

Stenographic Transcript  
Before the

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

# **UNITED STATES SENATE**

NOMINATIONS

Thursday, August 6, 2020

Washington, D.C.

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NOMINATIONS:

JASON A. ABEND, TO BE INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE;

BRADLEY D. HANSELL, TO BE DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF  
DEFENSE FOR INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY;

LUCAS N. POLAKOWSKI, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF  
DEFENSE FOR NUCLEAR, CHEMICAL, AND BIOLOGICAL DEFENSE  
PROGRAMS; AND

LOUIS W. BREMER, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS/LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT

Thursday, August 6, 2020

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:04 a.m. in  
Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. James M.  
Inhofe, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Members Present: Senators Inhofe [presiding], Wicker,  
Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Sullivan, Cramer,  
Scott, Blackburn, Hawley, Reed, Shaheen, Gillibrand,  
Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Heinrich, Warren, Peters,  
Manchin, and Jones.

1           OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES M. INHOFE, U.S.  
2           SENATOR FROM OKLAHOMA

3           Chairman Inhofe: The meeting will come to order.

4           We meet today to consider the nominations of Mr. Jason  
5           Abend, to be Inspector General of the Department of Defense;  
6           Mr. Brady Hansell, to be Deputy Under Secretary of Defense,  
7           Intelligence and Security; Mr. Lucas Polakowski, to be  
8           Assistant Secretary of Defense, Nuclear, Chemical,  
9           Biological in Defense Programs; and Mr. Louis Bremer, to be  
10          Assistant Secretary of Defense, Special Operations.

11          We thank everyone for being here today. Let me just  
12          briefly say who these people are. And I think we have a  
13          great bunch that is certainly qualified for the missions  
14          that they're nominated for.

15          Mr. Abend, you're presently the Senior Advisor to the  
16          U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and you have extensive  
17          experience leading the investigations as part of the  
18          Inspector General's offices for the Federal Housing Finance  
19          Agency and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban  
20          Development. You've been a former Secret Service Agent with  
21          the winner of the 2015 Council of the Inspector Generals  
22          Award for Excellence.

23          Mr. Hansell, you are currently an Associate Director of  
24          the Boston Consulting Group in its North American public  
25          sector, having previously served as the Special Assistant to

1 the President for National Security Affairs and as Senior  
2 Director for National Threats -- Transnational Threats on  
3 the NSC staff. As a Special Forces officer, you commanded  
4 the force team on the ground in Afghanistan.

5 Mr. Polakowski, prior to your recent service as  
6 Managing Member of the Everest Technology, LLC, you served  
7 as a Senior Intelligence Support Officer with the CIA. You  
8 also have a 36-year career of distinguished service in the  
9 U.S. Army, culminating as the Deputy Director for U.S.  
10 Strategic Command for Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction,  
11 and retiring as the Major General in the United -- Army  
12 Reserve.

13 Mr. Bremer, you have a 20-year civilian career in  
14 finance and capital management. In 2007, you were appointed  
15 by President George W. Bush to be a White House Fellow, and  
16 later served on the Homeland Security Council, where you  
17 were an author of the 2007 National Strategy for Homeland  
18 Security. Prior to that, you served for years as a Navy  
19 SEAL.

20 So, we have a great bunch here.

21 Gentlemen, it's standard, we have the -- some required  
22 questions that are -- questions. So, I'm going to ask these  
23 questions and ask each one of you to respond vocally. Okay?

24 Have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations  
25 governing the conflict of interest? All four of you.

1 [All four witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

2 Chairman Inhofe: Was that four? Oh, okay.

3 Will you ensure that your staff complies with deadlines  
4 established for requested communications, including  
5 questions for the record in hearings?

6 [All four witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

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

10 [All four witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

11 Chairman Inhofe: Will those witnesses be protected  
12 from reprisal for the testimony and briefings?

13 [All four witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

14 Chairman Inhofe: Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear  
15 and testify before this committee?

16 [All four witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

17 Chairman Inhofe: And do you agree to provide  
18 documents, including copies of electronic forms and  
19 communication, in a timely manner when requested by a duly-  
20 constituted committee, or to consult with the committee  
21 regarding the basis for any good-faith delay or denial in  
22 providing such documents?

23 [All four witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

24 Chairman Inhofe: Have you assumed any duties or  
25 undertaken any actions which would appear to presume an

1 outcome of this hearing?

2 [All four witnesses answered in the negative.]

3 Chairman Inhofe: Well, I don't have to tell you guys,  
4 this is a serious time, a threatened time we're in. This  
5 hearing, I think, is very significant at this time.

6 Senator Reed.

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

3           Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.  
4 I want to thank you and -- for having this hearing, also  
5 welcome our nominees, and also their families who are  
6 watching, supporting them.

7           I would be remiss, however, if I would -- once again  
8 did not take this opportunity to remind my colleagues that  
9 the administration recently disregarded our constitutional  
10 role of advice and consent with respect to the appointment  
11 of Mr. Tata to the Department of Defense, when it was clear  
12 that he would not receive confirmation from this body. This  
13 is an abuse of power that continues to disturb me and should  
14 cause us all consternation about the appropriate role --  
15 constitutional role of both the President and the United  
16 States Senate. And I would hope that the administration  
17 would be taking actions to rectify and to prevent any  
18 further erosion or disruption of the appropriate role  
19 between the United States Senate and the administration.

20           I had the opportunity, gentlemen, to talk with most of  
21 you, I think, previously.

22           Mr. Abend, I want to thank you for our conversation.  
23 You have extensive experience as an investigator, but you  
24 have never really had the experience as an Inspector  
25 General, which is, I think, a specific and a very, very

1 sophisticated operation. You've been a Special Agent. You  
2 served in many areas, but you've never served in the  
3 military, in the Department of Defense. And you're being  
4 asked now to be the Inspector General for the Department of  
5 Defense. And again, we acknowledge your skill as an  
6 investigator, but you will be leading 1600 professionals in  
7 jobs that transcend investigations. They're very complex  
8 operations when it comes to the Department of Defense and to  
9 the Inspector General's operations.

10 Also, in 2008, we passed the Inspector General Reform  
11 Act, and one of the functions was the creation of a Council  
12 of Inspector Generals on Integrity and Efficiency, or it's  
13 called the CIGIE. One of their roles is to make  
14 recommendations for appointments to IG positions. And your  
15 nomination is the only recent IG nomination that was not  
16 submitted for a recommendation. And so, we have no input  
17 from the Council. And again, I think that is an unfortunate  
18 detriment to you, and we are lacking the advice and the  
19 insight of the Council.

20 Mr. Hansell, you've been nominated to serve as the  
21 Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence/Security.  
22 I believe your service to the Army and the Special Forces,  
23 on the National Security Council, and as management  
24 consultant in industry provide you with valuable and  
25 relevant experience for the position. In your answers to



1 the committee's advance policy questions, you consistently  
2 emphasized the importance of collaboration and coordination  
3 to the effective performance of the duties of the office,  
4 and I appreciate this perspective very much. The Office for  
5 the Under Secretary for Defense for Intelligence/Security  
6 must be focused on providing intelligence support to our  
7 warfighters and security services for all components of the  
8 Department of Defense.

9 Mr. Polakowski, you have been nominated to the position  
10 of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical, and  
11 Biological Defense Programs. As a former chemical officer,  
12 you have an experience in defending against chemical and  
13 biological weapons. That knowledge will be important as you  
14 oversee the Defense Department's expertise in these areas,  
15 particularly in the Department's role in the whole-of-  
16 government effort to develop a vaccine against the  
17 coronavirus. Mr. Polakowski, if confirmed, another major  
18 part of your portfolio will deal with nuclear matters. You  
19 will have acquisition oversight, along with the Department  
20 of Energy's Nuclear -- excuse me -- National Nuclear  
21 Security Administration, on the reduction schedules for the  
22 nuclear warheads. You will also be involved with managing  
23 the Nuclear Weapons Council, which is the joint DOD-DOE body  
24 to coordinate these efforts. I have concerns about your  
25 expertise in nuclear matters, since you have great

1 experience in chemical and biological weapons, and I would  
2 hope, and I know, that you will focus a great deal of your  
3 attention in getting up to speed with respect to nuclear  
4 matters.

5 Mr. Bremer, you are nominated to be the next Assistant  
6 Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-  
7 Intensity Conflict, or the ASD SOLIC, a critically important  
8 position tasked with the oversight of, and advocacy for,  
9 Special Operations Forces, in addition to other policy  
10 responsibilities related to counterterrorism, irregular  
11 warfare, counternarcotics, and building partner capacity.  
12 If confirmed, you will be charged with completing long-  
13 overdue actions to enable the Office of the ASD SOLIC to  
14 fulfill its service-like responsibilities related to Special  
15 Operations Forces. The Department has fallen short of the  
16 clear mandate provided by the Congress nearly 4 years ago  
17 and the efforts to hire qualified personnel, update  
18 Department guidance to integrate SOLIC into the  
19 decisionmaking bodies. All of this must be accelerated.  
20 Unfortunately, several high-profile misconduct incidents in  
21 recent years have led to questions about the professionalism  
22 and ethics of our Special Operators. I opposed, as I  
23 indicated to you on the phone, the President's inappropriate  
24 intervention in several war-crimes cases last November, and  
25 remain concerned about the message such actions send to our

1 troops, the American people, our allies, and our  
2 adversaries. I'm particularly interested in the comments  
3 you made regarding Chiefs Edward Gallagher, and I'll address  
4 those during our questioning. I believe the ASD SOLIC needs  
5 to be a person who is not only willing to advocate for  
6 SOCOM, but also hold each member to the highest standards of  
7 conduct, and not applaud those who abandon those standards.

8 I look forward to the testimony of all the nominees.

9 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed.

11 As a reminder, we're going to be joined -- some of our  
12 members will be coming in via computer, and I hope it's  
13 going to work better than it did last Tuesday.

14 And I'm going to take the opportunity here to make up  
15 for a problem that existed last Tuesday. That is that  
16 Senator Cotton was on, but was not able to talk. So, we're  
17 going to give him twice as much time, without objection.

18 We're going to hear now from the members, in order of  
19 -- starting with Mr. Abend, and then Hansell, then  
20 Polakowski, then Bremer. And we'd like to suggest you can  
21 make your remarks brief, because you'll be getting a lot of  
22 questions during the process of this.

23 So, we'll start with you, try to keep our -- brief.

24 And, Mr. Abend, you're recognized for your opening  
25 statement.

1           STATEMENT OF JASON A. ABEND, NOMINATED TO BE INSPECTOR  
2           GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

3           Mr. Abend: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member  
4           Reed, and distinguished members of the committee and their  
5           staff. I am grateful and deeply humbled to be before you  
6           today for consideration of my nomination to be Inspector  
7           General of the Department of Defense.

8           I would like to thank the President for his nomination,  
9           and for my incredible family, friends, and colleagues who  
10          have brought me to this day. And, most especially to my  
11          wife, Valerie, who met me on a blind date 20 years ago, and  
12          has stood by me ever since. She inspires me every day. My  
13          amazing children, who are constant reminders for why I  
14          continue this great career in public service. My parents,  
15          who instilled in me an early love of country, and most  
16          especially my father, who is the proud product of Army ROTC  
17          and its Signal Corps. My longtime friends and mentors, Ken  
18          and John, who, over decades, have selflessly given  
19          themselves to me.

20          If confirmed, I will have the high honor and privilege  
21          of serving alongside 73 other Federal Inspectors General, as  
22          well as the 1600 extraordinarily skilled professionals of  
23          the Department of Defense Office of Inspector General. It  
24          is a huge responsibility I would not take lightly, but one,  
25          if confirmed, I will gladly accept.

1           Inspectors General are center stage at today's most  
2           important matters, and none more so than the DOD OIG. In  
3           addition to overseeing the Department of Defense's  
4           activities around the globe, they are here at home facing  
5           the pandemic, including broad oversight with the Pandemic  
6           Response Accountability Committee and the Government  
7           Accountability Office to oversee the Federal investment in,  
8           and response to, the COVID-19 pandemic.

9           Congress has appropriated \$10.6 billion to the  
10          Department of Defense for prevention, preparation, and  
11          response to COVID-19, as well as a separate \$20 million  
12          appropriation to the IG for oversight of the same. If  
13          confirmed, I'm confident that my over-two decades of diverse  
14          management and oversight experience will serve me well in  
15          leading the DOD OIG. Having served as a Special Agent with  
16          two other Offices of Inspector General, as well as with the  
17          U.S. Secret Service, I have led complex investigations into  
18          civil, criminal, and employee misconduct. Through these  
19          experiences, I witnessed firsthand how fraud, waste, and  
20          abuse negatively impacted government programs, services, and  
21          ultimately our taxpayers, and how sustained oversight and  
22          preventative corrective actions are critical to the  
23          effective operations of our government.

24          In closing, in many of my meetings with both you and  
25          your staff, we discussed the importance of independence and

1 of transparency. I stated then, and publicly reaffirm now,  
2 my commitment to champion both of these values without  
3 reservation and without exception. If confirmed, I will  
4 exercise my responsibilities, as I have throughout my  
5 career, by gathering and following the facts, wherever they  
6 lay, analyzing the data objectively, and applying the law  
7 without favor or preconception.

8 I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Reed,  
9 and members of the committee, and I look forward to  
10 answering your questions.

11 [The prepared statement of Mr. Abend follows:]  
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1 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Abend.  
2 Mr. Hansell.

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1           STATEMENT OF BRADLEY D. HANSELL, NOMINATED TO BE  
2           DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTELLIGENCE AND  
3           SECURITY

4           Mr. Hansell: Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, and  
5           distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the  
6           opportunity to appear before you today, and for your  
7           consideration of my nomination to be Deputy Under Secretary  
8           of Defense for Intelligence and Security.

9           I appreciate the trust and confidence the President and  
10          Secretary Esper have placed in me, and am truly grateful for  
11          the opportunity to serve again, if confirmed.

12          My journey to this hearing room today began with  
13          lessons learned in my family at an early age, the value of  
14          service and the love of our country. My grandfather was a  
15          sailor in the Pacific during World War II. My father and  
16          uncle were both naval officers, a submariner and a P-3  
17          pilot. My brother, Brian, is an Active Duty Marine officer  
18          and a F-35 pilot, who himself married a Marine naval flight  
19          officer. My other brother, Michael, and his wife are both  
20          DOD civilians serving the Navy as my mother-in-law did. For  
21          three generations, my family has sworn to protect and defend  
22          the Constitution, as I myself have had the honor to do  
23          multiple times.

24          Each chapter of my career has helped to uniquely  
25          prepare me for this role. As a Special Forces officer, I



1 was both a consumer and collector of intelligence.  
2 Downrange, I saw firsthand how timely and accurate  
3 intelligence affects the fidelity of military strategy,  
4 operations, and risk to force. As a Senior Director on the  
5 National Security Council staff, I had an opportunity to  
6 work closely with the interagency to coordinate  
7 governmentwide efforts enhancing our collective security.  
8 In this role, I was reminded daily how essential integrated  
9 intelligence is to supporting national policymaking and its  
10 implementation. And now, as a leader on the Boston  
11 Consulting Group North American Public Sector Team, I work  
12 to bring commercial best practices to government problems.

13 I approach my nomination with a clear focus on the  
14 criticality of defense intelligence and security efforts in  
15 support of the National Defense Strategy. These efforts are  
16 essential to ensure that the United States retains a  
17 strategic advantage in the competitive and contested  
18 environments we face today. The foundational military  
19 intelligence necessary to inform great-power competition,  
20 and the technology and environment in which it will occur,  
21 is paramount.

22 With program costs to meet these threats incredibly  
23 high, and the cost of misallocation even higher, the premium  
24 on intelligence informing prudent investment acquisition is  
25 at an alltime level. Furthermore, as malign activity from

1       adversaries short of armed conflict continues to rise, the  
2       timely and accurate intelligence required to inform leaders  
3       and warfighters alike in response is critical.

4               Lastly, ensuring we are fully leveraging protecting our  
5       national security innovation base will remain a significant  
6       imperative. The defense intelligence and security  
7       enterprise must continue aggressively seeking commercial  
8       partnerships to retain our innovation advantage while at the  
9       same time protecting this advantage against a growing range  
10      of adversarial attempts to infiltrate and undermine our  
11      sources of strength. If confirmed, I look forward to  
12      supporting these crucial efforts and serving the men and  
13      women of the defense intelligence and security enterprise.

14             In closing, I'm committed to working closely with this  
15      committee and other committees of jurisdiction to provide  
16      the information needed to carry out oversight  
17      responsibilities.

18             Thank you for your time today, and consideration of my  
19      nomination. I look forward to your questions.

20             [The prepared statement of Mr. Hansell follows:]

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1 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Hansell.  
2 Mr. Polakowski.

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1           STATEMENT OF LUCAS N. POLAKOWSKI, NOMINATED TO BE  
2           ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR NUCLEAR, CHEMICAL, AND  
3           BIOLOGICAL DEFENSE PROGRAMS

4           Mr. Polakowski: Thank you, Chairman Inhofe, Ranking  
5           Member Reed, and members of the committee, as you consider  
6           my nomination to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for  
7           Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Defense Programs. I am  
8           honored to be considered for this important position, and it  
9           is a great privilege to appear before you today.

10          I wish to thank President Trump and Secretary Esper for  
11          this opportunity and their confidence in me and support for  
12          my nomination.

13          I am very appreciative of my family, who have supported  
14          me during my long career of past government service,  
15          especially my children and my sister, who, unfortunately,  
16          could not be here today.

17          I am here today desiring to continue to serve our  
18          Nation and our national defense in the nuclear, chemical,  
19          and biological defense areas. After my commissioning at the  
20          Citadel, I served the majority of my 36-year Army career  
21          defending our Nation against the scourge of weapons of mass  
22          destruction. I believe my career to date has both prepared  
23          me and given me great insight into the ASD and CB portfolio,  
24          and a sound appreciation for the needs of the warfighter and  
25          the joint force in both acquiring and sustaining nuclear,

1 chemical, and biological defense capabilities.

2 During these times, I regard modernizing our nuclear  
3 deterrent and its associated National Nuclear Security  
4 Administration infrastructure as critical to our Nation's  
5 security and preserving our American way of life. My  
6 previous senior-leader tours at both U.S. Strategic Command  
7 and at the Joint Staff developed in me a deep understanding  
8 of U.S. Strategic Command's nuclear deterrence mission and  
9 the Joint Forces' roles in preventing, countering, and, if  
10 needed, defending our Nation against weapons of mass  
11 destruction. If confirmed, I pledge to focus on modernizing  
12 our nuclear triad, building on the partnership the  
13 Department of Defense has with the NNSA, improving counter-  
14 WMD programs, and completing destruction of the remainder of  
15 our legacy chemical weapons stock pile, on time and within  
16 budget. If confirmed, I pledge to work with the Congress in  
17 these efforts, and to enhance our communication and  
18 cooperation.

19 Thank you again. I'll look forward to your questions.

20 [The prepared statement of Mr. Polakowski follows:]

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1 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Polakowski.

2 Mr. Bremer.

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1           STATEMENT OF LOUIS W. BREMER, NOMINATED TO BE  
2           ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS/LOW-  
3           INTENSITY CONFLICT

4           Mr. Bremer: Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, and  
5           distinguished members of this committee, it is an honor to  
6           appear before you today as the President's nominee for  
7           Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and  
8           Low-Intensity Conflict.

9           I want to thank the President and the Secretary of  
10          Defense for this opportunity. If confirmed, it will be my  
11          highest professional honor to again serve alongside the most  
12          capable and honorable fighting force in the world.

13          I would like to begin by recognizing my amazing wife,  
14          Brooke, and son, Will, who are watching from a location  
15          nearby. Their unconditional love and support makes this all  
16          possible. To my son, if I am confirmed, the long hours and  
17          time apart will be the hardest on you. For that, I thank  
18          you. I couldn't be any more proud.

19          I would like to thank my brother, Steve, my sister,  
20          Tammy, my extended family, and countless friends and  
21          neighbors and mentors whose counsel and support throughout  
22          my career have been invaluable.

23          Most of all, I'd like to thank my parents, Lou and  
24          Carol Bremer. They are watching from my hometown of Bossier  
25          City in the great State of Louisiana. Because of their

1 sacrifice, I have lived the American Dream. My mom was a  
2 West Virginia coal miner's daughter. She grew up in a  
3 "holler" with no running water. My dad enlisted in the Air  
4 Force at 17, and served 20 years in uniform. They taught me  
5 the importance of faith, hard work, and love of country.  
6 Mom and Dad, thank you, and I love you.

7 The national security challenges we face are complex  
8 and rapidly evolving. The rise of great-power competition  
9 with China and Russia has dramatically increased the stakes  
10 of the game, and the myriad threats we face from rogue  
11 regimes and nonstate actors persist. The consequences of  
12 failing to deter great powers is the potential for total  
13 war. This is the challenge of our lifetimes.

14 The National Defense Strategy articulates a sober  
15 assessment of these threats and a path forward to address  
16 them. I am encouraged by the alignment of the Congress and  
17 the Department behind the NDS. I support it without  
18 reservation.

19 Since 9/11, U.S. Special Operations Command has led our  
20 global fight against terrorism. In so doing, they have  
21 perfected their craft. They are unmatched globally, lethal,  
22 and agile. The return on investment for the U.S. taxpayer  
23 has been immeasurable. Our battlefield primacy has caused  
24 our terrorist adversaries to adapt. They are networked and  
25 distributed. They leverage technology to recruit and



1 radicalize sympathizers to launch attacks from outside and  
2 inside our borders. China and Russia seek to undermine our  
3 competitive advantage by investing heavily in asymmetric  
4 capabilities in the realms of disinformation, cyber, space,  
5 hypersonics, and undersea. They challenge us in the gray  
6 zone between competition and conflict, often using proxies  
7 to do their bidding while also building their conventional  
8 capabilities.

9 While SOCOM will always lead in counterterrorism, it is  
10 -- it has a critical role to play under the NDS. This  
11 requires a concerted, long-term investment in how we  
12 organize, train, and equip the force. Building on the  
13 decades-long focus on counterterrorism will also address  
14 emergent threats posed by great powers in the principal  
15 challenge -- is the principal challenge facing U.S. Special  
16 Operations Command. It is not a transition from one to the  
17 other, but an adaptation to confront both. Under the  
18 leadership of General Clarke and his predecessors, this  
19 process is well underway. If confirmed, it will be my top  
20 priority.

21 SOF must dominate in the gray space through the  
22 instruments of irregular warfare to erode our adversaries'  
23 power and influence. We must invest smartly in  
24 revolutionary technologies -- artificial intelligence,  
25 unmanned systems, 5G, and others -- and we must be a global

1 leader in the information domain.

2 All of this must be grounded in SOF's total commitment  
3 to ethics. If confirmed, I will address head-on the moral  
4 and legal failings that have surfaced within the ranks in  
5 recent years. These actions betray the very principles we  
6 fight for and erode the sacred trust of the American people.  
7 They also tarnish the legacy of the vast majority who have  
8 served so honorably, from OSS in World War II to SOF today.  
9 I give you my commitment to enact all necessary reforms, in  
10 partnership with the Commander of U.S. Special Operations  
11 Command.

12 And through all this, it's critical that we safeguard  
13 the well-being of the force and the families. The last few  
14 decades have put them under tremendous strain. Taking care  
15 of our people is nonnegotiable.

16 Thank you again for your time and consideration. I  
17 look forward to your questions.

18 [The prepared statement of Mr. Bremer follows:]

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1 Chairman Inhofe: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr.  
2 Bremer.

3 And we're going to start our 5-minute rounds of each  
4 member. I'd like to ask you to try to hold it to 5 minutes,  
5 because we have a lot of interest, and, of course, we have  
6 four of the witnesses before us. Five minutes, except for  
7 Senator Cotton. I've already explained that. He can have  
8 more time, if he wants it.

9 But, I'm going to start mine with Mr. Polakowski. I  
10 can't think of anyone who's in a better position to assess  
11 what we need for our NNSA with -- than you, and the  
12 background that you have and you bring to this committee,  
13 which I appreciate very much. As Assistant Secretary of  
14 Defense for Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Programs, you  
15 would be designated Staff Secretary for the Nuclear Weapons  
16 Council. That means that you would be responsible for  
17 ensuring coordination between DOD and the National Nuclear  
18 Security Administration on all nuclear modernization  
19 programs, funding requirements, and policy.

20 Let me ask you a question. Do you believe that DOD,  
21 acting through the Nuclear Weapons Council, should provide  
22 guidance and assistance to the NNSA as it develops its  
23 budget each year?

24 Mr. Polakowski: I do, Senator.

25 Chairman Inhofe: Can you think of any reason why you

1 wouldn't?

2 Mr. Polakowski: I can't. I see the NNSA supporting  
3 the Department of Defense in its mission.

4 Chairman Inhofe: If confirmed, what would you think if  
5 you were prevented from even seeing the NNSA budget until  
6 after it was finalized for submission to Congress?

7 Mr. Polakowski: I think that would be a mistake and  
8 would severely impair not only our existing triad, but our  
9 modernization efforts, going forward in the future, and, in  
10 fact, could potentially jeopardize our national defense --

11 Chairman Inhofe: That would be a disaster, wouldn't  
12 it?

13 Mr. Polakowski: Yes, Senator.

14 Chairman Inhofe: I believe that's -- and that's  
15 exactly what some people would like, and specifically some  
16 in the Department of Energy.

17 The Nuclear Weapons Council is currently composed of  
18 six Under Secretaries or equivalent general officers, five  
19 from DOD, and one from NNSA. Recently, some have proposed  
20 to elevate the Council to the Secretary level and  
21 designating the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of  
22 Energy as co-chairs.

23 Now, let me read that. I think I kind of stumbled  
24 through that.

25 The Nuclear Weapons Council is currently composed of

1 six Under Secretaries or equivalent general officers, five  
2 from DOD, and one from NNSA. Recently, some have proposed  
3 elevating the Council to the Secretary level and designating  
4 the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Energy as co-  
5 chairs.

6 What would be your opinion of this proposal?

7 Mr. Polakowski: I think that's a mistake, and I would  
8 not support it, Senator.

9 Chairman Inhofe: Wouldn't that put the Secretary of  
10 Energy where he could have the veto power?

11 Mr. Polakowski: Yes, Senator.

12 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you.

13 Senator Reed.

14 Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

15 Let me also associate myself with your comments which  
16 you directed to the Doctor with respect to the role of the  
17 Department of Defense in crafting the budget between DOE and  
18 DOD. So, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your leadership.

19 Mr. Bremer, we had an opportunity to chat on the phone.  
20 I raised the issue of Chief Gallagher. You pointed out that  
21 you had made comments, but they were in the trial phase,  
22 before the conclusion of the trial, and they were generally  
23 about due process, about everyone getting a fair process.  
24 And I -- we agree with that.

25 But, the President's actions came after the due-process

1 phase, and that raises one question. Do you believe that,  
2 first, an individual military member, particularly a Special  
3 Operator, should be held accountable for misconduct?

4 Mr. Bremer: Senator, without question, misconduct  
5 should never be tolerated within the SOF enterprise or DOD,  
6 writ large.

7 Senator Reed: Do you believe that Chief Gallagher,  
8 after the due process given to him by the military justice  
9 system, was he held accountable appropriately for his  
10 conduct?

11 Mr. Bremer: Senator, I know he was convicted of posing  
12 with an ISIS warfighter. I don't condone that activity. It  
13 has no place in the SOF enterprise. I know the President  
14 weighed in on the matter. It's his prerogative as the  
15 Commander in Chief. I think that authority that's invested  
16 in him has been exercised by many presidents over time.

17 Senator Reed: But, the question still remains. Do you  
18 believe that Chief Gallagher was held accountable  
19 appropriately under due process by the military for his  
20 conduct?

21 Mr. Bremer: Senator, I know the military did its part  
22 through due process and the UCMJ. They found him guilty of  
23 posing with the ISIS fighter. The ultimate adjudication of  
24 that went to the President's desk. I'm not privy to the  
25 counsel that he was provided. I'm not even privy to the

1 details of the case. So, I've got no further comment.

2 Senator Reed: Well, what message does the President's  
3 action send if, in fact -- your comments were about due  
4 process, and there's -- I will accept those as fair comments  
5 -- but, the due-process arguments have -- were resolved.  
6 There is a possibility that the message that was sent, not  
7 only in this context, but the context of at least two other  
8 incidents, where a infantry lieutenant was pardoned who had  
9 ordered his troops to kill civilians, where a Special Forces  
10 officer was in a process of adjudication when he was  
11 pardoned. Does that send a message to our troops and to the  
12 world at large that this behavior is acceptable rather than,  
13 as you initially indicated, unacceptable?

14 Mr. Bremer: Yeah, I understand the concern, Senator.  
15 And, without question, we hold our warfighters to a very  
16 high standard. If I am confirmed in this position, I will  
17 ensure those standards are appropriately enforced. It's  
18 always going to be the President's prerogative as the  
19 Commander in Chief to weigh in on those issues. And again,  
20 I'm not privy to the counsel that he's provided in that  
21 process.

22 Senator Reed: And just a final point. General Clarke  
23 has undertaken a significant study of the culture of the  
24 Special Operations, because incidents like this -- and some  
25 not as serious, but incidents like this have cropped up.

1 Are you concerned about, as you go into this job, your role  
2 of implementing those changes so that the culture is  
3 improved?

4 Mr. Bremer: Yes, Senator. I've read that report. I  
5 was actually encouraged by it, even more encouraged by the  
6 fact that I know General Clarke and his staff are proceeding  
7 to implement those key findings. There were 16 key findings  
8 under a number of different categories. I will  
9 wholeheartedly support that effort and do my role in  
10 assisting him with that.

11 Senator Reed: Thank you.

12 Mr. Bremer: Thank you.

13 Senator Reed: Mr. Hansel, one of your responsibilities  
14 with the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency,  
15 which has gotten more and more responsibility each day since  
16 it has to protect our -- the contractors and all of the  
17 enterprise from intrusion by foreign powers,  
18 cyberintrusions, multiple intrusions, I just would like you  
19 to give us a sense that you will focus your attention on  
20 making sure this agency is up to speed. Can you do that?

21 Mr. Hansell: Yes, Senator, and certainly recognize the  
22 important role it plays in securing our supply chain, and  
23 countering continual efforts by our adversaries to exploit  
24 vulnerabilities in the supply chain, and look for weaknesses  
25 in our security protocols.



1           Senator Reed:  Again, thank you.

2           And, Mr. Polakowski, you have extraordinary experience  
3           as a chemical weapons officer, which is going to come in, as  
4           I indicated, extremely fortunately, given the chemical  
5           issues and the biological issues we're facing.  One area  
6           where I think you agree that you will spend a little more  
7           time, extra study, is nuclear policy.  Do you have, sort of,  
8           a sense of how you're going to get up to speed as fast as  
9           possible?

10          Mr. Polakowski:  I do, Senator.  I plan to, if  
11          confirmed, and with my staff, and go over to update myself  
12          on what has occurred in the recent past, and, most  
13          importantly, what are those pressing issues that are coming  
14          up immediately, as well as the long term, and then branch  
15          out and work very closely with my NNSA colleagues, the  
16          Deputy Secretary -- I'm sorry -- Deputy Administrator for  
17          Defense Programs, Dr. Verdon, as well as the Administrator,  
18          Lisa Hagerty -- Gordon-Hagerty.

19          Senator Reed:  Thank you.

20          And, Mr. Abend, you've had a career dedicated to public  
21          service, and you've done it with admirable skill and  
22          dedication and patriotic commitment.  We appreciate that  
23          very much.

24          In your new role, you're going to be in a very  
25          difficult position.  That is, you're going to have to be

1 sort of keeping tabs on your bosses, more or less, the  
2 Secretary of Defense, senior military officers, et cetera,  
3 who potentially might outrank you. I assume that you're not  
4 only prepared to do that, but you see that as one of the  
5 most significant responsibilities of an IG, which is to  
6 speak truth to power every day, even if that person happens  
7 to be the Secretary of Defense or the Secretary of State or  
8 the Secretary of anything else. Is that a fair assessment?

9 Mr. Abend: Yes, Senator, it is. I think one of the  
10 great aspects of my background is that I don't come from the  
11 Department of Defense. It makes me an independent arbiter  
12 of fact, and not coming with any legacy bias. I don't  
13 belong to a service. I don't belong to a component. It's  
14 critical to talk truth to power. That's one of the key  
15 roles of an Inspector General. So, if confirmed, you have  
16 my commitment that that will be the way that I organize the  
17 office, run the office, and report out of the office, sir.

18 Senator Reed: And reporting to the Congress, when  
19 appropriate, and to others, individuals, when appropriate,  
20 correct?

21 Mr. Abend: Yes, Senator.

22 Senator Reed: Thank you very much.

23 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Chairman Inhofe: By WebEx, Senator Wicker, you are  
25 recognized.

1           Senator Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2           And thanks, to the witnesses, for their willingness to  
3           serve the government.

4           Mr. Abend, let me just follow up on the interesting  
5           exchange between you and Senator Reed just now. I think you  
6           mentioned an important perspective there. But, also, you  
7           bring 20 years of experience in offices of Inspector  
8           General, the Federal Housing Finance Agency OIG, as well as  
9           the Department of Urban Development OIG. And, of course,  
10          you mentioned, in your testimony, you intend to be a leader  
11          in rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse. It's harder to  
12          find, as we've seen over time, than you might think.  
13          There's certainly no line item that we can cut for waste,  
14          fraud, and abuse. It has to be identified. It has to be --  
15          you have to convince others that this particular spending  
16          is, indeed, wasteful and abusive.

17          What experience do you think, in these other agencies,  
18          you'll be able to bring to the Department of Defense to save  
19          us some money there? Because we're going to actually need  
20          to spend more money defending America. And, to the extent  
21          we can save money where it is being spent ineffectively, we  
22          can do a better job of securing our freedom and our  
23          security.

24          Mr. Abend: So, thank you, Senator, for that question.

25          One of the primary aspects of the Inspector General's

1 office is obviously to do economy and efficiency reviews of  
2 programs and operations. And one of those critical elements  
3 is to review, constantly, how expenditures such as contract  
4 oversight are being conducted. One of the critical elements  
5 I think that we can all agree on is that, for example,  
6 military -- privatized military housing was not executed  
7 well. It's a -- not only a wellness issue for our military  
8 servicemembers and family, but it's a critical failure in a  
9 government program.

10 Aspects of my background that could address savings  
11 would include looking at programs as they're being stood up,  
12 identifying, early and often, how we can accommodate to save  
13 money, and then ferreting out fraud, waste, and abuse  
14 throughout, with proper mitigation techniques. There's a  
15 lot of room for improvement, obviously, throughout the  
16 entire enterprise, and I'm committed to helping with that  
17 effort.

18 Senator Wicker: And could you give us your assessment,  
19 so far, of the audit of the Department of Defense? A  
20 massive undertaking, but if you'd tell us, in a few minutes  
21 remaining, how you see that is going, and how you could  
22 contribute.

23 Mr. Abend: Sure. So, the Department of Defense's  
24 consolidated audit is an absolutely gigantic undertaking.  
25 The Department spends about a billion dollars a year on the

1 effort. The Department of Defense OIG is in charge of  
2 ensuring that the 23 consolidated financial statements can  
3 come together. I think that, over the last 2 years it's  
4 been conducted, there has been incredible growth in the  
5 ability to identify the universe of transactions, and also  
6 identify performance areas that could be improved, including  
7 the financial services and auditing components improvements,  
8 the IT systems, and as well as the data compliance measures.  
9 I think that there is absolutely room for improvement on how  
10 that audit can be conducted, but the DOD OIG has been doing  
11 an incredible job managing the independent public  
12 accountants, their staff as well, and working with the other  
13 components and servicemembers to get that job done.

14 Senator Wicker: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.  
15 And I yield back.

16 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Shaheen.

17 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 Mr. Bremer, I appreciated the exchange you had with  
19 Senator Reed about the importance of responding to the SOCOM  
20 Comprehensive Review, which found -- and I'm quoting, here  
21 -- "a SOCOM culture overly focused on force employment and  
22 mission accomplished that creates the context or situations  
23 allowing for misconduct and unethical behavior to develop  
24 within the SOF enterprise," end quote.

25 You have a number of interesting -- have had a number

1 of interesting social media posts, where you featured  
2 disparaging comments about Democratic candidates, where you  
3 have pictures -- had pictures with a number of  
4 personalities, some of whom have been discredited, including  
5 a man named Milo Yiannopoulos, who lost his job -- or  
6 resigned at Breitbart after he defended pedophilia. So, as  
7 you think about the role that you will play in responding to  
8 that SOCOM Comprehensive Review, how do you explain some of  
9 your past social media posts and activities, which I assume  
10 you would agree with me are not the kind of model we want to  
11 hold up to our Special Operations Forces?

12 Mr. Bremer: Yes, Senator. Listen, those were posts  
13 that I regret. They were flippant. They were in my  
14 capacity as a private sector. I am now down to LinkedIn on  
15 social media. And, you know, people that know me and have  
16 worked with me over the last 30 years, both in uniform and  
17 in the private sector, know that I'm a serious person. I'm  
18 a businessman, I'm a national security professional. I plan  
19 to take that body of work and experience to the enterprise.  
20 Ethics is a very big thing. I've lived it in uniform. I've  
21 lived it outside of uniform. I've relieved people, as a  
22 commander and as a chairman of a company, for unethical  
23 behavior. So, I take these issues very serious, and my  
24 oversight role, as it relates to ethics, will be a top  
25 priority.

1 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you. I appreciate that.

2 Can you tell me if you're still a managing director at  
3 Cerberus Capital?

4 Mr. Bremer: I am.

5 Senator Shaheen: And if you are confirmed, do you plan  
6 to divest from Cerberus?

7 Mr. Bremer: Yes, Senator. I've gone through an  
8 extensive ethics review and agreed to make a number of  
9 different divestitures as part of that review. There are  
10 some findings in my ethics agreement, after a detailed  
11 review by the Office of Government Ethics, where they felt  
12 the investments that I held did not pose a conflict for this  
13 particular post. If I'm ever involved in a matter, a  
14 particular matter that involves any equities whatsoever  
15 across my portfolio, I will either recuse myself or divest,  
16 as appropriate.

17 Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

18 And I would ask you the same thing about Tier 1, which  
19 has been reported to be a company that trained some of the  
20 individuals who were responsible for the murder of Jamal  
21 Khashoggi. Are you still involved in Tier 1? And, if  
22 confirmed, will you agree to divest from any involvement  
23 there?

24 Mr. Bremer: Yes, Senator. I'm on the board. I do not  
25 have any interest in Tier 1 Group. And, if confirmed, I

1 would be stepping off and resigning from that board and all  
2 other boards of Cerberus.

3 Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

4 Mr. Polakowski, if confirmed, you're going to be  
5 responsible for developing policies and recommendations on  
6 nuclear weapons, as you've testified. As you know, the New  
7 START Treaty expires in 2021, and the administration is  
8 still considering whether to call for the 5-year extension  
9 that the Treaty allows. Can you share your thoughts on  
10 whether you think we should extend the New START Treaty and  
11 what benefits it provides to our national security?

12 Mr. Polakowski: Well, if confirmed, I will, of course,  
13 defer to the Department of State and to the Under Secretary  
14 for Policy. But, with regards to myself as a private  
15 citizen and as a professional, we live in a very, what I  
16 consider, dangerous time. We have two near-peer  
17 competitors, Russia and China, who have been modernizing  
18 very rigorously over the -- over these past years, while we  
19 have not. And we are in a precarious state now. In fact,  
20 there are thousands of systems that are not covered by the  
21 existing New START Treaty that are quite concerning, I  
22 believe, to the American public as well as the  
23 administration.

24 Nevertheless, there are benefits with the Treaty  
25 itself. Both nations have followed the Treaty provisions.



1 And, from what I've heard in previous testimony from  
2 previous Strategic Command commanders, as well as other  
3 senior leaders in the Joint Force, is that they do get value  
4 from the existing verification provisions. So, I'll be  
5 happy to expound any further on that.

6 But, just like is going on right now, I believe there  
7 is room for improvement in the Treaty itself to encompass  
8 more systems that potentially threaten our Nation and  
9 increase the strength of the verification enforcement regime  
10 associated with perhaps a renegotiated treaty.

11 Senator Shaheen: I'm -- my time is up, so I will  
12 submit a further -- a followup question for the record. I  
13 think we would all agree that further improvements would be  
14 helpful. I think the question is, What is lost if we can't  
15 get those improvements and we lose the ability to extend New  
16 START?

17 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

19 Senator Rounds.

20 Oh. No. What? See if he wanted to go.

21 Senator Rounds.

22 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 First of all, I want to thank all of you for your  
24 service.

25 Mr. Bremer, I enjoyed our conversation a few weeks ago,

1 especially your views on maintaining Special Operations  
2 Forces standards while recognizing these warriors for the  
3 truly awe-inspiring contributions they have made to our  
4 Nation's security.

5 I want to follow up with you, though, on the discussion  
6 we had on the Close Combat Lethality Task Force. Secretary  
7 Mattis established this task force and believed that the  
8 personnel policies, training, and equipment that we provide  
9 to our close-combat forces have not kept pace with major  
10 advances in technology: human factors, science, and talent  
11 management. I agree with his thinking on this issue. These  
12 are the forces who have accounted, historically, for nearly  
13 90 percent of the casualties, yet constitute 4 percent of  
14 the force. Many of them are Special Operations Forces. Can  
15 you provide the committee with your perspective on this task  
16 force and the important work that it is doing?

17 Mr. Bremer: Senator, I -- thank you for the question.  
18 I also enjoyed our discussion, and couldn't agree more about  
19 the importance of this task force. The stat that I was  
20 going to share is the exact stat that you just shared, that  
21 front-line combat units are responsible for 90 percent of  
22 the fatalities of DOD. And so, if we don't get it right at  
23 the edge of the battlespace, then we're not doing our job as  
24 overseers of the enterprise.

25 It comes down to technology. You know, increasing the

1 lethality of the force -- I think the task force is working  
2 on sort of a 600-meter-from-the-edge-of-the-battlespace sort  
3 of a directive. Comes down to night vision, smart  
4 munitions, the right sort of weaponry. I think we need to  
5 constantly invest in that. We need to iterate it, make sure  
6 we're giving our front-line soldiers, to your point, many of  
7 whom are SOF, the best that's out there from both the  
8 commercial and military industrial complex to do their jobs.

9 Senator Rounds: Thank you, sir.

10 Mr. Polakowski, our Chairman has made it pretty clear  
11 the concern that this committee has regarding long-term  
12 planning, leadership, and the responsibilities between the  
13 Department of Energy and the Department of Defense. If we  
14 are going to upgrade and continue the modernization of our  
15 nuclear command and control, it is absolutely essential that  
16 this issue be cleared up, and be cleared up as soon as  
17 possible. Would you agree with that, sir?

18 Mr. Polakowski: I do. I -- there has been a lot of  
19 progress, on the leadership side, with U.S. Strategic  
20 Command, as well as the Under Secretary having significant  
21 responsibilities.

22 Senator Rounds: Thank you, sir.

23 Mr. Abend, I commend you in your interest in serving as  
24 the DOD IG. I think one of the challenges we have working  
25 in Washington and representing people back home, like in my

1 home State of South Dakota, is a concern that is expressed  
2 to us on a regular basis, that what happens in Washington  
3 does not reflect the beliefs and values of a lot of the rest  
4 of America. And, in that regard, they believe that, while  
5 they elect us to make decisions, that the vast majority of  
6 the decisions that are made are made by unelected  
7 bureaucrats, and that sometimes they go without control.  
8 And the one thing that they ask of us on a regular basis,  
9 time and time again, is that we do everything we can to  
10 regain control and to understand clearly what does happen  
11 within very, very large departments, ones in which we expect  
12 executive-branch employees to be responsible, but, at the  
13 same time, that we have a responsibility to exercise due  
14 diligence when it comes to their oversight. You become a  
15 tool, a very important tool, in that battle.

16 I appreciate the fact that you've made it clear that  
17 you are from the outside, that you are not from the inside  
18 of the Pentagon. And I think that is an opportunity for  
19 you. And I guess the only thing that I would ask of you,  
20 sir, is the commitment that, when you look at reports, and  
21 when you look at concerns that may come up, that you look at  
22 them from the eyes of a citizen sitting someplace else,  
23 outside of Washington, D.C., and ask the question whether or  
24 not they would believe that the contracts that are being  
25 reviewed, that the actions of individual departments within

1 the Department of Defense or within the offices, whether or  
2 not they would meet the standards of what a taxpaying  
3 citizen would consider to be a fair use and an appropriate  
4 use of those resources. And I think that's the commitment  
5 that you're trying to make, but I just want to make it clear  
6 that I really think you are on the front line, and you can  
7 provide our citizens with a confidence that somebody, on a  
8 daily basis, is looking out for their interests, as well.

9 Your thoughts, sir?

10 Mr. Abend: Senator, I couldn't agree more. That is  
11 the primary responsibility as an Inspector General, is to  
12 ensure not only that citizens have transparency in their  
13 government through our reporting to them, and that that  
14 reporting is objective, thorough, and timely, but also that  
15 it's written in plain English so they can interpret the  
16 facts of it. DOD OIG has a great history of doing so,  
17 including the Consolidated Financial Analysis that they put  
18 out. It's very easy to understand. And I'm committed to  
19 ensuring that that continues forward, and that, when  
20 accountability is due, that accountability is handed down,  
21 as well.

22 Senator Rounds: Thank you.

23 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator.

25 Senator Blumenthal.

1           Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

2           Mr. Abend, you and I talked on the phone about the  
3 vulnerability of Inspectors General, and the critical role  
4 they play that, in effect, makes them vulnerable. This  
5 administration has, unfortunately, seen a high turnover --  
6 just yesterday, the departure of another Inspector General  
7 at the Department of State. What will you do to make sure  
8 that your independence is safeguarded against any kind of  
9 interference?

10          Mr. Abend: Senator, any request that comes towards me,  
11 whether it be from the White House, Congress, or the public,  
12 will be treated the same way, independently, objectively,  
13 and through the analytic lens of an Inspector General.  
14 Nobody has preference, in my book.

15          Senator Blumenthal: The kind of turnover we've seen,  
16 largely the result of the President firing Inspectors  
17 General without cause, has severely undermined effective  
18 oversight and, in fact, the role of the Congress as well as  
19 those Inspectors General. And when you and I spoke, I  
20 mentioned that I have introduced, with Senator Warren, a  
21 measure called the CORE Act that would forbid the firing of  
22 Inspectors General without cause. It would provide rights  
23 of action to those Inspectors General, as well as to others,  
24 against illegal firings. Have you reviewed that  
25 legislation? And will you support it?

1           Mr. Abend:  Senator, I have reviewed the legislation.  
2           At this time, I would like to, you know -- I would like to  
3           pause on whether or not I could support your exact  
4           legislation until I would have a chance to discuss that with  
5           the other professionals at the Defense Department Inspector  
6           General.  I think that the content of the legislation, the  
7           concept of protecting Inspector Generals' independence is  
8           critical.  I think all Inspector Generals should be  
9           permitted to investigate to the full completion of their  
10          investigation without interference, bar none.  The specifics  
11          of that legislation and the impact it would have on the  
12          long-term -- I think, on the long-term responsibilities for  
13          all Inspector Generals, I just don't want to see a situation  
14          where the IG community becomes a sense of sovereignty.  I  
15          want to ensure that there's also oversight of that, as well.

16          Senator Blumenthal:  Will you commit that you will  
17          review it and come back to me with a position, hopefully  
18          supporting it?

19          Mr. Abend:  Senator, as we discussed on the phone, I  
20          think we had a very transparent and honest conversation, I  
21          will absolutely have those discussions with you and come  
22          back to you with a decision.

23          Senator Blumenthal:  Mr. Hansell, over the last few  
24          days, members of this committee and others have received  
25          classified briefings about foreign threats to the security

1 of our election. These briefings and the documents we've  
2 been shown have been absolutely chilling. I find them  
3 shocking and appalling. Would you agree with me that the  
4 American people need and deserve to know more about these  
5 security threats?

6 Mr. Hansell: Senator, I certainly agree that the  
7 foreign malign activity aimed at undermining our democratic  
8 process will continue. And I personally believe the best  
9 disinfectant for misinformation is sunlight and would work  
10 to inform the threat.

11 Senator Blumenthal: Will you authorize steps to be  
12 taken to declassify some of this information, as much as  
13 possible, in fact, of this information?

14 Mr. Hansell: Senator, at this time, I don't have  
15 access to the classified information to make an informed  
16 opinion on that. However, I do think a principle, in order  
17 to counter disinformation, is education of the electorate as  
18 well as policymakers.

19 Senator Blumenthal: Well, again, I'd like you to come  
20 back, and I will put questions in the record on this issue,  
21 as to a means to declassify this information. I think the  
22 need to know for Americans is urgent. They deserve it.

23 Let me just say, finally, as I did at the last hearing,  
24 I continue to be really deeply dismayed and outraged by the  
25 installation of General Tata as Acting Deputy Under



1 Secretary of Defense Policy. It's an evasion of  
2 congressional scrutiny. It makes these proceedings a sham  
3 and a mockery. As the Ranking Member has indicated, others  
4 on this committee share that view, I believe. I'm not sure  
5 what I will do, or we will do. I certainly am now  
6 disinclined to oppose every nominee, especially at this late  
7 stage of this administration, for any position in the  
8 Department of Defense. What other measures may be possible,  
9 I'm not committing to do at this point. Others have  
10 mentioned putting a hold on nominees. I'm not prepared to  
11 take that step right now. But, this appointment was done in  
12 such bad faith, with such disrespect, I think that some  
13 response by this committee is necessary.

14 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you.

16 Senator Cotton's recognized for his time, plus  
17 additional time to make up for our blunder of 2 days ago.

18 Senator Cotton: I just want to say, for the record, it  
19 wasn't the Chairman's blunder. He is the cutting-edge  
20 technological early-adopter on this committee.

21 [Laughter.]

22 Senator Cotton: So, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate that.  
23 I won't take a full 10 minutes, though. Maybe we should get  
24 Tim Kaine, with his fancy little small computer there, to  
25 run technology for me.

1 [Laughter.]

2 Senator Cotton: Mr. Bremer, I want to go back to  
3 something that you said in your exchange with Senator  
4 Shaheen. You talked about taking responsibility as a  
5 leader, both in your military service and in the private  
6 sector, talked about relieving people. Could you just give  
7 an example, from your time in the Navy, of an instance where  
8 you had to make those kind of hard decisions?

9 Mr. Bremer: Yeah, Senator. I don't want to go into  
10 great detail on a personnel matter, but, effectively, in a  
11 real-world situation as a combat leader, I was in a position  
12 where I had to make a decision on the combat effectiveness  
13 of my platoon versus what I saw was a lapse of good order  
14 and discipline amongst the ranks. I made the tough choice  
15 and sent somebody back to headquarters. And, you know, the  
16 -- I think it's a -- it's a good lesson, here, because that  
17 individual learned a lesson, and he went on to have a very  
18 stellar career, naval special warfare. But, to me, this is  
19 the sort of leadership that we need at the lower levels of  
20 the ranks. SOF has a distributed operational force, so, you  
21 know, culture and ethics can't just come from the top; it  
22 has to start on day one when a SOF operator comes into the  
23 enterprise, because that SOF operator may be operating in a  
24 two-man or a four-man unit someplace, you know, in Africa,  
25 and if they don't have ethics as a core principle that

1 guides their daily actions, then it could lead to bad  
2 behavior.

3 Senator Cotton: And that's a message that you want all  
4 of our troopers to hear, down to the lowest level, that  
5 that's the standards you will expect, should you be  
6 confirmed to this job, not just at the high levels, but down  
7 to junior officers and NCOs, as well.

8 Mr. Bremer: Absolutely, Senator.

9 Senator Cotton: You'll be working with some of the  
10 country's finest troopers. We hold all of our soldiers,  
11 sailors, airmen, marines to the highest of standards, and I  
12 believe they're the best among us as a people. But, in our  
13 Special Operations Forces, we have, I think, an even higher  
14 standard. And many of these units' creeds or mottos suggest  
15 that those standards apply not just to being mentally alert  
16 and physically strong, but morally straight. And is that  
17 the message that you want our Special Operation Forces to  
18 hear today from you?

19 Mr. Bremer: Yes, it is, Senator. If confirmed, that  
20 will be the standard.

21 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

22 Mr. Polakowski, I want to return to a conversation you  
23 were having earlier about the New START Treaty. And I just  
24 want to punctuate a couple of points on that. I believe  
25 that Treaty has many flaws, but I think two of them are

1 fundamental. It only covers about half of Russia's nuclear  
2 arsenal, and China is not bound by it. So, on the first  
3 point, do you believe it's in the interest of the United  
4 States and our allies to include all of Russia's nuclear  
5 weapons in any kind of an extension of the New START Treaty,  
6 whether you call those weapons tactical or battlefield or  
7 low-yield or what have you?

8 Mr. Polakowski: I do. That would be an objective of  
9 any treaty negotiations.

10 Senator Cotton: Okay. And then the second flaw that I  
11 mentioned is that it only covers Russia. It has a very  
12 outdated Cold War approach to nuclear arms control. Yes,  
13 Russia still has, by far, the larger arsenal than does  
14 China, but China is rapidly modernizing and expanding its  
15 nuclear arsenal. And if we continue with this model of  
16 simply bilateral treaties between the United States and  
17 Russia, I fear that, in a relatively short order, the United  
18 States could face nuclear overmatch with Russia and China's  
19 arsenals combined against ours. So, do you believe it is in  
20 the best interest of the United States to abandon that  
21 bilateral approach and move to a trilateral approach, where  
22 we are making treaties with our two main adversaries that  
23 have nuclear weapons?

24 Mr. Polakowski: Senator, I would prefer to refrain  
25 from encompassing both together. I do think that we need to

1 address both nations. As you mentioned, and as I brought up  
2 earlier, the modernization by both nations really concerns  
3 me. And China has their own obligations under the Nuclear  
4 Non-Proliferation Treaty to negotiate in faith to reduce  
5 and, hopefully, eventually eliminate nuclear weapons. So,  
6 they do have a legal obligation to come to the table, either  
7 bilaterally or multilaterally. And so, it would be prudent  
8 for us to include them in any negotiations.

9 Senator Cotton: Thank you. And, for the record, do  
10 you commit your full support to the modernization of the  
11 nuclear triad -- air, land, and sea?

12 Mr. Polakowski: I do.

13 Senator Cotton: And do you commit your full -- or full  
14 support for the production of 80 plutonium pits per year?

15 Mr. Polakowski: I do.

16 Senator Cotton: I want to turn, finally, to the  
17 Nuclear Weapons Council. We've -- it's already been  
18 discussed. If confirmed, you'll be deeply involved in the  
19 operations of the Council. Do you agree that close  
20 coordination between the Department of Defense and the NNSA  
21 through the Council is essential for effective management --

22 Mr. Polakowski: I do.

23 Senator Cotton: -- of nuclear modernization? And you  
24 agree that an essential component of that coordination is  
25 the ability of the Department of Defense to advise and guide

1 in the preparation of the NNSA budget?

2 Mr. Polakowski: Yes. And the Nuclear Weapons Council  
3 really has legal responsibilities to coordinate and approve  
4 their budget submission.

5 Senator Cotton: If DOD didn't participate in that  
6 budget process for the NNSA, what do you think would be the  
7 likely consequences?

8 Mr. Polakowski: Uncontrolled spending, and, most  
9 importantly, our Nation's deterrent would suffer.

10 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

11 Mr. Chairman, I yield back my time.

12 Chairman Inhofe: Okay.

13 Via WebEx, we have Senator Hirono.

14 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 I ask the following two questions of every nominee who  
16 appears before any of my committees. We'll do this very  
17 quickly, going down the line, starting alphabetically with  
18 Mr. Abend, and then Mr. Bremer, Mr. Hansell, and then Mr.  
19 Polakowski.

20 First question. Since you became a legal adult, have  
21 you ever made unwanted requests for sexual favors or  
22 committed any verbal or physical harassment or assault of a  
23 sexual nature?

24 Mr. Abend: No.

25 Mr. Bremer: No.

1 Mr. Hansell: No.

2 Mr. Polakowski: No.

3 Senator Hirono: Same question. Have you ever faced  
4 discipline or entered into a settlement related to this kind  
5 of conduct?

6 Mr. Abend: No.

7 Mr. Bremer: No.

8 Mr. Hansell: No.

9 Mr. Polakowski: No.

10 Senator Hirono: Thank you.

11 This is a question for Mr. Abend. The President has  
12 repeatedly taken actions to undermine, weaken, and even fire  
13 Inspectors General when their investigations uncover  
14 wrongdoing or potential wrongdoing within his  
15 administration. In fact, a recent -- within the -- a 6-week  
16 period, four IGs have been fired. And your immediate  
17 predecessor at the DOD, should you be confirmed, resigned  
18 after being demoted. And you did testify that the -- of the  
19 importance of the independence of the Inspector General.  
20 You would be overseeing 1600 people within the -- your shop  
21 in DOD. So, are you willing to stand up for the truth, even  
22 if it means being targeted by the President for doing so,  
23 Mr. Abend?

24 Mr. Abend: Yes, Senator. I definitely am. That's  
25 been a concept of operation in every position that I've had.

1 I've always been excepted service, and so I don't fear that.  
2 I'm going to follow the facts where they lead and apply the  
3 law exactly how it's written.

4 Senator Hirono: Yes. So, you certainly will be held  
5 to that, because your -- as I said, your immediate  
6 predecessor was demoted and resigned after that.

7 For Mr. Bremer, you testified earlier that, if  
8 confirmed, you will ensure due process is followed for those  
9 who are accused of misconduct. When most servicemembers are  
10 returned to their services for adjudication of their cases,  
11 such as in the Gallagher case, how exactly would you do that  
12 if you are not in the service chain of command?

13 Mr. Bremer: Senator, what I would advocate for is due  
14 process. If I'm not in the chain of command to effectuate  
15 that, then -- you know, then I would have limitations around  
16 that. But, from my perspective, all U.S. citizens should be  
17 afforded due process. And those that go forward are  
18 warfighters that are putting their lives on the line to  
19 protect the same rights and liberties we have in this  
20 country, should also be afforded due process.

21 Senator Hirono: Yes. Well, that didn't quite happen  
22 with -- Mr. Bremer. They -- he went through the process,  
23 and then the President intervened, which is highly unusual.  
24 And I hope that that's not the kind of practice that you  
25 consider to be usual --



1           Another question for you. You've been asked these  
2           sorts of questions, but let me go into it. Several  
3           incidents involving Special Operations Forces have made  
4           headlines during the past year, from the Eddie Gallagher  
5           case, to the Special Operations hazing incident in Africa  
6           that led to a soldier's death, to a SEAL team sent home from  
7           Iraq due to a deterioration of good order and discipline.  
8           And while the Special Operations Command's recent  
9           Comprehensive Ethics Review did -- didn't reveal any  
10          systemic issues, I remain concerned about the Special  
11          Operators acting with impunity. Additionally, the  
12          President's words and actions since granting clemency to --  
13          Gallagher have made promoting a culture of integrity in the  
14          U.S. military more difficult. You did say that this is  
15          something you would address. I'd like to know. Describe  
16          some of the first steps you will take improve the culture  
17          and reinstate trust in our Special Operation Forces as the  
18          civilian responsible for the oversight of the -- Special  
19          Operations Command.

20                 Mr. Bremer: Yeah. Thank you, Senator.

21                 It's a problem, and it's got my attention. You know,  
22                 our American taxpayers expect Special Operations troop to  
23                 uphold the highest level of ethics and conduct on the  
24                 battlefield.

25                 Senator Hirono: Well, I'm running out of time, so can

1       you name one --

2             Mr. Bremer:  Yes.

3             Senator Hirono:  -- step you would take first?

4             Mr. Bremer:  Yes.  I would --

5             Senator Hirono:  -- [inaudible].

6             Mr. Bremer:  -- Senator.

7             The first thing I would do is work with the commander  
8       of U.S. Special Operations Command to see, through the  
9       implementation, the key findings in the Comprehensive  
10      Review.  I think it's very important.  It's multifaceted.  
11      There were 16 recommendations that came out of that --

12            Senator Hirono:  Thank you.  Thank you.

13            Now, you did mention that Russia is engaging in  
14      disinformation, and you, I think, would acknowledge that  
15      they're doing that with regard to our upcoming elections.  
16      So, do you think the President has taken the necessary steps  
17      to thwart Russia's disinformation in this upcoming election?

18            Mr. Bremer:  Senator, is that question for me?

19            Senator Hirono:  Yes.  Mr. Bremer.

20            Mr. Bremer:  Yes.  Yeah, Senator, that's outside of my  
21      purview for the position that I'm nominated for, overseeing  
22      Special Operations.  I just don't have sufficient  
23      information to give you a thoughtful answer on that.

24            Senator Hirono:  Well, you hope that the President is  
25      doing the things he needs to be doing, right?

1 Mr. Bremer: I certainly --

2 Senator Hirono: Thank you.

3 Mr. Bremer: -- expect that he is.

4 Senator Hirono: Well, he's not.

5 Thank you.

6 Mr. Bremer: Thank you, Senator.

7 Chairman Inhofe: Okay.

8 Senator Ernst.

9 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

10 And, gentlemen, thank you very much for your  
11 willingness to serve our great Nation.

12 And, Mr. Bremer, thank you very much. We had a very  
13 healthy conversation last week. I truly appreciate it. And  
14 your -- the expression you had of your leadership vision --  
15 and you have answered, many times over, some of the  
16 questions I was going to direct to you about the culture and  
17 how we can really professionalize the force and ensure that  
18 our SOF community is adhering to the highest standards that  
19 we truly expect of them. So, thank you very much for that.  
20 I won't ask you to answer that today. You've answered it  
21 many times over.

22 But, what I would like to ask about is something else  
23 that we had a conversation about, and that is one of the key  
24 programs located at SOCOM. And that's the Preservation of  
25 the Force and Family and that task force. I firmly believe

1 in this. And this task force has a critical mission to  
2 ensure the well-being of our Special Operations Forces  
3 warriors, their support personnel, and, of course, their  
4 families. And you know that the SOF deployments are unique  
5 in scope and their requirements. And we've learned the hard  
6 way that we must rebuild the resilience of our Special  
7 Operations Forces and their families -- a very important  
8 part of the organization -- not only physically, but also  
9 psychologically, spiritually, and socially. Do I have my  
10 commitment from you today -- your commitment that you will  
11 continue to support the POTFF program?

12 Mr. Bremer: Absolutely, Senator. If confirmed, I am  
13 an avid supporter of that program. It's very important for  
14 the force and our families.

15 Senator Ernst: And can you describe some of the steps  
16 through POTFF that you see could be very helpful to SOF and  
17 to SOCOM, in general?

18 Mr. Bremer: Sure. So, the POTFF program is  
19 multifaceted. It focuses on not just physical well-being,  
20 but also mental well-being, spiritual well-being, and well-  
21 being of the family. It involves the Care Coalition and the  
22 support that that provides to families when operators are  
23 deployed overseas, helping them to return and reintegrate  
24 into the family. So, there's a number of different aspects  
25 of that program that I think have really taken the pressure

1 off the sustained combat deployments to the community.

2 Senator Ernst: Yes. And we know that they have a  
3 very, very tough cycle of deployments. And so, we want to  
4 make sure that we are keeping not only our operators and  
5 support personnel at their finest, but also their families,  
6 and keeping them in the fold. So, thank you, Mr. Bremer. I  
7 truly appreciate it.

8 Mr. Bremer: Thank you.

9 Senator Ernst: Mr. Abend, last year, I saw down with  
10 representatives from the DOD IG, the Army IG, and the  
11 National Guard IG regarding two Iowa cases involving sexual  
12 assault and reprisal. Each case was with each respective IG  
13 for a total of over 798 days and 749 days. One sat with the  
14 DOD IG for 255 days before being transferred to the Army IG.  
15 I don't believe that this is acceptable. This is not the  
16 timeline we expect from our IGs, and certainly for those  
17 that have suffered from sexual assault and that reprisal.  
18 So, if confirmed, would you commit to looking at the  
19 standards used to determine whether or not a complaint  
20 warrants a full investigation, and if they are being fairly  
21 applied?

22 Mr. Abend: Senator, any individual that comes forward  
23 with an allegation should be treated much better than that.  
24 Absolutely, I'm committed to reviewing the timeliness,  
25 thoroughness, and objectivity of the reporting, and ensuring

1 that it gets out to the proper decisionmaking authorities  
2 correctly. Nobody that suffers through that kind of action  
3 should have to wait that amount of days. I'm not familiar  
4 with the individual case, but, if confirmed, I promise you  
5 I'll look into it.

6 Senator Ernst: Thank you. And, if the DOG is not  
7 adequately manned, trained, and equipped to carry out their  
8 missions, will you notify us immediately?

9 Mr. Abend: Senator, I'm committed to do that.

10 Senator Ernst: Okay, thank you.

11 And if you have any potential resource shortfalls and  
12 other issues, also, will you commit to letting us know  
13 immediately?

14 Mr. Abend: Yes, Senator, I'll do that.

15 Senator Ernst: Thank you very much. I appreciate  
16 that. These are issues that are very significant,  
17 especially to those survivors of assault and other actions.  
18 So, we want to make sure that those cases are being  
19 completed as quickly as possible.

20 And, with that, Mr. Chair, I yield back.

21 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Ernst.

22 Senator Kaine.

23 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

24 And, to the witnesses, thank you for your service to  
25 the country, and your willingness to continue serving.

1           Mr. Bremer, I want to follow up on questions that  
2           Senator Shaheen asked you. When did you join Cerberus  
3           Capital Management?

4           Mr. Bremer: I joined Cerberus, Senator, in January of  
5           2015.

6           Senator Kaine: January of 2015. When did you become a  
7           board member of the board of the Tier 1 Group?

8           Mr. Bremer: I'm not exactly sure of the date. I would  
9           say it was probably around 2017. But, I'd have to come back  
10          to you with an actual date.

11          [The information referred to follows:]

12          Senator Kaine: If Tier 1 Group operates -- the board  
13          operates with committees, have you ever been a chair of any  
14          of the committees of the Tier 1 Group board?

15          Mr. Bremer: I have not, Senator.

16          Senator Kaine: Have you ever been an officer of the  
17          Tier 1 Group?

18          Mr. Bremer: I have not, Senator.

19          Senator Kaine: How large is the board of the Tier 1  
20          Group?

21          Mr. Bremer: Very small. I believe we've got five  
22          directors on the board.

23          Senator Kaine: Public reports suggest that the name of  
24          the Tier 1 Group used to be Aggressive Training Solutions.  
25          Is that correct?

1           Mr. Bremer: Senator, it's the first time I've heard  
2           that name. If there's history that I'm unaware of, I'm just  
3           not, sir.

4           Senator Kaine: Thank you for that.

5           Reports also indicate that Cerberus either owns the  
6           Tier 1 Group or affiliates of Cerberus own the Tier 1 Group.  
7           Is that accurate?

8           Mr. Bremer: Yes, it is. It's owned through the fund,  
9           Senator.

10          Senator Kaine: Mr. Bremer, in March of 2019, a few  
11          months after the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi, who was a  
12          Virginia resident who worked as a journalist with the  
13          Washington Post, the Washington Post ran a piece by reporter  
14          David Ignatius. It's titled "How the Mysteries of  
15          Khashoggi's Murder Have Rocked the U.S.-Saudi Partnership."  
16          The date of the article of March 29, 2019.

17          Mr. Chair, I'd like to introduce it for the record.

18          Chairman Inhofe: Without objection.

19          Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

20          [The information referred to follows:]

21                 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

22

23

24



1           Senator Kaine: In the article, Mr. Bremer, I'm going  
2           to just read a section that I want to ask you about. "The  
3           Khashoggi story is a lesson in how U.S.-supported  
4           intelligence and Special Operations capabilities can be  
5           misused by other countries. That's the starkest conclusion  
6           that emerged from this reporting among these previously  
7           undisclosed findings. Some members of the Saudi Rapid  
8           Intervention Group that was sent to Istanbul received  
9           training in the United States, according to U.S. and Saudi  
10          sources. The CIA has cautioned other government agencies  
11          that some of this Special Operations training might have  
12          been conducted by Tier 1 Group, an Arkansas-based company,  
13          under a State Department license. The training occurred  
14          before the Khashoggi incident as part of ongoing liaison  
15          with the Saudis, and it hasn't been resumed."

16                 Are you aware of that public reporting, Mr. Bremer?

17                 Mr. Bremer: Senator, this is the first time I've heard  
18                 of this article.

19                 Senator Kaine: Were you aware -- separate from the  
20                 article, were you aware of claims that had been made that  
21                 members of the Saudi Rapid Intervention Group that were sent  
22                 to Istanbul to assassinate Jamal Khashoggi might have  
23                 received training by Tier 1 Group?

24                 Mr. Bremer: I was not aware of that.

25                 Senator Kaine: Do you know whether Tier 1 Group has

1 conducted any internal investigation to determine whether  
2 Saudis that had been trained by the Tier 1 Group  
3 participated in this?

4 Mr. Bremer: Not to my knowledge or recollection,  
5 Senator. I knew -- I do know that we train Saudi nationals  
6 as part of our engagements with the Kingdom as an allied  
7 nation. We train other nations, as well. But, I have no  
8 knowledge of that.

9 Senator Kaine: So, until today, you had not been aware  
10 that an allegation had been made that a company on which you  
11 sit as a director, with a small board of directors, had  
12 potentially been involved in training Saudis who were  
13 participants in the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi?

14 Mr. Bremer: Senator, I don't have any recollection of  
15 that. There is a possibility that we did have a discussion  
16 about it. It's a number of years ago. I could go back and  
17 check my records and come back to you on a more specific  
18 answer. But, to my recollection, I do not recall internal  
19 discussions on that.

20 Senator Kaine: I'm asking this partly because Jamal  
21 Khashoggi was a Virginia resident, but I'm also asking to  
22 sort of probe, in a leadership position, and being a  
23 director of a corporation, especially a small one with a  
24 small board, if there are public allegations of this kind --  
25 and the Washington Post piece is not the only one -- it's

1 reported in the Chicago Tribune, it's been reported in  
2 Arkansas papers, it's been reported internationally -- that  
3 Tier 1 Group-trained Saudis were involved in the  
4 assassination of Jamal Khashoggi, it would seem like that  
5 would be the kind of public news that might make an  
6 organization say, "We should at least check and see whether  
7 this is true." But, I just want to be clear about it. As  
8 of today, you do not know whether the Tier 1 Group has  
9 conducted any investigation to determine whether there's any  
10 truth to these multiple public reports.

11 Mr. Bremer: Senator, I will give you my commitment to  
12 go back and check the record on this. It's my recollection  
13 that we have not, but I may be mistaken. So, we have a  
14 culture of compliance at Cerberus. That culture is pushed  
15 down into our portfolio companies. So, as I sit here and  
16 think about it in realtime, you know, I think it's probably  
17 likely that we did do some sort of investigation. I just  
18 don't recall the specifics of that. But, I will definitely  
19 come back to you with a more fulsome answer.

20 [The information referred to follows:]

21 Senator Kaine: I will ask questions for the record  
22 about whether there was an investigation; and, if so, what  
23 it disclosed.

24 Thank you.

25 And, Mr. Chair, I yield back.

1 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you.

2 Senator Cramer.

3 Senator Cramer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 Thank all of you for being here.

5 Mr. Bremer, wanted to follow up on some of the  
6 discussions we've had previously. Obviously, as a former  
7 SEAL, you're more than slightly familiar with the importance  
8 of good ISR. And this year, the Department of Defense has  
9 tried to eliminate some of the platforms to make room for  
10 other ISR capabilities related specifically to the near-peer  
11 adversaries. And we're in this shifting timeframe. You're  
12 all -- we're all very familiar with that. But, as a former  
13 SEAL, do you have concerns about the -- about this  
14 transition and the gap that -- for example, in North Dakota,  
15 we have -- the MQ-9s, the RQ-4s are two of the platforms  
16 that our airmen fly and utilize. Are you concerned at all,  
17 as I am, that we don't have a plan for the middle and -- in  
18 this -- is it less important that we do?

19 Mr. Bremer: Senator, it's certainly an important  
20 issue. I don't have any particular knowledge on what the  
21 plan to make that plan is for that transition. I will say  
22 that ISR is very important to the battlespace, and  
23 specifically to SOF, who tends to be out on the edge of that  
24 battlespace. So, I think ensuring that we have eyes and  
25 ears in the areas that we operate is important. I do have

1 confidence that the Department will get this right.  
2 Obviously, we're transitioning and adapting our enterprise  
3 for both the counterterrorism mission set and near-peer  
4 competition. So, we need assets in other geographies  
5 outside of traditional CT mission sets. So, beyond that, I  
6 have no other, you know, knowledge about the issue.

7 Senator Cramer: And maybe -- and I appreciate that.  
8 And I think North Dakota and North Dakotans and all of us,  
9 we want to be part of the solution, certainly not part of  
10 the problem, because we know where we need to get. We --  
11 you know, we'd love to be able to get there faster. But,  
12 we're concerned about the transition. And I would look  
13 forward to working with you, and would love, of course, as  
14 always, and with everybody, love to have you come to North  
15 Dakota, see some of our capabilities, both at the Guard and  
16 at the Air Force, and even in the private sector, as it  
17 relates to ISR platforms, UAS, and -- would welcome that, if  
18 you'd come and visit us.

19 And, Mr. Hansell, similarly -- I mean, you're -- you  
20 know, you're former Special Ops. You understand the  
21 importance of ISR. Are you comfortable with the decreases  
22 in capacity with some of the legacy systems that are being  
23 contemplated?

24 Mr. Hansell: Senator, as we discussed on the phone,  
25 certainly aware of the progress made in the Department to

1 align ISR resources to NDS priorities. And, from my own  
2 time in combat, certainly recognize the rightful insatiable  
3 demand by commanders for ISR as it increases mission success  
4 and, equally importantly, reduces risk to force. If  
5 confirmed, I would certainly work to balance this alignment  
6 to NDS priorities with the ongoing requirement to meet  
7 combatant commander ISR demand.

8 Senator Cramer: So, I don't remember if you and I  
9 discussed this on the phone, or not, but, if not -- I always  
10 have to do this for the benefit of the Senator from Alaska,  
11 reminding them that it's cold in North Dakota, too, and we  
12 border two Canadian provinces and are close to the North  
13 Pole. So, with regard specifically, then, to that domain,  
14 the Arctic domain, do you have any thoughts about ISR in  
15 that domain, and the role northern bases could play?

16 Mr. Hansell: I think, Senator, as we pivot ISR support  
17 to NDS priorities, of note is Chinese and Russian increased  
18 activities -- Chinese scientific, economic, and security  
19 activity in the Arctic since joining the Council, and  
20 Chinese and Russian exploration of the northern seaways.  
21 And so, I think -- as I think about ISR related to the  
22 Arctic is coverage for Chinese and Russian great-power  
23 competition, it's certainly something that would be weighed.

24 Senator Cramer: Well, Mr. Polakowski, as long as I  
25 have a couple of minutes -- of course, North Dakota has two

1 of the three legs of the nuclear triad. Submarines don't  
2 have a lot of value in the middle of the North American  
3 continent, but -- if they did, we'd love to have all three  
4 -- but, anyway, we have two of the three. And we -- I know  
5 you get this, probably, a lot, but -- maybe it's more of a  
6 statement than a question. We share the concern about the  
7 timeline for modernization. We're all committed to it. I'm  
8 -- you know, I know the Chairman showed you the Blue Book,  
9 the NDS, and he reminds us -- when he's reminding you, he's  
10 really reminding all of us of the priority of the NDS. And  
11 we appreciate that.

12 So, just any thoughts you might have on sticking with  
13 the timeline for modernization, particularly of the ground-  
14 based strategic deterrent, as well as the B-52  
15 modernization. Just know we're with you, and then if -- I  
16 would just open the floor to your thoughts.

17 Mr. Polakowski: I think the planning and deliberations  
18 that have been made so far with regards to the delivery  
19 platforms, as well as the work by NNSA on both the warhead  
20 side as well as infrastructure, are all well planned.  
21 They're very challenging. We not only have to modernize,  
22 but we also have to sustain what we have in place today.

23 As Admiral Richard recently mentioned on a Web talk,  
24 he, basically, was very emphatic. Whatever we can do to  
25 accelerate things, he would welcome. So, one of the areas

1 that I'm going to be focused on, considering all the normal  
2 balancing that one has to do in terms of programs, is, Where  
3 can we, wherever possible, accelerate? And, of course, that  
4 is also going to take the cooperation of the Congress,  
5 because, without funding, both for the Department and NNSA,  
6 we won't get there.

7 So, I think we have a good plan. NNSA has a good  
8 roadmap in their area. And hopefully, with all the  
9 challenges ahead, we can very closely lead and manage the  
10 enterprise so we get to where we need to be, a strong, safe,  
11 and effective deterrent that will continue to last for the  
12 decades to come.

13 Senator Cramer: As with everything we've talked about,  
14 the transition is the challenge. And you won't have much  
15 argument in this committee.

16 Thank you all. I look forward to supporting you all.

17 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Cramer.

18 Now, via WebEx, Senator King.

19 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 Mr. Bremer, I'd like to follow up on Senator Kaine's  
21 line of questioning. And having served on a number of  
22 corporate boards myself, it's hard for me to believe that a  
23 mention of your company by name in a column by David  
24 Ignatius, one of the leading foreign affairs commentators in  
25 the country, would not come to your attention or to the



1 attention of the board, and the implication that your  
2 company was somehow involved in the training of those who  
3 murdered Jamal Khashoggi. And you're telling us here today  
4 that you only -- at first you said you had no recollection  
5 of it, and then you said, "Well, maybe there was something."  
6 Would you like to clarify this matter? It just -- I find it  
7 incredibly hard to believe that a five-person board of this  
8 company would not have had a fire drill when this allocation  
9 arose.

10 Mr. Bremer: Yeah. Senator, listen, I -- you know, to  
11 be absolutely clear on the issue, I just don't recall the  
12 specifics about it. I'm not trying to hide any  
13 investigation that we may have done, or not done.  
14 Understanding how we approach these sort of things is -- has  
15 me sort of thinking that it's very likely that we did do  
16 some form of investigation, likely even had a discussion at  
17 the board level. I can go back and look at the details on  
18 that and provide that to both you and Senator Kaine, in full  
19 disclosure. It's just that, you know, I'm involved in a lot  
20 of different corporate matters, a lot of different boards.  
21 And that particular instance, I cannot recall the specifics  
22 about it.

23 Senator King: Thank you. And I'll -- I know Senator  
24 Kaine's going to follow up.

25 You're in a unique and, I think, very important

1 position right now, as you, yourself -- I think the term you  
2 used, "moral and legal failings in recent years" in SOCOM.  
3 And as a former SEAL with credibility in that community, it  
4 seems to me you have a very terrific opportunity to try to  
5 deal with this -- what appears to be potential problems of  
6 culture. I hope you'll take advantage of that. And I think  
7 you've testified here that that is your intention. Is that  
8 right?

9 Mr. Bremer: Yes, Senator, it is. Thank you. Thank  
10 you for those comments. If confirmed, I will absolutely  
11 take lead on this.

12 Senator King: Thank you.

13 Mr. Abend, you're taking a very difficult job, a very  
14 important job. I consider Inspector Generals among the most  
15 important jobs in the U.S. Government. Because of the size  
16 and, in the case of the Defense Department, often secrecy,  
17 the public really doesn't have much visibility as to what's  
18 going on. Unfortunately, in recent years, the life  
19 expectancy -- the job life expectancy of an Inspector  
20 General is about the same as a squirrel trying to cross  
21 Pennsylvania Avenue, down the street, here. I really hope  
22 you'll think hard about the obligation you have to the  
23 country, and the fact that your oath, when you're likely  
24 confirmed and sworn in, is to the Constitution of the United  
25 States and to the laws under which you will be operating,

1 not to any particular President or Member of Congress or  
2 Secretary of Defense. Do you -- is that the way you see it,  
3 Mr. Abend?

4 Mr. Abend: Senator, that's exactly the way I see my  
5 obligation. I've sworn that oath several times in my  
6 career, and I abide by it each and every time. I'm a  
7 zealous advocate for the truth. I have advocated on behalf  
8 of victims my entire law enforcement career. I will  
9 advocate on behalf of the Department's best interests  
10 throughout this one, as well. There's no deterrence from  
11 that. That's the mission.

12 Senator King: Thank you. I appreciate that. And I  
13 take you at your word. I think you may be tested, and I  
14 hope that you will remember your testimony here today when  
15 that happens.

16 Mr. Hansell, talking about intelligence, normally the  
17 customer of the intelligence agencies is the President, the  
18 Secretary of Defense, or the CIA, the policymaker, sometimes  
19 Member of Congress. I would argue that every 4 years, your  
20 customer is the American people, because, when they vote on  
21 November 3rd, they are the decisionmakers, they are the  
22 policymakers, and they need and deserve your intelligence  
23 about information involving foreign actors that may  
24 influence -- or try to influence our election. Will you  
25 push for the declassification, when possible? And I

1 understand about sources and methods, but I think you need  
2 to think about who is your customer. And every 4 years in  
3 November, your customer is the American people. Do you view  
4 it that way, Mr. Hansell?

5 Mr. Hansell: Senator, as you alluded to, part of my  
6 responsibility, if confirmed, will be secure our classified  
7 information and our sources and method. However, as I  
8 stated earlier, I do believe that the best disinfectant for  
9 misinformation is the sunlight, and certainly, if confirmed,  
10 would work with the broader intelligence community and the  
11 DNI's office to determine what is appropriate for  
12 declassification.

13 Senator King: I think you're absolutely right in that  
14 view, and I hope you will hold to it. And look forward to  
15 supporting your confirmation.

16 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator King.

18 A squirrel crossing Pennsylvania -- that was good. I  
19 like that.

20 [Laughter.]

21 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Warren is coming, via Web --

22 Senator Warren: I'm here. I'm here, Mr. Chairman.

23 Can you hear me?

24 Chairman Inhofe: You are recognized.

25 Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate

1 it.

2 Mr. Abend, the Defense Department Inspector General is  
3 one of the most important IG positions in all of government.  
4 And, if confirmed, you will lead an office of nearly 1500  
5 investigators, auditors, other staff that are going to be  
6 responsible for investigating waste, fraud, abuse across the  
7 Department, whose budget accounts for half of all Federal  
8 discretionary spending. Now, this job requires someone with  
9 experience in leading large organizations and overseeing  
10 high-profile investigations, as well as someone who can  
11 exercise strong independence.

12 So, Mr. Abend, in the past three -- the past three  
13 Defense Department IGs all came in this role having been IGs  
14 at other smaller agencies. Have you ever been an Inspector  
15 General for any Federal or State agency?

16 Mr. Abend: No, I have not, Senator.

17 Senator Warren: Well, President Trump has already  
18 fired or removed five Inspectors General this year alone,  
19 including the IG whom you've been nominated to replace. It  
20 seems clear to me that the President doesn't believe  
21 Inspectors General should be investigating his  
22 administration.

23 Now, despite your obvious lack of experience, I know  
24 you're going to say that you are committed to being  
25 independent and resisting political pressure. And, frankly,

1 it's easy to say that in a confirmation hearing when you  
2 want the big promotion. So, instead of asking you that, I  
3 just want to get more specific.

4 The President has already shown an interest in using  
5 military forces to quell peaceful protests. He did it right  
6 here in Washington's Lafayette Square just 2 months ago.  
7 It's an abuse of power, and it's a disturbing misuse of our  
8 military. If the Department of Defense leadership allowed  
9 military forces to deploy to American cities in response to  
10 people who were exercising their First Amendment rights, is  
11 that something you would consider investigating?

12 Mr. Abend: Senator, anytime there's an expenditure  
13 that involves the Department of Defense that falls under the  
14 purview of the Inspector General's office, in that  
15 hypothetical situation there's an expenditure being  
16 appropriated towards the movement of troops or whatnot, and  
17 that would fall under consideration for review by the  
18 Inspector General's office.

19 Senator Warren: Good. I appreciate that. You know, I  
20 hope we never see another Lafayette Square or similar  
21 incident again, but I am glad to hear you say that such a --  
22 an episode may lead to the rise of an investigation.

23 You know, I appreciate your past public service, and I  
24 know that you would tell us that you're going to be  
25 independent, but I'm concerned that the President has picked

1       you for this job precisely because he believes that you will  
2       not stand up to him. So, let me just be really clear about  
3       this. Over the past several months, the President has  
4       repeatedly worked to delegitimize the upcoming elections.  
5       He's deployed Federal troops to exercise force against  
6       peaceful forces. And last week, he proposed delaying the  
7       election. Failing to take these actions seriously is a  
8       mistake for both Democrats and Republicans. We need  
9       watchdogs at the DOD who will safeguard our democracy, even  
10      if it means preventing the President from turning the  
11      military into his own personal militia.

12             Thank you.

13             Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14             Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Warren.

15             Senator Hawley.

16             Senator Hawley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17             Thank you all for being here.

18             Mr. Polakowski, let me start with you. Missouri, as  
19      you know, is the proud home of the Kansas City National  
20      Security Campus, which does extraordinary work producing the  
21      non-nuclear components of the NNSA's warhead programs. Can  
22      you give me a sense -- and I think Senator Cotton touched on  
23      this earlier, but I think it's important enough to revisit  
24      it -- how do you think the Nuclear Weapons Council should  
25      support the preparation of the NNSA's budget so that we can

1 ensure that the facility in Kansas City and others like it  
2 get the resources that they need to meet DOD requirements?

3 Mr. Polakowski: Well, the Council needs to be able to  
4 do exactly what the law has charged them to do: coordinate  
5 and approve NNSA's budget proposal, and also track that  
6 through the process, through the Congress, so that, in the  
7 end result, NNSA gets the budget that it needs to deliver  
8 and support the Department of Defense for its mission.

9 Senator Hawley: Do you support modernizing the NNSA's  
10 production complex in order to support the programs and  
11 priorities laid out in the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review?

12 Mr. Polakowski: Absolutely.

13 Senator Hawley: Very good.

14 Mr. Hansell, let me ask you about the National  
15 Geospatial Intelligence Agency, which is building a new  
16 campus in St. Louis, on the other side of my State, that  
17 will host many of the agency's most important functions and  
18 capabilities. Can you give me a sense of how you see this  
19 campus, and the NGA more broadly, contributing to the  
20 Department of Defense's shift away from counterterrorism and  
21 toward great-power competition?

22 Mr. Hansell: Senator, if confirmed, I would help  
23 manage that trade space between our enduring intelligence  
24 requirements and the new prioritization of NDS efforts.  
25 Specifically to the NGA facility and broader NGA assets, I



1 would say it's critical -- these intelligence investments  
2 are critical in order to inform that great-power  
3 competition, to identify additional gaps that might be  
4 required.

5 Senator Hawley: Very good.

6 Let me ask you, Mr. Hansell, about a related security  
7 issue. I introduced legislation, back in March, that would  
8 prohibit all Federal employees, including DOD employees, DOD  
9 personnel, from downloading or using the app TikTok on their  
10 devices, on Federal devices. Can you give me a sense of  
11 your understanding of what security dangers this app,  
12 TikTok, poses to DOD employees, and why it's important that  
13 DOD personnel not use TikTok on government devices?

14 Mr. Hansell: Yes, Senator. I'm certainly aware of the  
15 security threat from TikTok application, and currently it's  
16 not on the list of approved applications for Department  
17 personnel and network. Furthermore, though, relative to the  
18 threat from ByteDance and TikTok, I would say it's the  
19 Department's role as an interagency player in the broader  
20 CFIUS review specifically, and, if confirmed, would  
21 participate in that.

22 Senator Hawley: Based on these -- the risks that  
23 you're aware of with the TikTok app and, as you point out,  
24 DOD's own actions now in prohibiting personnel from using it  
25 -- I believe, actually, the Department went so far as to

1 discourage DOD personnel from permitting their own  
2 dependents' minor children from downloading it on personal  
3 devices -- in light of what you know about this, do you  
4 agree that TikTok ought to be prohibited on all government  
5 devices?

6 Mr. Hansell: Senator, my purview would be both  
7 informing them, with the CIO -- in conjunction with the CIO,  
8 for DOD policy, but certainly would work with my interagency  
9 colleagues for a broader government policy.

10 Senator Hawley: Let me just -- to broaden the aperture  
11 just a little bit, TikTok, of course, isn't the only  
12 application that has -- that comes with some sort of tie to  
13 Beijing that could potentially pose security risks for DOD  
14 personnel, or for civilians, for that matter. If you're  
15 confirmed, how will you make sure that other applications  
16 that have Chinese ownership or Chinese influence are kept  
17 off of DOD-issued devices?

18 Mr. Hansell: Senator, I think actions similar to what  
19 we outlined for TikTok would be applicable. I think,  
20 specifically to the Chinese threat, though, is to ensure  
21 that a principle we follow when constructing are efforts so  
22 that they are aligned across the entire range of the value  
23 chain, from very early research and development through the  
24 entire defense industrial base that supports traditional  
25 players that develop and deliver warfighter capability.

1 It's that management of information across the defense  
2 intelligence base that's a vulnerability.

3 Senator Hawley: Very good, thank you.

4 Mr. Abend, let me, in my few remaining moments here,  
5 ask you about your responsibilities, if confirmed. You  
6 would be responsible for overseeing investigations of waste,  
7 fraud, and abuse in Afghanistan reconstruction. Can you  
8 give me some examples now of waste, fraud, and abuse in the  
9 Afghan reconstruction effort that you know of and find  
10 particularly worthy of attention?

11 Mr. Abend: Senator, as you're aware, the Department of  
12 Defense Inspector General is the lead IG for all oversight  
13 in freedom --

14 The reconstruction efforts are headed up through the  
15 SIG Afghanistan Reconstruction Office. We would be  
16 deconflicting and collaborating with them on those efforts.

17 Specific examples that I read through the reporting,  
18 you know, include some construction contracts and some  
19 bribery incidences. But, it would be incumbent upon us to  
20 make sure that there's a clear focus for the taxpayer that  
21 every dollar allocated is being spent for its intended  
22 purpose, and not wasted.

23 Senator Hawley: I've got some additional questions for  
24 you, Mr. Abend, about that. My time is expired here, so  
25 I'll give those to you in the record. And then some

1 questions for you, Mr. Bremer, that I didn't get to, but  
2 I'll have for you in the record, as well.

3 Thank you all for being here.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Hawley.

6 Senator Gillibrand. She is via WebEx.

7 Senator Gillibrand: Mr. Chairman, I'm going to pass to  
8 the next person. I'm just getting my computer together.

9 Chairman Inhofe: All right. We'll come to you next.

10 After that -- before that, it would be Senator Jones,  
11 via WebEx.

12 Senator Jones: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 And thank you, to all our witnesses today, for your  
14 past service and your willingness to serve in the capacities  
15 in which you're -- been nominated.

16 Mr. Polakowski, I'd like to ask you a little bit about  
17 your background. Your biography states that, while joining  
18 in the -- serving in the Army, you helped stand up the  
19 Standing Joint Force Headquarters for Elimination. And,  
20 while you've got a very impressive background, there has  
21 been some concern about your lack of nuclear experience for  
22 this particular position. So, I'd like for you to just talk  
23 to the committee a little bit about how, with your career,  
24 and particularly on the Standing Joint Force for --  
25 Headquarters for Elimination, how you -- experience prepared

1 with regard to the nuclear aspect has prepared you for this  
2 upcoming position.

3 Mr. Polakowski: Senator, I'm a strong leader, with  
4 significant technical aptitude, and I've worked the issues  
5 of nuclear, chemical, and biological defense over my 36-year  
6 career.

7 During my last 3 years in the Army, ending in -- with  
8 my retirement in 2016, I worked at U.S. Strategic Command.  
9 I worked directly for the commander, Admiral Haney, and I  
10 also was dual-hatted, working as the Deputy Director for  
11 STRATCOM Center for Countering WMD.

12 At STRATCOM, I was involved as the main point of  
13 contact for, not only the STRATCOM Center, but also the  
14 Standing Joint Force Headquarters on STRATCOM's strategic  
15 and operational planning, their -- I participated in all  
16 their global series of exercises, and also provided input  
17 with regards to their strategic targeting planning process.  
18 I was a frequent TDY-er to STRATCOM headquarters. I  
19 interfaced very heavily with the staff.

20 With regards to the Standing Joint Force Headquarters,  
21 most of the focus of that headquarters when I was at Fort  
22 Belvoir was getting the U.S. military ready for a potential  
23 conflict on the Korean Peninsula. And part of that charge  
24 was to do planning in case U.S. forces and our coalition  
25 partners ever had to go and seize chemical, biological, and

1 nuclear sites in North Korea, to either prevent attacks from  
2 occurring or to prevent the proliferation of those materials  
3 elsewhere. So --

4 Senator Jones: I think that's good, Mr. Polakowski.  
5 Thank you very much. I appreciate -- I don't mean to cut  
6 you off, and I may ask you to do more for questions for the  
7 record. But, I'm -- my time's running out a little bit.

8 So, I want to get to a similar question to you, Mr.  
9 Hansell. Again, impressive career, and I appreciate it very  
10 much. But, there's a -- I've got a little bit of concern  
11 about your lack of intelligence-specific experience. So, if  
12 you would, could you just describe for the committee  
13 specifically what experience or training you've received to  
14 prepare and qualify you to assume the role of Deputy Under  
15 Secretary of Defense for Intelligence?

16 Mr. Hansell: Yes, Senator.

17 As I've stated in my opening, Senator -- statement --  
18 as a Special Forces officer, I was both a collector and a  
19 consumer of intelligence, and familiar with intelligence at  
20 the tactical edge. As a Senior Director on the National  
21 Security Council, I was privy to interagency efforts in the  
22 intelligence space. A part of -- portion of my  
23 responsibilities on the NSC within the confines of my  
24 portfolio was coordination among intelligence agencies to  
25 better integrate efforts towards supporting strategic

1 priorities.

2 Senator Jones: Thank you, sir.

3 Mr. Bremer, there were reports that you had presented a  
4 plan to replace troops in Afghanistan with military  
5 contractors. Could you talk about that a little bit, and  
6 what -- and describe for the committee what your -- what you  
7 believe is the appropriate role for private security  
8 contractors in Afghanistan or in other areas of active  
9 service?

10 Mr. Bremer: Senator, we own a portfolio company called  
11 DynCorp, and DynCorp provides very important support to our  
12 warfighters downrange in a number of different geographies,  
13 mainly around logistics and maintenance. I think that's the  
14 sort of role the private military contractors have in  
15 overseas combat operations, supporting U.S. troops abroad.

16 Senator Jones: All right. Thank you. Thank you, sir.

17 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Appreciate it.

18 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you.

19 Senator Gillibrand, by WebEx.

20 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

21 Mr. Bremer, the last two decades has seen an enormous  
22 transformation in our military. This is most evident when  
23 we look at the expanded role of our Special Operations  
24 community that assumed new duties all over the world. Your  
25 service as a Navy SEAL occurred before this transformative

1 period. So, do you feel you are qualified and possess the  
2 necessary experience to lead future efforts, given that you  
3 have worked mostly in the financial sector during this new  
4 era of Special Operations?

5 Mr. Bremer: Yes, Senator, I do. The 20 years that  
6 I've been out of the community, I've certainly kept a foot  
7 in national security, but the body of work and the  
8 development of experience that I had is very applicable,  
9 especially as it relates to the organize, train, and equip  
10 functions of the office that is very clearly intended for  
11 the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations to  
12 oversee. I appreciate that congressional intent. It's  
13 clear that the -- this position is now intended to reside  
14 between the U.S. Special Operations commander and the  
15 Secretary of Defense. And so, I'm used to that sort of  
16 oversight role at the board level, looking into how money is  
17 spent, the efficacy of programs, and a number of different  
18 skillsets in the private sector that are very applicable to  
19 the oversight role in this position.

20 Senator Gillibrand: The Special Operations community  
21 -- in particular, the Navy SEALs -- have seen a number of  
22 scandals recently. Given this current image, do you believe  
23 that you are the right person to reform the Special  
24 Operations community and rehabilitate its culture?

25 Mr. Bremer: I do, Senator. I share your concern.



1 It's gotten a lot of air time here today. It's a  
2 significant issue, and it needs to be addressed head-on. I  
3 understand the enterprise, the SOF enterprise, having come  
4 out of service as a SEAL. And it's a good starting point,  
5 because I understand how these organizations are task-  
6 organized. I understand how they have independent cultures.  
7 And I understand how the training pipelines, if you get them  
8 right, can involve training and ethics from a very early  
9 part of an individual's service. You know, my perspective  
10 on this is, when somebody shows up to the quarterdeck at  
11 BUD/S or shows up for day one of the Army SFQ course, ethics  
12 should be a big part of their training. They should start,  
13 on day one. It should be inculcated into the DNA of every  
14 SOF operator. And it's going to take a concerted effort  
15 over multiple years to sort of turn this narrative around.  
16 Because, ultimately, it tarnishes the vast majority of  
17 Special Operators that are out there doing their work  
18 honorably. And we just can't allow that to happen.

19 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

20 Mr. Abend, I want to talk a little bit about  
21 whistleblowers. As you know, the IG Act and the law  
22 protecting Federal contractor employee whistleblower states  
23 that an IG cannot expose a whistleblower's identity in the  
24 course of an investigation unless the IG deems it necessary  
25 or essential to carry out the investigation. Do you believe

1 it's ever acceptable for an IG to expose a whistleblower's  
2 identity in the course of an investigation? And, if yes,  
3 when is that acceptable?

4 Mr. Abend: Senator, I think that the critical  
5 importance to keep confidentiality of whistleblowers is --  
6 it's paramount for the whistleblower program's success.  
7 Without the ability of employees, contractors, military  
8 servicemembers, intelligence community members to come  
9 forward with information and not fear reprisal, the  
10 whistleblower program would just crumble upon itself. I'm  
11 committed to protecting the identities, pursuant to the IG  
12 Act, all the way through, pursuant to the law, and to  
13 ensuring that people can come forward and report fraud,  
14 waste, and abuse.

15 Senator Gillibrand: As the Senior Policy Advisor for  
16 U.S. Customs and Border Protection, have you ever been  
17 involved in any way in CBP's deployment of personnel to the  
18 protests in Washington, D.C., Portland, Oregon, or any other  
19 city?

20 Mr. Abend: Senator, when I was -- received the  
21 nomination, I stepped back from my day-to-day duties, and I  
22 was not involved in any of those actions.

23 Senator Gillibrand: Okay. And if, as Inspector  
24 General, you were to investigate and then find reasonable  
25 grounds to believe that these statutes have been violated by

1 Pentagon officials in the context of ongoing protests, do  
2 you commit to reporting those findings to Congress and to  
3 the public?

4 Mr. Abend: Senator, I commit to reporting the results  
5 of those investigations, if they were undertaken, pursuant  
6 to the law, and to the committee, as well.

7 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Gillibrand.

9 I believe there are no more members seeking recognition  
10 at this time, and I would ask Senator Reed, Do you have any  
11 further comments?

12 Senator Reed: No, Mr. Chairman.

13 Chairman Inhofe: All right.

14 Let me just mention, Mr. Polakowski, this -- the --  
15 this year, the NNSA assessed it would need just roughly  
16 \$19.9 billion to accomplish its mission, and, during the  
17 budget process, DOE, Department of Energy -- that's  
18 Secretary Brouillette -- and OMB cut that request down by 2-  
19 and-a-half-billion dollars to 17-and-a-half-billion dollars  
20 without consultation to -- with DOD. Now, luckily,  
21 President Trump -- in fact, we were all there, and appealed  
22 to him, members of this committee, as to the need that has  
23 been impressed upon us for our -- to adequately have the  
24 nuclear capability that we need at this time. And so, the  
25 President believed us, and he took it back up to where it

1 was, another 2-and-a-half-billion dollars.

2 Now, since that time, I think -- I know Secretary  
3 Brouillette's a very effective lobbyist, and all of a sudden  
4 the request that the President had, to go back up to 19.9  
5 billion, was reduced back down to the original amount,  
6 reduced by about 2-and-a-half-billion dollars.

7 Now, I would say that you are probably one of the most  
8 knowledgeable persons in this field. And so, I would like  
9 to ask you. The question is, Have you had a chance to  
10 assess the budget that we're talking about now? And having  
11 gone up from 17-and-a-half to roughly 20 billion, and then  
12 back down again, what would be your assessment as to the --  
13 where we should be in that budget process for this year?

14 Mr. Polakowski: Senator, the budget needs to be  
15 restored to what the original NNSA budget proposal was.  
16 That was a very deliberative process by the Nuclear Weapons  
17 Council, with input from the combatant command. A lot of  
18 thought was put into that. And if that budget is not  
19 actually provided to NNSA, they will not be able to deliver  
20 on their warhead acquisition programs, and they will not be  
21 able to do their infrastructure plans in accordance with our  
22 modernization schedule. It's got a significant and severe  
23 impact if it remains the way it is.

24 Chairman Inhofe: I couldn't think of a better answer  
25 for that, and I appreciate very much your background, your

1 knowledge, and your willingness to come forth in full  
2 honesty as to what our needs are. There's nothing more  
3 important that we're dealing with than that nuclear  
4 capability. And I think we all understand that.

5 Let me thank all four of you for your time this  
6 morning. I'm looking forward to serving with you.

7 Thanks so much.

8 We are adjourned.

9 [Whereupon, at 11:03 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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