Border Patrols  
25 so that they can do their law enforcement along there.

1           They're not back home training for Great Power  
2 Competition missions. They're not back home with their  
3 families and their employers getting set up so that the next  
4 time they're asked to deploy overseas for a combat role,  
5 that they have that more spin for the National Guard. We've  
6 seen very consistent that our service members continue to be  
7 retained at a high level.  
8 And so, they appreciate, the deploy, to dwell that they  
9 have. But every time we send them to another location, it  
10 does take them away from their families and from their  
11 employers, and we can't use them to train for Great Power  
12 Competition.

13           Senator Budd: I thank you for your leadership on this,  
14 General. I think the part that's not said is the emphasis  
15 and the need to have strict enforcement of our immigration  
16 laws and fully allow border patrol to secure borders so that  
17 the guardsmen under your watch and care can get back to  
18 preparing for potential conflict with our adversaries.

19           Admiral, earlier this week in my office, we had a great  
20 discussion regarding the lengthy and bureaucratic processes  
21 that our allies and partners face in the Foreign Military  
22 Sales process. So how does the current FMS process hamper  
23 efforts with partners in places like Panama, Columbia, that  
24 could help those countries stem the flow of migrants,  
25 illegal migrants, or combat drug cartels?

1           Admiral Holsey: So, Senator, I understand your  
2 concern, it's a very long process.

3           Senator Budd: Yes.

4           Admiral Holsey: There are a lot of different, as you  
5 term, wickets to go through to get the, you know, letter of  
6 acceptance to go back to the, whether it's a ship or a  
7 service the company's going to go to. So, it takes a lot of  
8 time and you want to generally make sure you're checking all  
9 the boxes to make sure you get it right. That's part of the  
10 -- it's just really bureaucracy, right?

11           So again, and partners are waiting for these tools, and  
12 if they don't get them, then they look elsewhere. So right  
13 now, what we're trying to do is working with EXIM Bank and  
14 others to find other ways to deliver quicker. And so,  
15 again, we had a chief of mission conference this past May.  
16 Had a chance to bring in the EXIM Bank president, share that  
17 story and how she's willing to help, and other avenues to go  
18 after things outside the process.

19           And we're seeing some results that we might be able to  
20 train and get better results over.

21           Senator Budd: Thank you for that. Would you mind  
22 sharing with the committee the example of the maritime  
23 patrol aircraft that took personal involvement from General  
24 Richardson in order to get it delivered?

25           Admiral Holsey: Yeah. Yes, very briefly. I think the

1 aircraft had been stalled for over two years. And her first  
2 visit with the President, he asked about that aircraft and  
3 she came back and really got personally involved. And three  
4 months later or so, the plane was delivered, and she was  
5 able to go there and the president was actually there at the  
6 reception along with some of his cabinet members. So it's a  
7 great process if we get it to work.

8 Senator Budd: So, in closing, I'll ask you this if  
9 confirmed, Admiral, do you commit to keep the committee  
10 updated on similar issues so that we can work together to  
11 improve the FMS process?

12 Admiral Holsey: Yes, Senator.

13 Senator Budd: Thank you.

14 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Budd.

15 Senator Schmitt, please.

16 Senator Schmitt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 Admiral, I have some questions for you. Thank you for  
18 being here. You authored the controversial, I would say,  
19 Task Force One Navy Report. Is that right?

20 Admiral Holsey: Yes, I was part of the lead there,  
21 yes.

22 Senator Schmitt: Okay. I want to ask you a few  
23 questions about that. So, on page 33, it recommends  
24 including a "Cultural framework questionnaire, tailored to  
25 individual minority candidates for the Naval Academy." What

1 does that mean?

2 Admiral Holsey: So, I don't have that in front of me  
3 right now, Senator, but I would share that basically what we  
4 started looking at was a whole of person criteria, to look  
5 at young folks and make sure we can open our apps here and  
6 look for more talent and use every -- look at the talents of  
7 all those willing to serve our nation.

8 Senator Schmitt: So, does that mean that there's a  
9 different application based on somebody's race?

10 Admiral Holsey: No, Senator. And to be clear, we are  
11 a war fighting organization. Our most fundamental duty is  
12 support and defend the constitution and to support and make  
13 sure we can take care of the safety and serve of American  
14 people. That's what we're about. We're war fighters,  
15 right? So that's what this process is about, to make sure  
16 we can build readiness.

17 Senator Schmitt: Well, I would agree with that. On  
18 page 40, I'm honestly trying to understand what some of  
19 these terms mean and how it would apply. I don't think any  
20 of this stuff has been implemented yet. Is that right?

21 Admiral Holsey: Most of the results from the Task  
22 Force One Navy Report was rolled into the Culture of  
23 Excellence campaign. If you look at the recommendations,  
24 there are words like explore, review, and then the Navy took  
25 a look at it and they decided what they wanted to use, what

1 they could help to build war fighters. And so basically the  
2 Culture of Excellence, which is about war fighting, war  
3 fighters in the foundation, is what's left over now, the  
4 task force one effort.

5 Senator Schmitt: Okay. On page 40 of that, you  
6 recommend that we consider the use of diversity stamps on  
7 minority applications. What is a diversity stamp?

8 Admiral Holsey: Actually, that was from before. There  
9 used to be a case of diversity stamps. I'm not sure if that  
10 was the exact recommendation. I don't have in front of me  
11 right now, so.

12 Senator Schmitt: Okay. I guess the idea then of  
13 whether it's in there -- I want to make sure I understand  
14 --what is the thinking behind a diversity stamp?

15 Admiral Holsey: So, Senator, I would share with you  
16 that I'm reminded of the words E pluribus unum, out of many  
17 one. That's who we are. We're a nation of immigrants.  
18 We're a nation of people serving together. There's so many  
19 of us today who are looking for opportunity to serve, and  
20 they want to serve our nation and do what's best for all of  
21 us.

22 And so, I think again, the Navy was looking away to  
23 find out who people were. To be quite honest, after two  
24 years in Carrier Strike Group Command, I was asked to lead  
25 this effort. I did not ask for it. I didn't want to do it.



1 But I think I was selected to do it because of my character,  
2 my reputation, my professional --

3 Senator Schmitt: Well, listen, I admire your career,  
4 and I really do thank you for your service. I just, my  
5 concern is, and this is not the first time I've asked on  
6 this kind of topic, when people come before and you know  
7 their name has been associated with some of these ideas, I  
8 do think it's incredibly divisive, right? To be whether  
9 it's a quota or it's a just dividing the room by immutable  
10 characteristics.

11 I just don't think it has anything to do, or it has no  
12 place in our military. I really don't. And I do think we  
13 should be active in reaching out to you know, a broad group  
14 of people to serve. I don't disagree with that at all.  
15 But, you know, when there's things like recommendation 5.4,  
16 which is to counter hate speech who decides? Who's the  
17 arbiter of what's hate speech in this recommendation?

18 Admiral Holsey: That is decided by the Uniform Code of  
19 Military Justice.

20 Senator Schmitt: Okay. Would referring to white  
21 people as Bubba's be hate speech?

22 Admiral Holsey: I don't know about that.

23 Senator Schmitt: Well, that's part of the problem. I  
24 mean, Derek Chollet, who's President Biden's nominee to be  
25 under Secretary of Defense for policy, that's what he said

1 in 2020. So, I don't know, is he disqualified? Is that  
2 hate speech or not hate speech? So, this is what I'm  
3 getting at. Like, I don't understand what a lot of these  
4 terms even mean, and certainly not how they would be  
5 applied. And, you know, you authored this report, so I'm  
6 honestly asking for some explanations about how this would  
7 actually work.

8 Admiral Holsey: Again, I think Senator, the Navy took  
9 the report. They looked at it and they'll decide how they  
10 want to go forward with it. As I said before if anything  
11 out of it they brought it to the Culture of Excellence 2.0  
12 to look at how to build war fighters.

13 Senator Schmitt: Okay. Well, we may follow-up with  
14 some additional questions on this because I don't know what  
15 a quality assurance check means. I don't, like -- anyway I  
16 appreciate your service. There's just a lot of questions  
17 about this report that I have, which I hope you can  
18 appreciate. I'm not alone in this. I think we need to do  
19 everything we can to ensure that our armed services and our  
20 military is the great meritocracy it should be.

21 And my concern is that you start dividing people up or  
22 you know, this obsession with kind of with race is not good  
23 for us. It's certainly not. I don't think gets us further  
24 down the road. I think it's hurting recruiting. I firmly  
25 believe that. So, I appreciate your time here today.

1 [The information referred to follows:]

2 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Admiral Holsey: Thank you, Senator.

2 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Schmitt.

3 Senator Sullivan, please.

4 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And  
5 gentlemen, congratulations on your nomination, both of you  
6 and your families as well. So appreciate families being  
7 here, being supportive. As I told my wife and daughters,  
8 you know, you might not be wearing a uniform, but you're  
9 serving sometimes harder job than it is for the men and  
10 women wearing a uniform. So, thank you.

11 General, I want to go into a little bit follow up on  
12 our conversation yesterday in my office. I actually really  
13 appreciated that. I thought it was a really good meeting.  
14 But I want to begin with this just maybe a little bit of  
15 lessons learned from this latest Air Guard initiative on the  
16 PEC leveling, as they called it.

17 My own view is that there was a lot of mistakes that  
18 happened, and I want to get your commitment to make sure  
19 that you work with this committee and my office and me  
20 directly to make sure those mistakes don't happen again.  
21 The biggest mistake was the Guard at the highest levels  
22 didn't check in with the joint force on, "Hmm, is this  
23 initiative we're undertaking going to impact the readiness  
24 of the joint force?" That's number one.

25 Number two, didn't really kind of, at least as far as I

1 can tell, didn't check in with the committee. And then  
2 number three, particularly as it relates to the great state  
3 of Alaska and our incredible guardsmen there, didn't check  
4 in with the NORTHCOM commander, ALCOM commander saying,  
5 "Hey, is this initiative going to impact what these men and  
6 women do?"

7 So, what's your thought on that? We had a good  
8 discussion. And can you commit to me to make sure that the  
9 issues we talked about yesterday don't happen again? It was  
10 a big mistake and, you know, a lot of young men and women  
11 were making decisions in my state who had served in the  
12 military for a long time to essentially get out. Not good.  
13 So, can you comment on that and make that commitment to me,  
14 sir?

15 General Nordhaus: Senator, I can make that commitment  
16 to you. Communication transparency, I think is the hallmark  
17 to make sure that we get out to all the stakeholders and  
18 understand points of view from each side. And then we need  
19 to communicate that up and back and make sure that we  
20 understand any of the implications like you talked about.  
21 So, you have my commitment, if confirmed, to review this in  
22 whole and to make sure that I communicate back to this  
23 committee as required.

24 Senator Sullivan: And to check in with the joint  
25 force, the active-duty force, correct?

1           General Nordhaus: Yeah, absolutely Senator. And  
2 that's what I meant by all the stakeholders. So I'm talking  
3 about combatant commands, MAG comms, the Air Force.

4           Senator Sullivan: Good. Did you hear what happened  
5 yesterday in the NORAD region of Alaska last night?

6           General Nordhaus: Yes sir. And I was on, on my  
7 systems and talking back and forth with General Moore.

8           Senator Sullivan: Okay, good. Just for the chairman's  
9 knowledge and this committee's knowledge, we had another  
10 Russian bear bomber incursion into the Alaska ADIZ last  
11 night. This is in addition to on July 24th, we had a joint  
12 Chinese Russian strategic bomber task force entered the  
13 Alaska ADIZ. That's the first time anywhere in American  
14 airspace ever that that's happened. That's an escalation  
15 between our two biggest adversaries.

16           Last August, we had a joint Chinese, Russian naval task  
17 force of 12 ships -- Admiral, I'm sure you're aware of this  
18 -- off the coast of Alaska. We already had a three-ship  
19 Chinese Naval Task Force this summer, Russians Naval Task  
20 Force this summer. And of course, the spy balloons that  
21 were shot down February 10th of last year.

22           The reason I'm mentioning that General is, you know,  
23 what unit made it happen that our joint force, both naval  
24 but in particular the air assets, could go intercept these  
25 Russian and Chinese bombers and send them back to their

1 communist countries and tell them, "Hey, stay out of our  
2 ADIZ or maybe you'll get shot down next time." What unit  
3 made that happen?

4 General Nordhaus: Sir, that'd be the 168th up at  
5 Eielson with their KC 135s.

6 Senator Sullivan: And what kind of unit is that?

7 General Nordhaus: It's an Air National Guard unit,  
8 sir.

9 Senator Sullivan: Right. So, some of the most  
10 important missions that are happening in the world today,  
11 front lines with Great Power Competition in Alaska are being  
12 -- there's no way that mission could have happened without  
13 the Air National Guard, correct?

14 General Nordhaus: That's correct, sir.

15 Senator Sullivan: The previous NORTHCOM commander mentioned  
16 that these guard member units were operating not at like  
17 varsity football, not at varsity college football, but at  
18 pro Super Bowl level. That's how good they were. And all  
19 of these missions that I just mentioned. Would you agree  
20 with that?

21 General Nordhaus: Senator, I'm very proud of all the  
22 service members in the Air National Guard and the Army  
23 National Guard, and in the active forces that continue to do  
24 this Great Power Competition to make sure we're always ready  
25 and always there. Yes, Senator.

1           Senator Sullivan: You can just say they were operating  
2 Super Bowl. No one's going to hit you up for that one.  
3 Wouldn't you agree they were?

4           General Nordhaus: Oh, yes.

5           Senator Sullivan: 100 percent. I mean, look at their  
6 missions. Really, really important.

7           General Nordhaus: Senator, I've flown up in Alaska.  
8 I've been up there multiple times. I was just there last  
9 time in December. And yes, you have incredible airmen up in  
10 Alaska in the 176th and the 168th.

11          Senator Sullivan: Let me conclude Mr. Chairman, with just  
12 one final question. It's not really a question. It's more  
13 of a gift to the two nominees. I was just in Korea on a  
14 Code L. By the way, I want to compliment the President of  
15 Korea, President Yoon. Whenever I've met with hi, the  
16 number one thing he does -- I'm kind of a Korean War history  
17 buff -- the number one thing he does is he always highlights  
18 the heroic actions of American Korean War veterans who saved  
19 their country, which they did.

20          Americans know the history of the Korean War. You  
21 know, it's always called the Forgotten War. I hate that  
22 phrase because it's kind of a pejorative phrase. The  
23 President of Korea doesn't forget about it, right? Our  
24 service members saved that country, and he acknowledges that  
25 every time. I want to thank President Yoon again for his



1 acknowledgement of our Korean War veterans, you know, we  
2 don't have a lot left.

3 I have a book, one of my favorite books is called, This  
4 Kind of War. Have either of you read it? Have you read it,  
5 General?

6 General Nordhaus: No, sir.

7 Senator Sullivan: Have you read it, Admiral?

8 Admiral Holsey: Yes, sir.

9 Senator Sullivan: You have?

10 Admiral Holsey: Yes.

11 Senator Sullivan: And I'm going to give you, I'm going  
12 to give you a copy anyways. I always give this to our  
13 nominees. The reason I do, this is a really good book.  
14 It's about the Korean War. Most of your peers at the four-  
15 star level general will have read it. And what it describes  
16 though, it describes America, World War II, at the end of  
17 World War II, we had the, the fiercest, most lethal military  
18 in the history of the world, literally, that's not an  
19 exaggeration.

20 By 1950, we had a military that couldn't stop a peasant  
21 army from invading South Korea. And it goes into why we  
22 lacked readiness. It was uniform and civilian leaders in  
23 our military who made horrible decisions. And in the summer  
24 of 1950, thousands of young Americans, mostly soldiers, paid  
25 the ultimate sacrifice because the leadership of our country

1 at the highest levels of DOD failed.

2 So, I'm going to give this to both of you. I highly  
3 recommend you read it and Admiral, you know, you might want  
4 to skim it or just put it on your bookshelf. But  
5 congratulations to both of you. And these are really  
6 important positions. And I'm going to follow up with some  
7 questions for the record for both of you.

8 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 [The information referred to follows:]

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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

2 Gentlemen, thank you for your testimony. Look forward  
3 to your confirmations, that we will try to do it with some  
4 diligence and speed. Thank you very much and thank you  
5 family also.

6 General Nordhaus: Thank you, Chairman.

7 Admiral Holsey: Thank you, Chairman.

8 Chairman Reed: Hearing adjourned.

9 [Whereupon, at 11:08 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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