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Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

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

Tuesday, February 2, 2021

Washington, D.C.

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(202) 289-2260
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7 U.S. Senate

8 Committee on Armed Services

9 Washington, D.C.
10

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

14 Committee Members Present: Senators Inhofe
15 [presiding], Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis,
16 Sullivan, Cramer, Blackburn, Hawley, Reed, Shaheen,
17 Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Heinrich,
18 Warren, Peters, Manchin, and Duckworth.
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1 Chairman Inhofe: The committee will come to order.
2 The committee meets today to consider the expected
3 nomination of Dr. Kathleen Hicks to be Deputy Secretary of
4 Defense. Thank you all for being here today. Dr. Hicks,
5 welcome. A warm welcome to your husband, Thomas Hicks. We
6 are glad to have you both with us today. And I would like
7 to acknowledge your children, who I know to be a source of
8 great joy and support to you both.

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

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

14 Chairman Inhofe: You are recognized.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

15 Ms. Hicks: Yes.

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

20 Ms. Hicks: Yes.

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

24 Ms. Hicks: Yes.

25 Chairman Inhofe: Will those witnesses be protected

1 from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

2 Ms. Hicks: Yes.

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

5 Ms. Hicks: Yes.

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

12 Ms. Hicks: Yes.

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

16 Ms. Hicks: No.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 manage this process, if you are confirmed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 America's allies and partners.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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1 Chairman Inhofe: Well, thank you very much, Dr. Hicks.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3 Ms. Hicks: Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 Senator Wicker: Thank you, ma'am.

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

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

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

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

1 So I agree that it is greatly important.

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

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

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

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

20 Ms. Hicks: I will, Senator.

21 Senator Shaheen: Thank you very much.

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

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

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

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

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

1 would work.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

22 Ms. Hicks: I do.

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

1 compared to previous eras?

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

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

6 Ms. Hicks: I do, Senator.

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

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

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

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

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

1 warhead ICBMs contribute to stability."

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

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

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

25 Do you agree that allowing these capabilities to age

1 into obsolescence is unacceptable?

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

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

22 Ms. Hicks: I do.

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

1 capacity.

2 Ms. Hicks: Thank you, Senator.

3 Senator Fischer: Thank you very much.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 of something critical to our international security.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 actually make a difference.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

15 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 Would you please share your thoughts on this with the

1 committee?

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

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

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

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

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

1 Ms. Hicks: No.

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

4 Ms. Hicks: No.

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

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

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

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

1 and mission assurance a priority for the DoD.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

23 Ms. Hicks: Thank you, Senator.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 priority for me.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Tillis. Senator

1 Kaine.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

23 Ms. Hicks: I do.

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

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

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

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

25 Ms. Hicks: It is, Senator.

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

5 Ms. Hicks: Generally speaking it is bad.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8 Ms. Hicks: Thank you, Senator.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 future.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

9 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator King.

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

12 Ms. Hicks: Thank you, Senator.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

9 Ms. Hicks: Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 I would face if I were confirmed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 Senator Heinrich: Thank you. I would really encourage

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

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

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

1 difficult.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 Ms. Hicks: Absolutely, Senator.

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

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

12 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4 Senator Peters: Thank you, Dr. Hicks.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 effective.

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

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

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

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

10 Senator Manchin: How do we change that?

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

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

25 The other thing is on holding. The prime contractor

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

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

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

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

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

7 Ms. Hicks: Senator --

8 Senator Manchin: Biggest threats.

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

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

20 Ms. Hicks: Yes.

21 Senator Manchin: Would you rank them --

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

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

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

8 Ms. Hicks: I agree.

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

12 Ms. Hicks: Thank you, Senator.

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

15 Ms. Hicks: Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 the words.

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

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

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

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

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

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

6 Senator Scott: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 we rely for our logistics.

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

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

13 Senator Reed: [Presiding.] Without objection.

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

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

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

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

7 Ms. Hicks: I do.

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

15 Ms. Hicks: I do.

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

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

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

2 Ms. Hicks: Less likely.

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

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

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

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

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

1 expects the Defense Department to be.

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

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

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

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

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

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

9 Ms. Hicks: Absolutely, Senator.

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

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

1 commitments.

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

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

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

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

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

25 Ms. Hicks: Thank you, Senator.

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

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