

Stenographic Transcript  
Before the

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

## **UNITED STATES SENATE**

TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATIONS OF:  
HONORABLE MELISSA G. DALTON TO BE UNDER SECRETARY  
OF THE AIR FORCE; DR. DOUGLAS C. SCHMIDT TO BE  
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONAL TEST AND EVALUATION; AND  
DR. APRILLE J. ERICSSON TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF  
DEFENSE FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Tuesday, January 23, 2024

Washington, D.C.

ALDERSON COURT REPORTING  
1029 VERMONT AVE, NW  
10TH FLOOR  
WASHINGTON, DC 20005  
(202) 289-2260  
[www.aldersonreporting.com](http://www.aldersonreporting.com)

1 TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATIONS OF: HONORABLE MELISSA G. DALTON  
2 TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE; DR. DOUGLAS C.  
3 SCHMIDT TO BE DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONAL TEST AND EVALUATION;  
4 AND DR. APRILLE J. ERICSSON TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF  
5 DEFENSE FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

6  
7 Tuesday, January 23, 2024

8  
9 U.S. Senate

10 Committee on Armed Services,  
11 Washington, D.C.

12  
13 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m.,  
14 in Room 50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Jack Reed,  
15 chairman of the committee, presiding.

16 Committee Members Present: Senators Reed [presiding],  
17 Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King,  
18 Warren, Peters, Manchin, Duckworth, Rosen, Wicker, Fischer,  
19 Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Cramer, Scott, Tuberville, Mullin,  
20 Budd, and Schmitt.

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

3           Chairman Reed: Good morning. The committee meets  
4 today to consider the nominations of Ms. Melissa G. Dalton  
5 to be Undersecretary of the Air Force, Dr. Douglas C.  
6 Schmidt to be Director of Operational Test and Evaluation,  
7 and Dr. Aprille J. Ericsson to be Assistant Secretary of  
8 Defense for Science and Technology.

9           I thank the nominees for their careers of service to  
10 the United States and their willingness to assume these  
11 important roles. I would also like to welcome the guests  
12 and family members who are with us today.

13           Ms. Dalton, I welcome your husband, Jason. Dr.  
14 Schmidt, I welcome your partner, Karen. Dr. Ericsson, I  
15 welcome your partner, Aaron, your daughter Arielle, and  
16 other family members, your mother particularly, who are  
17 here today.

18           Ms. Dalton, you have been nominated to serve as the  
19 Undersecretary of the Air Force. Your decades of  
20 experience in defense policy, including your current role  
21 as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and  
22 Hemispheric Affairs and prior role performing the duties of  
23 the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans and  
24 Capabilities will serve you well in this position. If you  
25 are confirmed, you will face a number of pressing

1 challenges for the Air Force.

2 The service has operated at a high tempo for the past  
3 two decades, supporting around the clock operations in the  
4 Middle East and around the world. This high operating  
5 tempo has challenged Air Force leaders to adequately invest  
6 in modernization efforts.

7 With China posing new, unprecedented challenges to our  
8 air power in the Indo-Pacific and emerging technologies  
9 like hypersonic weapons and unmanned aerial vehicles  
10 creating new threats around the world, the Air Force must  
11 adapt quickly to stay ahead.

12 In particular, the Air Force must continue to  
13 strengthen and improve its acquisition system in order to  
14 field new capabilities to match the speed of technological  
15 change. The next Undersecretary will need to take steps to  
16 ensure that the Air Force has a secure and reliable  
17 industrial base and a trained and qualified workforce.

18 I would like to know your plans for addressing these  
19 challenges for the Air Force. Dr. Schmidt, you are  
20 nominated to be the Director of Operational Test and  
21 Evaluation, or DOT&E. This position is responsible for all  
22 operational and live fire review, testing, and evaluation  
23 activities.

24 You bring a wealth of experience in military  
25 technology development, having held key leadership roles at

1 Dover, Vanderbilt University, Carnegie Mellon, and other  
2 Government and industry organizations.

3 There are a number of challenges that will require  
4 your attention within the Department. In particular, you  
5 will be responsible for updating the Department's aging  
6 test infrastructure and capabilities to prevent falling  
7 behind our competitors.

8 Key to this effort will be addressing gaps in the size  
9 and expertise of the DOT&E workforce, particularly in areas  
10 such as software development, cybersecurity, and data  
11 analysis, as well as integrating new tools such as  
12 artificial intelligence and machine learning to help the  
13 test enterprise do their jobs much better.

14 You will also be tasked with improving the data  
15 available within the testing community, including access to  
16 data rights and intellectual property, which are critical  
17 to more effectively test and evaluate weapon systems,  
18 including cyber vulnerabilities. I look forward to hearing  
19 how you will address these challenges.

20 Finally, Dr. Ericsson, you have been nominated to be  
21 the first Assistant Secretary of Defense for Science and  
22 Technology, or ASDS&T. This position was established in  
23 the Fiscal Year 2023 National Defense Authorization Act and  
24 will report to the Undersecretary of Defense for Research  
25 and Engineering.

1           As the first nominee for this position, you will be  
2 responsible for establishing the office and codifying its  
3 roles and responsibilities. The ASDS&T will have purview  
4 over DOD basic research, DOD labs, small business  
5 innovation research programs, and the development of  
6 emerging technologies, including advanced materials,  
7 biotechnology, 5G, quantum science, and hypersonics.

8           Dr. Ericsson, you are eminently qualified for this  
9 position having served in top technology leadership  
10 positions at NASA for more than 30 years, including your  
11 current role as New Business Lead, Instrument Systems and  
12 Technology Division at the Goddard Space Flight Center.  
13 You will have a pivotal role in shaping the office and the  
14 powers of the ASDS&T.

15           I would like to know your vision for the position,  
16 including how you plan to advance the goal of delivering  
17 war winning capabilities to our nation's warfighters, as  
18 well as maintaining and growing the Department's STEM  
19 workforce.

20           Thank you again to all of our nominees. I look  
21 forward to your testimonies. Let me now recognize Ranking  
22 Member, Senator Wicker.

23

24

25

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

3           Senator Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Today, we  
4           are here to consider three nominees for important roles in  
5           the Department of Defense. I welcome the nominees and  
6           their families, as the chair did.

7           The Air Force and Space Force both possess  
8           insufficient capacity and capability to meet their growing  
9           mission sets. This is the case even as we march toward a  
10          state of maximum vulnerability in the Pacific.

11          The last confirmed appointee to the post that Ms.  
12          Dalton has been selected for failed to focus on this  
13          challenge. He created a division in our military instead  
14          of prioritizing readiness and modernization. If Ms. Dalton  
15          is confirmed, I hope she will not do the same.  
16          Regrettably, her performance in her position gives me  
17          pause.

18          While she has been at the post, the Department of  
19          Defense was caught flat footed as a Chinese surveillance  
20          balloon traversed the continental United States and flew  
21          over military sites. When Congress sought more  
22          information, she, along with others in the Department,  
23          evaded Constitutionally authorized oversight.

24          Nearly a year later, we are still learning new facts  
25          about that episode. I am also concerned about Ms. Dalton's

1 handling of the Pentagon's responsibilities in our  
2 Southwestern border. At one point, the Department of  
3 Defense was spending \$130,000 every day to store, instead  
4 of use, border wall construction materials.

5 They had already been manufactured, they were ready,  
6 and yet we were spending \$130,000 every day to store them.  
7 Meanwhile, illegal immigration broke records. Later, we  
8 found out that the Department of Defense had initiated a  
9 process in which these panels would be auctioned for  
10 pennies on the dollar, a clear effort to circumvent  
11 emerging Congressional intent as the Finish It Act was  
12 being added to the NDAA.

13 That Act was added to the NDAA. It is now the law of  
14 the land. Ms. Dalton also failed to deliver the homeland  
15 defense planning guidance until the end of 2023, over a  
16 year after the release of the National Defense Strategy.

17 This track record casts a shadow on this nomination,  
18 but on top of it all, she has virtually no experience with  
19 the Air Force. Ms. Dalton needs to address what she will  
20 bring to this position and what she has learned from the  
21 mistakes in the current and prior roles.

22 Now briefly, Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, Dr. Ericsson  
23 would help keep the U.S. military technology a step ahead  
24 of our adversaries. The Pentagon relies on American  
25 universities for early stage research and development, but



1 today it works primarily with major universities in just a  
2 few States.

3 I hope Dr. Ericsson will advocate for the Department  
4 of Defense taking advantage of the talent, capabilities,  
5 and expertise found at research institutions from coast to  
6 coast, not just a select few. And then, with regard to Dr.  
7 Schmidt, if confirmed, he will have his work cut out for  
8 him. This role has grown and is now responsible for the  
9 certification of all middle tier acquisition programs.

10 These programs increase the speed at which the U.S.  
11 prototypes and fields new systems, and they use novel  
12 testing methods for certain software acquisition pathway  
13 programs. These are exciting developments, but new systems  
14 often require new processes.

15 The testing community could find it challenging to  
16 support the iterative testing these systems require,  
17 particularly where the lines between development and  
18 fielding are blurred. So, I look forward to hearing how  
19 Dr. Schmidt will promote best practices and support rapid  
20 acquisition pathways in this ever changing area.

21 So, thank you all for being here, and I look forward  
22 to your testimony.

23 Chairman Reed: Well, thank you very much, Senator  
24 Wicker. Now, I would call upon, Dr. Schmidt for his  
25 opening statement.

1           STATEMENT OF DOUGLAS C. SCHMIDT TO BE DIRECTOR OF  
2           OPERATIONAL TEST AND EVALUATION

3           Dr. Schmidt: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker,  
4           and esteemed members of the committee, I am honored that  
5           President Biden nominated me as the Director of Operational  
6           Test and Evaluation.

7           I would like to express my gratitude to the President,  
8           Secretary Austin, and Deputy Secretary Hicks for their  
9           consideration. I would also like to acknowledge my family,  
10          including my parents, retired Navy Captain Raymond Schmidt  
11          and Roberta Schmidt, my partner Karen Perry, and my son  
12          Branson Schmidt for their unwavering support. My  
13          relationship to national security spans my entire life.

14          My parents met after my father received his commission  
15          in the United States Navy and was stationed at the National  
16          Security Agency, where my mother and her father worked. My  
17          professional involvement with national security spans for  
18          decades, marked by extensive work in researching,  
19          developing, and testing United States military systems.

20          I have evaluated software product lines for mission  
21          computing systems in military aircraft, assessing the  
22          reliability of the avionics, and cockpit functions. I have  
23          led national efforts at the Defense Advanced Research  
24          Projects Agency developing, validating, and verifying  
25          technologies applied in mission critical systems, including

1 naval shipboard computing environments and Air Force time  
2 critical targeting systems.

3 I have overseen cybersecurity and software testing  
4 initiatives at the Software Engineering Institute, working  
5 closely with the Air Force as a member of their Scientific  
6 Advisory Board on a variety of topics, including assessing  
7 Air Force cyber situational awareness readiness, as well as  
8 aircraft sustainment and testing efforts.

9 I have also performed independent technical  
10 assessments for the United States Missile Defense Agency,  
11 Sentinel Program, and Long Range Standoff Program. And  
12 most recently, I have led research and development efforts  
13 focused on responsible and reliable application of  
14 generative augmented intelligence in defense acquisition  
15 systems.

16 If confirmed to this critical role, my foremost  
17 commitment would be to accurately assess the effectiveness,  
18 suitability, survivability, and when necessary, the  
19 lethality of defense systems created for our dedicated  
20 warfighters.

21 This commitment underpins the United States' vital  
22 role of deterring conflicts and ensuring national security.  
23 As we navigate the evolving landscape of warfare marked by  
24 advancing capabilities, both our own as well as our  
25 adversaries, our capacity for operational test and

1 evaluation must evolve in tandem.

2 Integrating operational test and evaluation throughout  
3 the development lifecycle of our acquisition programs is  
4 paramount. This approach allows us to assess our weapons  
5 systems under realistic combat conditions, optimize the use  
6 of taxpayer resources, and implement cost effective  
7 enhancements to achieve peak performance.

8 Transparent reporting of test outcomes is critical for  
9 our nation, since it fosters a culture of continual  
10 improvement that reaffirms our armed services as the  
11 world's preeminent fighting force. If confirmed, I commit  
12 to ensuring the Office of Operational Test and Evaluation  
13 delivers independent, accurate, and authoritative  
14 assessment of defense system performance, both for your  
15 benefit and for Secretary Austin.

16 Adapting our operational test and evaluation  
17 strategies for future warfare necessitates both incremental  
18 improvements and groundbreaking innovations built on  
19 collaboration among a diverse set of stakeholders. This  
20 transformation requires a reliance on a highly skilled test  
21 and evaluation workforce, as well as cutting edge  
22 infrastructure, methods, and tools.

23 Together, these assets will enable a faster and more  
24 efficient assessment of defense systems under realistic  
25 operating conditions. But to achieve this objective, we

1 need to integrate various digital technologies such as high  
2 fidelity modeling and simulation tools, as well as testing  
3 conducted on live fire ranges and in laboratory settings.

4 This integration will instill confidence in our  
5 warfighters, provide operators with valuable insights into  
6 system usability, assist in verifying, validating, and  
7 accrediting digital models, and identifying vulnerabilities  
8 beyond the limits of today's technologies and modeling  
9 simulation tools.

10 If confirmed, I am committed to fostering robust  
11 collaborations with our research and engineering community,  
12 acquisition programs, armed services, and international  
13 partners. Together, we will strengthen the Department's  
14 capacity to provide robust warfighting capabilities to the  
15 Joint Force, while ensuring effective oversight,  
16 transparency, and value for taxpayers.

17 I am eager to fulfill my responsibilities by  
18 collaborating with -- closely with key stakeholders,  
19 including Congress, the Department, the services, and  
20 industry partners. It would be my privilege to contribute  
21 to this vital mission as the Director of Operational Test  
22 and Evaluation. Thank you, and I look forward to your  
23 questions.

24 [The prepared statement of Dr. Schmidt follows:]

25

1 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Dr. Schmidt.  
2 Secretary Dalton, please.

3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

1 STATEMENT OF HON. MELISSA G. DALTON TO BE UNDER  
2 SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE

3 Ms. Dalton: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and  
4 distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to  
5 come before you today and be considered as President  
6 Biden's nominee for Undersecretary of the Air Force.

7 I want to thank President Biden for my nomination, as  
8 well as Secretary Austin, Deputy Secretary Hicks, and  
9 Secretary Kendall for their confidence in me. I also wish  
10 to thank my family, friends, and mentors for their  
11 encouragement, particularly my husband and true North,  
12 Jason, my two amazing children, Jacob and Isabel, and my  
13 parents Anne and Ravi.

14 My father chose to make this country his own as an  
15 immigrant from India. He and my mother imbued within me a  
16 deep respect for the foundational values of our great  
17 nation. I come from a family committed to public service  
18 and have been drawn to it since I was 22 years old. I am  
19 honored by the prospect of serving as the Undersecretary of  
20 the Air Force.

21 I began my career at the Department of Defense as a  
22 civil servant during the Bush Administration and served for  
23 a decade in several policy and intelligence roles. I then  
24 spent six years at the bipartisan think tank, the center  
25 for Strategic and International Studies.

1 I was honored to return to DOD on January 20th, 2021,  
2 as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for  
3 Strategy, Plans and Capabilities as a member of the Biden-  
4 Harris Administration. Since March 2022, and with the  
5 Senate's confirmation, I have served as the Assistant  
6 Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Hemispheric  
7 Affairs.

8 Distinguished members of the committee, the People's  
9 Republic of China, DOD's pacing challenge, is the United  
10 States' most consequential strategic competitor and the  
11 most pressing challenge facing the Department of the Air  
12 Force.

13 As part of the team that developed the 2022 National  
14 Defense Strategy and Missile Defense Review, and as the co-  
15 lead in developing the Nuclear Posture Review, I understand  
16 the challenge the PRC presents and the role that the Air  
17 Force and Space Force have in meeting that challenge.

18 Under Secretary Kendall's leadership, substantial work  
19 is already underway to modernize the Air Force and Space  
20 Force. Secretary Kendall has called for re optimizing for  
21 great power competition, and if confirmed, I would look  
22 forward to helping him achieve that vision. I have a track  
23 record of effectively driving NDS aligned priorities  
24 forward in DOD.

25 I led the development of the first update to DOD's



1 classified homeland defense policy guidance in a decade,  
2 signed by Secretary Austin, focused on the PRC pacing  
3 challenge. A second challenge facing the Department of the  
4 Air Force is nuclear modernization, following decades of  
5 focus on other priorities.

6 If confirmed, I would leverage my experience co-  
7 leading the NPR to ensure the Department of the Air Force  
8 is making the necessary investments to maintain a safe,  
9 secure, and effective nuclear deterrent. Given the nuclear  
10 threat landscape, it is vital for the United States to  
11 invest in modernizing the nuclear triad as the bedrock of  
12 our national defense and for our extended deterrence  
13 commitments to our allies.

14 If confirmed, I would steward two legs of the nuclear  
15 triad. Finally, and most importantly, the Department of  
16 the Air Force faces challenges to recruitment and retention  
17 of talent in the Air Force while also harnessing the  
18 opportunity of growing the Space Force. If confirmed, I  
19 would prioritize these issues.

20 We can build exquisite capability, but without taking  
21 care of service members and their families, we will not  
22 succeed in achieving our aims. As the DOD agency  
23 coordination lead for anomalous health incidents, I have  
24 worked across OSD and the military Departments to better  
25 synchronize medical care for affected DOD personnel and

1 research into the types of technologies that could cause  
2 adverse physiological effects.

3 If confirmed, I would bring the same focus and  
4 dedication to enhancing recruitment and improving quality  
5 of life and service for our Airmen and Guardians. We have  
6 a fundamental responsibility to provide the best support  
7 for our service members and their families to honor their  
8 service and sacrifice.

9 I would like to conclude by saying that I have a deep  
10 appreciation for this committee and its role. In my  
11 current position, I am proud to have briefed and testified  
12 before Congress over two dozen times.

13 If confirmed, I commit to consulting with you  
14 regularly and providing timely and accurate information to  
15 advance our nation's priorities in an active, bipartisan,  
16 transparent, and cooperative manner. I have long viewed  
17 Congress as a partner, and I will continue to do so in my  
18 current position and if confirmed as Undersecretary of the  
19 Air Force.

20 Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to  
21 your questions.

22 [The prepared statement of Ms. Dalton follows:]

23

24

25

1 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Secretary Dalton. Dr.  
2 Ericsson, please.

3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

1 STATEMENT OF APRILLE J. ERICSSON TO BE ASSISTANT  
2 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

3 Dr. Ericsson: Good morning. Chairman Reed, Ranking  
4 Member Wicker, and distinguished members of the committee.  
5 Thank you for your consideration of my nomination as the  
6 Assistant Secretary of Defense for Science and Technology.

7 I am deeply honored by the trust and confidence placed  
8 in me by President Biden, Secretary Austin, and  
9 Undersecretary Shyu. I want to express my gratitude to my  
10 family, several who have traveled here today, including my  
11 mother, Karee Ericsson, my siblings, Trina and Dawn, and my  
12 daughter, Ariel.

13 I also want to acknowledge my trusted mentors, former  
14 NASA Administrator Major General Charlie Bolden, current  
15 NASA Goddard Space Flight Center Deputy Director Second  
16 Lieutenant Cynthia Simmons, and former Assistant Secretary  
17 of the Navy Executive Officer Buddie Joe Penn. Your  
18 support has been invaluable.

19 My journey traces back to my grandparents who migrated  
20 from Barbados, Montserrat, and Saint Croix. I inherited  
21 their passion for learning and tenacity for action. I  
22 spring from a family of educators, engineers, craftsmen,  
23 civil servants, and service members of the U.S. Navy and  
24 Army. I was raised in New York and Cambridge, cities  
25 enriched with varied people, places, and ideas.

1           An early school experience launched my journey to this  
2 moment. In first grade, I watched two American heroes walk  
3 on the moon. Filled with dreams of exploring and studying  
4 the universe, I was inspired to pursue aerospace  
5 engineering and attended MIT.

6           While at Howard University, my MIT advisor, Dr. Sheila  
7 Widnall invited me to attend her confirmation hearings for  
8 the Secretary of the Air Force. Further inspired, I  
9 focused on co-oping at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center.

10           My interest in aerospace and astronaut training took  
11 flight. It fueled and propelled me to earn a Master's and  
12 Ph.D. in mechanical engineering. I was initially unaware  
13 when nominated by the President that if this -- if I was  
14 confirmed to the position, I would be the first Assistant  
15 Secretary of Defense for Science and Technology. I humbly  
16 assert that setting precedents is comfortable territory for  
17 me.

18           Today, I feel grounded by my educational foundation,  
19 my robust experiences. My CV includes being a STEM  
20 educator, board leader in academia and science, a technical  
21 management leader at NASA for more than 30 years.

22           In my roles as engineer, scientist, technologist,  
23 program manager, new business lead, policymaker, and  
24 ambassador, I have remained mindful that as we innovate,  
25 design, and build, we must develop impactful, cost-

1 effective, and reliable solutions for the knowledge and the  
2 security of the entire world.

3 In my work, I have contributed groundbreaking  
4 discoveries like the Big Bang theory, black holes,  
5 gravitational waves, and modeling and monitoring climate  
6 change, and the sun's radiation, and finally, the Moon and  
7 Mars exploration.

8 These scientific contributions, along with my ongoing  
9 work in infusing advancing manufacturing, incorporating  
10 innovative sensor and detector technologies for missions  
11 like the James Webb Space Telescope, accelerating the use  
12 of CubeSats in aerospace vehicles, and growing quantum  
13 capabilities closely aligned with the Department of  
14 Defense's critical science and technology areas.

15 If confirmed, I would pursue my vision to share the  
16 technical success stories of DOD's essential workforce and  
17 their STEM ecosystem partners, though this would profoundly  
18 impact our service members morale, grow public confidence,  
19 encourage small businesses, and inspire a recruit stream.

20 I would also focus on broad STEM outreach across the  
21 globe to inspire, hire, train, and retain the next  
22 generation of engineers and scientists. This is essential  
23 for the growth of our entire military workforce. I am  
24 eager to leverage my in-depth experience of supporting  
25 small businesses to deliver competitive technology to the

1 Department.

2 My vision for SBIR, STTR would provide opportunities  
3 for small business innovators to bridge the Valley of Death  
4 and deliver the rewards of our Government's investments,  
5 all while securing our innovative technology.

6 In this complex and rapidly evolving security  
7 environment, my vision aims to boost our technical  
8 advantages by shepherding our critical and emerging  
9 technologies, and strengthening our industrial  
10 manufacturing base, and protecting our intellectual  
11 property.

12 If confirmed, I will ensure the work of my portfolio  
13 is always aligned with the National Defense Strategy, and I  
14 will prioritize vital disruptive technologies like  
15 hypersonic weapons, artificial intelligence, and quantum  
16 computing.

17 Reflecting on my time at NASA, I am grateful for the  
18 honor and privilege of doing what I love. The new  
19 opportunity would allow me to continue my Government  
20 service. Today, I humbly step forward, committed to  
21 pivoting my diplomatic talents, academic networks,  
22 technical knowledge, and experience to grow our workforce  
23 in the service of the Department of Defense.

24 I am equipped to identify technology gaps, safeguard  
25 our innovative technology, balance risk, and rapidly

1 transition novel systems to our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen,  
2 Marines, and Guardians. I greatly respect the committee's  
3 bipartisan approach.

4 I commit to sustaining regular and transparent dialog  
5 with Congress, for we share the same goal, deterring our  
6 adversaries and maintaining the nation's security. Thank  
7 you for this opportunity, and I look forward to your  
8 questions.

9 [The prepared statement of Dr. Ericsson follows:]

10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25



1 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Dr. Ericsson. I have a  
2 series of standard questions for civilian nominees. You  
3 may respond in unison. Have you adhered to applicable laws  
4 and regulations governing conflicts of interest?

5 Dr. Schmidt: Yes.

6 Ms. Dalton: Yes.

7 Dr. Ericsson: Yes.

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

11 Dr. Schmidt: No.

12 Ms. Dalton: No.

13 Dr. Ericsson: No.

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

21 Dr. Schmidt: Yes.

22 Ms. Dalton: Yes.

23 Dr. Ericsson: Yes.

24 Chairman Reed: Do you agree to provide records,  
25 documents, and electronic communications in a timely manner

1 when requested by this committee, its subcommittees, or  
2 other appropriate committees of Congress, and to consult  
3 with the requester regarding the basis for any good faith,  
4 delay, or denial in providing such records?

5 Dr. Schmidt: Yes.

6 Ms. Dalton: Yes.

7 Dr. Ericsson: Yes.

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

13 Dr. Schmidt: Yes.

14 Ms. Dalton: Yes.

15 Dr. Ericsson: Yes.

16 Chairman Reed: Will you cooperate in providing  
17 witnesses and briefers in response to Congressional  
18 request?

19 Dr. Schmidt: Yes.

20 Ms. Dalton: Yes.

21 Dr. Ericsson: Yes.

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

24 Dr. Schmidt: Yes.

25 Ms. Dalton: Yes.

1 Dr. Ericsson: Yes.

2 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much. Secretary  
3 Dalton, did you play any role in what happened with the  
4 border wall material?

5 Ms. Dalton: No, Senator, I did not.

6 Chairman Reed: Now, well who made those decisions?

7 Ms. Dalton: Senator, on day one of the Biden  
8 Administration, the President issued an Executive Order to  
9 halt the construction of the border barrier wall.

10 The decision then on what to do with the materials  
11 fell to the Defense Logistics Agency after it declared  
12 those materials as excess property.

13 Chairman Reed: And are you aware of why they made the  
14 decisions they did to that process?

15 Ms. Dalton: Chairman, my understanding is that DLA  
16 followed the law required by the Federal property  
17 management regulations. The material was first offered to  
18 four different entities, per the DLA process, for it to be  
19 then declared as excess.

20 First to DOD, then to other Federal Departments and  
21 agencies, then to State and local government agencies and  
22 nonprofit organizations. And finally, as a last chance  
23 opportunity, for the entities previously described to claim  
24 the materials.

25 At each stage of that process, all declined to take

1 the materials, including the State of Texas.

2 Chairman Reed: So, you would know who decided the  
3 price of any of these materials at any time?

4 Ms. Dalton: No, Senator, that does not fall in my  
5 portfolio.

6 Chairman Reed: You responded to a letter written by  
7 Republican colleagues, and why did you do so, since it  
8 appears you had no real responsibilities for the disposal  
9 of the material?

10 Ms. Dalton: Chairman, because there was a  
11 Congressional inquiry addressed to me on the actions that  
12 took place, and because I take the oversight role of  
13 Congress incredibly seriously as a Senate confirmed  
14 official, I felt members of this committee who wrote the  
15 letter deserve a thorough response.

16 And so, I asked my team and undertook a fact finding  
17 mission across the Department, working with other  
18 components that do have oversight over these processes and  
19 materials and have the decision making responsibilities in  
20 this matter to get answers to the questions that had been  
21 posed to me in the letter.

22 I collected that information, the best available that  
23 we had at the time, and used that to provide a response to  
24 the letter.

25 Chairman Reed: Thank you. Dr. Schmidt, AI is rapidly

1 encroaching upon everything we do. And how will you try to  
2 integrate AI in our testing, particularly the JADC2 system,  
3 which is, we hope, the critical interface between all of  
4 our services? You can bring that closer too.

5 Dr. Schmidt: Chairman Reed, I have worked extensively  
6 with artificial intelligence over many years, and it is a  
7 very promising and also a very challenging technology.  
8 With respect to systems that are emerging for Kill-Webs,  
9 sixth generation fighter airplane programs, the JADC2  
10 environment.

11 It is crucially important that those systems be able  
12 to use advanced for "intelligent techniques," smart  
13 techniques, autonomous techniques. We are already doing  
14 quite a bit with artificial intelligence in a lot of our  
15 systems for computer vision, but being able to test those  
16 systems is going to involve many challenges.

17 If I am confirmed in this position, I will continue to  
18 work with other parties at the DOD, such as the Chief Data  
19 and Information Office, and the CAO's office to ensure that  
20 we are able to use artificial intelligence in a responsible  
21 but effective way.

22 And this includes being able to provide training and  
23 expertise for the DOD staff, as well as ensuring that the  
24 systems we put in the field that use AI do so in a way that  
25 won't cause more harm than good.

1 Chairman Reed: Thank you, doctor. Dr. Ericsson, one  
2 of the key challenges you have already mentioned is  
3 increasing the STEM workforce and improving their skills  
4 and retaining that talent, because one of the things we  
5 find is that when someone works successfully, that they are  
6 being offered quite astounding pays outside. So, could you  
7 give us an idea of what you would intend to do?

8 Dr. Ericsson: Thank you, Senator, for that question.  
9 I am very passionate about our future STEM workforce. They  
10 are our most valuable asset for the cultivation and the  
11 current recruitment of the next generation.

12 I say we should inspire, hire, train, and retain. Not  
13 only should we be concerned about who is entering the  
14 workforce and maintaining it, but we also want to make sure  
15 that we retain them. I say, let's cast a wide net. First  
16 of all, 50 percent of our population is women, so it is  
17 very important to be inclusive in including women in those  
18 careers.

19 We often focus on HBCUs. Historically black colleges  
20 and universities provide us with 25 percent of the African  
21 Americans in the STEM disciplines, so therefore it is  
22 really important to tap into those sources as well.

23 Personally, what my interns from the summer -- I had 17  
24 different interns from all over this country, many of them  
25 from the States that you represent.

1           It is very important for us to consider these diverse  
2 thoughts because we have unique experiences from the  
3 environments we are groomed in, and it will ultimately be  
4 very important ultimately to have them in our workforce so  
5 we can deliver the best technology for our troops.

6           Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Dr. Ericsson.  
7 Senator Wicker, please.

8           Senator Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary  
9 Dalton, you answered a standard question that the chair  
10 asks every nominee about timely responses to questions for  
11 the record and also other inquiries.

12           I have a letter from you here dated August 1st,  
13 thanking me for my letter of March 15th. So, I wrote you,  
14 in consultation with other members of the committee and  
15 staff on March 15th.

16           So, it is April, May, June, July, and half of July  
17 then, that long to get me a letter dated August 1st. Do  
18 you consider that a timely response?

19           Ms. Dalton: Thank you, Ranking Member Wicker. I take  
20 my responsibilities as Senate confirmed official very  
21 seriously, and that includes providing you and other  
22 members of Congress with a timely response. For the letter  
23 in question, as I described to the chairman --

24           Senator Wicker: Okay, well, if you will, you don't  
25 have to repeat what you said, because I have very little

1 time. Let me just say I don't consider that a timely  
2 response.

3 And also, it was an inaccurate response. It says in  
4 paragraph three, a decision on the disposition of the  
5 remaining materials will be made in accordance with  
6 applicable law and policy. We considered that such an  
7 unsatisfactory answer that the entire Republican membership  
8 of this committee sent a letter directly to the Secretary  
9 of Defense, Lloyd Austin.

10 And we didn't wait forever to get that letter done  
11 either. Later on, that month, we sent the letter. And in  
12 response to that, we find out that on August 1st, when you  
13 wrote the letter, it said a decision will be made, the  
14 decision had actually been made and title to the property  
15 was transferred to Iron Planet, which is a broker that  
16 sells off excess property by the end of April 2023.

17 Now, we wrote you on March 15th, and some month and a  
18 half later, when perhaps this decision could have been  
19 stopped, the Department -- somewhere in the Department the  
20 decision was made to transfer these already built portions  
21 of the wall to a third party to auction off at pennies on  
22 the dollar.

23 Do you concede that the statement you made in your  
24 letter about a decision going to be made, will be made, was  
25 inaccurate?



1 Ms. Dalton: Senator, the August letter was based on  
2 the information collected from other components across the  
3 Department of Defense, and it was the best available  
4 information that we had at the time.

5 Senator Wicker: Who gave you incorrect information?  
6 I would like to know.

7 Ms. Dalton: It was drawn from several components  
8 across the Department, to include the Defense Logistics  
9 Agency, the Department of the Army, Acquisition and  
10 Sustainment. There are a number of components that have  
11 roles to play in this matter, Senator.

12 Senator Wicker: Well, you know, this is actually  
13 emblematic of the way this committee, minority or majority,  
14 has been treated, and members of the House and Senate have  
15 been treated during this Administration.

16 A lengthy, lengthy time to answer a question. And of  
17 course, the chair's standard questions say timely. But  
18 that many months to answer this, to tell us that a decision  
19 is still going to be made -- we find out that a month and a  
20 half after we brought this to your attention, they had time  
21 enough to then make a decision to sell these valuable  
22 portions of the border wall for pennies on the dollar.

23 To me, it is unsatisfactory, and it is just like the  
24 -- it is just like the way your Department and your office  
25 did with regard to the Chinese spy balloon. You said, you

1 take your oversight responsibilities seriously, and you  
2 -- after our letter, you entered into this long fact-  
3 finding process. It doesn't appear that you did that with  
4 regard to all of the questions, regarding NORAD's lack of  
5 established identification, characterization, and handoff  
6 procedures.

7 And so, my time is expired here, but I just find your  
8 performance in your previous role so unsatisfactory that I  
9 have real doubts that it is going to get any better in an  
10 enhanced role. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Wicker. Senator  
12 Shaheen, please.

13 Senator Shaheen: Good morning to all of our nominees.  
14 Congratulations on your nominations and thank you for your  
15 willingness to continue to serve this country.

16 Dr. Schmidt, Pease National Guard Base in New  
17 Hampshire, the 157th Air Refueling Wing, was the first  
18 National Guard base to get the KC-46 refueling tanker.  
19 That was in 2019, we received our first plane. We are  
20 still waiting for the new remote vision system to work in  
21 that tanker.

22 As I understand, you will be the person who will  
23 continue to follow whether that remote vision system gets  
24 completed properly. Do you commit to staying on top of  
25 that and keeping this committee and me informed about what

1 the progress is?

2 Dr. Schmidt: Yes, Senator, absolutely.

3 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. Dr. Ericsson, in New  
4 Hampshire, we have a regenerative center called Region  
5 Valley in Manchester that is working on regenerative  
6 medicine and has gotten significant contributions from the  
7 Department of Defense.

8 We also have at VAE a new microelectronics center that  
9 was designated as a semiconductor manufacturing facility by  
10 the CHIPS and Science Act. They received a significant  
11 grant.

12 Can you talk about how you envision leveraging these  
13 kinds of tech hubs and the CHIPS and Science grant  
14 recipients to ensure that our investments in semiconductor  
15 manufacturing are done well and that we use the innovation  
16 that is happening there in a way that benefits the -- our  
17 security?

18 Dr. Ericsson: Sure, Senator. Thank you for those  
19 questions. I just wanted to mention that it is because of  
20 the Pease Air Force Base that I actually ended up in  
21 aerospace engineering during a visit as a high school  
22 student.

23 So, the CHIPS Act is -- I must say thank you to the  
24 committee for invoking the CHIPS Act. It is understanding.  
25 \$52 billion is a critical investment and a critical enabler

1 for us to be able to actually produce microchips on our  
2 -- in our United States regions.

3 It is, from my understanding, we are investing  
4 something like \$400 million over five years because we do  
5 recognize it will take time to build a lab to fab regional  
6 facilities. Microchip electronics are in everything that  
7 we utilize.

8 And we saw during the pandemic that it was  
9 particularly impactful because we were not able to provide  
10 those resources from outside of our borders, and it was  
11 almost crippling to our economy.

12 So, of course, I will commit to making sure that these  
13 things continue to grow. You mentioned one that I was not  
14 aware of in your State, but I look forward to working with  
15 that biotech partner and growing those capabilities which  
16 are very important and critical to delivering to our  
17 warfighters.

18 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you. Secretary Dalton,  
19 I mentioned the Pease 157th Air Refueling Wing received the  
20 first KC-46. Part of the reason that happened was because  
21 of the Air Force's active association structure, which  
22 allows our National Guard members to work with active duty.

23 During the pandemic, we lost that -- virtually that  
24 entire active duty component. Fortunately, those folks are  
25 back. But can you speak to why that structure is critical

1 and why it will be important to preserve that as we look  
2 going forward?

3 Ms. Dalton: Senator Shaheen, thank you for the  
4 question. In my current role, I know how valuable the  
5 National Guard is for our national defense and how they can  
6 support a range of missions for the Department of Defense  
7 working in lockstep oftentimes with our active duty forces.

8 I have seen that even at the Southwest border over the  
9 last year. With regards to the specific case you  
10 mentioned, while I am not familiar with the particulars in  
11 my current status, if confirmed, I would certainly look  
12 forward to leveraging the attributes of both the National  
13 Guard and the active duty, how we can bring them together  
14 for total force integration, to ensure we are leveraging  
15 the comparative advantages across the force as we move  
16 forward on modernization.

17 Senator Shaheen: Well, I hope we will continue where  
18 those -- that collaboration is working well, as it is in  
19 the 157th, that we will continue that force structure in a  
20 way that allows those units to continue to operate. And I  
21 hope that you will look at that very closely and ensure  
22 that that happens. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Shaheen. Senator  
24 Rounds, please.

25 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of

1 all, thank you, all of you, for your service to our  
2 country. I would like to begin just a -- Dr. Schmidt, what  
3 do you think the biggest challenges are that we face with  
4 regard to the ability to test and to analyze just exactly  
5 where our systems are at today? What is the shortcomings  
6 that we have to address?

7 Dr. Schmidt: Senator, some of the key challenges, as  
8 I am sure you are aware, are in cybersecurity. Our  
9 adversaries have very sophisticated capabilities  
10 offensively.

11 Our systems are getting more complicated, and they are  
12 only as strong as the weakest link, so making sure that we  
13 have the appropriate capabilities and workforce and tools  
14 to conduct advanced red team assessments is crucially  
15 important.

16 There is also a big challenge in terms of these new  
17 generation CONOPS, concept of operations, such as Kill-Webs  
18 and JADC2, which involve coordination between many  
19 different sensors and shooters where the whole is greater  
20 than the sum of its parts. Very important we have that  
21 capability.

22 As you can imagine, very difficult to test. So, we  
23 have to make sure once again, we have the right people with  
24 the right skills and the right test equipment in order to  
25 be able to ensure those systems work as designed.

1 Senator Rounds: We are not there right now, are we?

2 Dr. Schmidt: It is a continual process, and if  
3 confirmed, I commit to working very hard to make sure we  
4 get the right assets to address those challenging issues.

5 Senator Rounds: An ongoing process.

6 Dr. Schmidt: Absolutely.

7 Senator Rounds: Thank you. Dr. Ericsson, right now  
8 there is a sometimes they would suggest a Valley of Death  
9 with regard to the ability of small firms to be able to  
10 step up into the high technology areas and get past those  
11 first couple of months to years before their products are  
12 actually coming to market or being made available.

13 Can you talk a little bit about our needs here with  
14 regard to those startup companies and what we could perhaps  
15 do to allow more of them to be successful in bringing their  
16 products to market?

17 Dr. Ericsson: Senator Rounds, thank you for allowing  
18 me to talk about something that I have been working on at  
19 NASA Goddard Space Flight Center for some years, and across  
20 the agency as well.

21 There are really three components to the Valley of  
22 Death that I want to expand upon. There are more than one.  
23 There is partnerships and opportunities to work  
24 strategically to support our partners.

25 And then we must have patience. Technology does take

1 a while to develop. When I mentioned there were more than  
2 one, there are the early phases. If we don't identify  
3 those requirements early and bring in the potential long  
4 term partners, we end up struggling to make sure that we  
5 get what we want when we enter those later phases in our  
6 development, or what we call technology readiness levels.

7 There is also this aspect of test as we fly, as we  
8 say, and here we say test as we fight, because you really  
9 do want to test this new innovative technology in the  
10 environment that you envision for it later. So not kind of  
11 having those, oh wait a minute, we didn't do this exactly  
12 right and then have to take some steps back.

13 That of course needs resources and money. And then  
14 there is this step when you are potentially commercializing  
15 or mass producing. Often small businesses don't have that  
16 capability and we ultimately need to get thousands of them  
17 to our troops.

18 So, it is really going to be important to help to  
19 educate and to counsel small businesses along the way. I  
20 think that is one of the most important aspects. And then,  
21 on our side of the business where we really look at the  
22 cycles of funding -- sometimes small businesses get to that  
23 milestone and then the funding is not there because of  
24 either our phasing in our Congressional awards or other  
25 things that kind of hold us back.



1           So, if we could be able to look at some of those  
2 things, we will be able to help them to ultimately deliver  
3 what we need for our --

4           Senator Rounds: Oh, we -- look, we look forward to  
5 working with you to get that done.

6           Dr. Ericsson: Thank you.

7           Senator Rounds: Secretary Dalton, your nomination to  
8 be the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense  
9 passed the Senate Armed Services committee by a voice vote.

10           You were not controversial. Since that time, two  
11 items have happened that now call into question that  
12 confidence. The Ranking Member has identified very clearly  
13 the concerns with regard to the way that you responded to  
14 the issue of material at the Southern border, how it was  
15 handled, the assurances that were made that this was going  
16 to be handled in accordance to law, and yet it had already  
17 been completed.

18           It was not forthright to the committee. It really  
19 challenged the confidence that many of us had expressed in  
20 supporting your nomination to begin with. You have some  
21 work to do to regain that confidence. Let me ask about  
22 another item, and that is with regard to the Chinese spy  
23 balloon, which entered our airspace through Alaska, coming  
24 across Canada, back into the United States again.

25           This was under your watch. Were you in the line of,

1 or were you in the direct chain of command with regard to  
2 the decisions that were made not to shoot the balloon down  
3 until after it had left American airspace?

4 Ms. Dalton: Senator, I was one of the officials  
5 advising Secretary Austin. The best military advice to not  
6 shoot down the balloon over U.S. territory came from U.S.  
7 senior military officials.

8 Senator Rounds: Okay, look, I -- this is an area  
9 which you will be challenged on, on this particular one  
10 because it is a question of judgment and recommendations  
11 being made. I think between now and the time that a vote  
12 is held on your nomination, I think you have got some work  
13 to do to regain the confidence of a lot of the members on  
14 this committee. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Rounds. Senator  
16 Blumenthal, please.

17 Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thank you  
18 all for your service and your willingness to continue to  
19 serve. Ms. Dalton, I have read reports that Ukrainian  
20 pilots are now flying F-16s with instructors.

21 The Ukrainian Air Force spokesman, Yuriy Ihnat,  
22 apparently told Ukrainian TV broadcasters that Ukrainian  
23 pilots are now flying with those instructors. Could you  
24 please indicate how many Ukrainian pilots are flying and  
25 when they would be ready to actually fly F-16s in combat in

1 defense of Ukraine?

2 Ms. Dalton: Senator, thank you for the question. And  
3 the United States, and specifically the Department of  
4 Defense, is committed to supporting Ukraine in its fight  
5 against Russia and its invasion of Ukraine. On the  
6 specific question that you raise, I don't have the  
7 particular details to answer today but I would be happy to  
8 follow up to provide that information.

9 Senator Blumenthal: Could you do that within the  
10 week?

11 Ms. Dalton: Yes, Senator.

12 Senator Blumenthal: And I think you understand the  
13 question. I would like details on when these pilots are  
14 going to be ready, how many are now flying, what the status  
15 of the training is both in the United States, apparently in  
16 Arizona, and in Romania, and other countries where they may  
17 be under instruction.

18 You make reference in your testimony and again in the  
19 answers to specific questions to steps you would take to  
20 recruit and retain pilots, one of the great challenges  
21 right now. Can you be more specific about why the Air  
22 Force faces that shortage?

23 Obviously commercial demand for pilots is very much a  
24 factor. But also, what can be done to strengthen  
25 recruitment and retention?

1 Ms. Dalton: Senator, thank you for raising this  
2 question. And if confirmed, this would be a priority area  
3 of focus for me, specifically on the pilot shortage. It is  
4 due, as you noted, to a combination of factors.

5 It is the competitiveness of the commercial airline  
6 industry and the pay and benefits that they offer. It is  
7 the availability of instructors for the simulators that are  
8 needed to train pilots. And it is also the training  
9 aircraft availability.

10 So, all of those factors coming together make it quite  
11 challenging right now to produce enough pilots. But I  
12 understand that the primary Air Force is working to address  
13 that, and you would have my commitment to enable that as  
14 well.

15 More broadly for recruitment, I think there is a  
16 number of things that we can do to strengthen the Air  
17 Force's recruitment approach. One is to ensure that we are  
18 maximizing the full suite of outreach tools through social  
19 media, both traditional and nontraditional forms.

20 I understand the Department of the Air Force is  
21 established an e-recruiter cell and is doing a lot more  
22 digital engagement to try to reach hard to reach  
23 communities across the nation.

24 But my approach would be to leverage best practices,  
25 come up with innovative solutions, and establish new

1 partnerships to help tackle this challenge. And certainly,  
2 would look forward to working with you to address it.

3 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you. I would like to ask  
4 all the members of the panel this question. Consistently  
5 and constantly, we hear about the lack of capacity in our  
6 defense industrial base, whether it is 155 millimeter  
7 shells or artillery or drones.

8 We hear about shortages of skilled manpower, other  
9 kinds of limitations on our defense industrial base. What  
10 do you think is necessary to increase that capacity?

11 Dr. Ericsson: I will kind of -- thank you for that  
12 opportunity to provide input here. It is again inspiring,  
13 hiring, retraining, and then retaining our current  
14 workforce. I think once you have set that example of  
15 retaining and showing how it is a great place to work, it  
16 is exciting, an opportunity to really help our country, I  
17 think that that has often been what captures someone's  
18 attention as they begin to look for a job.

19 I look at programs like the SMART program, which  
20 offers funding for students working as interns as well and  
21 then they come and work by giving back their time. It is  
22 similar to what we call co-op or the pathways program for  
23 the Federal agencies. So, something of that nature would  
24 really help us to grow those ranks.

25 Senator Blumenthal: Any others?

1           Dr. Schmidt:  Sure.  Yes, Senator.  So, I will just  
2 focus very quickly on one area.  We need to find ways of  
3 being able to leverage our expertise in commercial software  
4 to bring it to the defense industry base in reliable and  
5 effective and safe ways.

6           Obviously, that is a challenge because they don't test  
7 the systems quite the way we do often.  So being able to  
8 make sure that the testing and evaluation community can  
9 apply the appropriate testing techniques, tactics, and  
10 tools to make sure the commercial software works  
11 effectively in our military systems is crucially important.

12          Senator Blumenthal:  My time has expired, so I will  
13 welcome any other thoughts any of the witnesses have on  
14 that point in writing.  Thank you.

15          Chairman Reed:  Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.  
16 Senator Ernst, please.

17          Senator Ernst:  Yes.  Thank you, Mr. Chair.  And good  
18 morning, Secretary Dalton, Dr. Schmidt, and Dr. Ericsson.  
19 It is very nice to have you all here today and thank you  
20 for your service to our great nation.

21          Ms. Dalton, we are going to follow on with a theme  
22 that you have heard from many of the members already today.  
23 And that is, starting with the crisis at our Southern  
24 border.  So, you may have noticed in the news we have a lot  
25 of candidates that came through Iowa.  Many of them are

1 talking about the issues that are really important to  
2 Americans. Top two issues, one is the economy, and the  
3 other is the crisis at the Southern border.

4 So, Ms. Dalton, in your time as the Assistant  
5 Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Hemispheric  
6 Affairs at the Department of Defense, she played a key role  
7 in the Department's plans regarding the disposal of unused  
8 border wall construction materials to protect the homeland.

9 And at the end of DOD's disposition process to  
10 transfer these materials, there were about -- no, exactly  
11 14,795 steel tubes remaining. Do you know how much the  
12 taxpayers initially paid for these unused materials?

13 Ms. Dalton: Senator, thank you for raising this  
14 really important challenge, which is the crisis at our  
15 Southern border. In my time as Assistant Secretary, I have  
16 conducted regular visits to the Southwest border to  
17 understand the strain that is being placed on our States,  
18 local authorities, and border patrol.

19 And just in Fiscal Year 2023, the Department of  
20 Defense has provided \$608 million in border security  
21 support to DHS and counter-narcotics support to DHS and  
22 other Federal Departments and agencies.

23 Senator Ernst: But the question would be, do you know  
24 how much the materials cost?

25 Ms. Dalton: So, for the specific materials, Senator,

1 I know that in our August letter that was seeking to be  
2 responsive, collecting information from across the  
3 Department because this is not in my portfolio, I  
4 understand from the Defense Logistics Agency that at that  
5 time, it was \$130,000.

6 Senator Ernst: Okay. That was to safeguard those  
7 materials. The actual cost to the taxpayers for those  
8 materials was \$4.4 million. And then with the disposition  
9 through the DLA, do you know how much the Department  
10 auctioned them off for?

11 Ms. Dalton: Senator, I would have to defer to the  
12 Defense Logistics Agency because they are the lead  
13 proponent in the Department of Defense for this issue. It  
14 is not in my portfolio, Senator.

15 Senator Ernst: So, I guess I am struggling to  
16 understand because maybe your portfolio doesn't include  
17 defense of the homeland?

18 Ms. Dalton: Senator, it includes defense support of  
19 civil authorities, which is when the Department of Homeland  
20 Security sends requests to the Department of Defense for  
21 support, we evaluate those requests to determine if they  
22 are legal, if it is appropriate use of the U.S. military  
23 per posse comitatus, if it is going to impact training and  
24 readiness for our U.S. military given our warfighting  
25 primary mission, and then we provide those recommendations



1 based on the input of components across the Department of  
2 Defense to the Secretary of Defense for a decision. I have  
3 no role to play, Senator --

4 Senator Ernst: So civil authorities are not used in  
5 constructing border materials or would not have any regards  
6 for securing our Southern border?

7 Ms. Dalton: We have not received a request from the  
8 Department of Homeland Security to use DOD forces in that  
9 manner. And so, that request has not come through my  
10 office.

11 Senator Ernst: Okay. So based on the information  
12 that was provided to us by the Department of Defense, back  
13 to the original question, the materials were actually sold  
14 to a private buyer for \$156,000.

15 So, I understand you are saying it is not under your  
16 portfolio and yet you responded to a letter that was sent  
17 in regards to this. So, I guess you can understand why the  
18 committee is having a hard time understanding how you are  
19 saying somebody else is in charge of this, and yet you are  
20 responding to a written request from Congress.

21 Ms. Dalton: Senator, I was sent a letter from several  
22 members of Congress, and because I am a Senate confirmed  
23 official, I take that very seriously.

24 Although this issue is not in my portfolio, I went on  
25 a fact finding mission with my team to collect inputs from

1 across the Department of Defense from those that have  
2 oversight and responsibility for this issue in order to  
3 answer the questions that I received --

4 Senator Ernst: Okay. I appreciate that. I am  
5 running out of time. So, what I want our taxpayers to  
6 understand though, is it seems that we have a number of  
7 different entities within the Department of Defense that  
8 are completely siloed.

9 And while you are doing a fact finding mission, you  
10 know, across the board and going to other Departments, you  
11 didn't take the time to question and follow up in a timely  
12 manner. It did take about five months to respond to that  
13 letter.

14 You simply could have responded, since you take  
15 Congressional oversight very seriously, you could have  
16 responded back to the chairman or back to the ranking  
17 member stating that this belongs to another entity within  
18 the Department of Defense. But you did go on that fact  
19 finding mission, taking some of that responsibility upon  
20 yourselves.

21 And unfortunately for our taxpayers, we now say that  
22 these materials have been sold for pennies on the dollar,  
23 about \$0.03 for every dollar that the Federal Government  
24 spent on it, and yet we have some additional auctions that  
25 are coming up where people are reselling the materials that

1 they just bought from DLA, and they have been receiving ten  
2 times as much as what they paid to get those tubes from the  
3 Federal Government.

4 So, there is a big scheme going on here where people  
5 are making a ton of money off of the taxpayers. And so, we  
6 have got to get to the bottom of this. I appreciate your  
7 answers in the follow up five months after the letter was  
8 sent, but more to follow. Thank you. Thank you, Mr.  
9 Chair.

10 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Ernst. Senator  
11 Hirono, please.

12 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And  
13 congratulations to each of our nominees. Welcome to your  
14 families. I ask the following two initial questions  
15 relating to a nominee's fitness to serve for all of the  
16 nominees who come before any of my committees on which I  
17 sit.

18 And we will start with Dr. Schmidt and just go right  
19 down the line. Since you became a legal adult, have you  
20 ever made unwanted requests for sexual favors or committed  
21 any verbal and physical harassment or assault of a sexual  
22 nature?

23 Dr. Schmidt: No.

24 Ms. Dalton: No.

25 Dr. Ericsson: No.

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

3           Dr. Schmidt: No.

4           Ms. Dalton: No.

5           Dr. Ericsson: No.

6           Senator Hirono: For all of you, cruise hypersonic and  
7 ballistic missiles continue to present a complex threat,  
8 particularly in the INDOPACOM AOR.

9           And the Department of Defense's approach to missile  
10 defense in this region is split across multiple  
11 organizations, including Missile Defense Agency, Space  
12 Development Agency, the Air Force, INDOPACOM and NORTHCOM.

13           This begs the question of whether there is duplication  
14 of effort or stovepipes in the technology developed  
15 -- technological development required for this important  
16 mission. For all of you, how would you work across  
17 agencies to ensure that the Department of Defense is  
18 developing the most advanced solution to our missile  
19 defense challenges?

20           Dr. Schmidt: Senator, it is very important that we  
21 have effective missile defense, particularly for the new  
22 generation of hypersonic missiles.

23           Speaking from an operational testing perspective, I  
24 would worked very closely with members of the Test Resource  
25 Management Center as well as the service labs in order to

1 make sure we had the appropriate environments, the long  
2 range test corridors for doing the testing, to make sure  
3 that we have the appropriate sky based assets, such as sky  
4 range to be able to test the information effectively, and  
5 also make sure that the workforce, both in the operational  
6 testing community and other parts, have the appropriate  
7 skills and resources to do their job effectively, if  
8 confirmed.

9 Senator Hirono: Senator Dalton.

10 Ms. Dalton: Senator, thank you. And I appreciate you  
11 highlighting this critical issue. Having worked on the  
12 missile defense review, I know how vital it is for us to  
13 address the missile defense for our homeland and across  
14 regions of great importance.

15 I understand that the Department of the Air Force is  
16 -- the acquisition authority for air cruise missile defense  
17 of the homeland has been working with OSD Acquisition and  
18 Sustainment to determine the appropriate acquisition and  
19 management activities that are necessary to integrate the  
20 collective efforts across the Department.

21 And the success of the Joint Force can only come from  
22 the full integration of resources and capabilities. That  
23 starts with defining what our priorities are that flow from  
24 our strategic guidance documents such as the MDR and the  
25 NDS, and then pulling those through our program budget

1 review process every year. And so, you have my commitment  
2 to do that.

3 Senator Hirono: Since the Air Force is the entity,  
4 but we have all these other entities involved, and when  
5 that happens, there is a tendency for people not to be  
6 getting together. So, my expectation is that should you be  
7 confirmed, this is an area missile defense, and  
8 particularly of course with regard to Hawaii, is an area  
9 that you will pay attention to.

10 One more thing for you, Secretary Dalton. I was at  
11 Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam, and I saw the disrepair of  
12 the Hickam Airfield parking ramp, which endangers the Air  
13 Force readiness -- impacts AF's ability to project power  
14 from Hawaii.

15 Now, we need all of the services commitment to ensure  
16 infrastructure will support mission readiness. And I found  
17 that was just totally unacceptable that these ramp areas  
18 are -- cannot support the kind of planes, the planes that  
19 we need to take off should there be any -- anything  
20 relating to, for example, Taiwan.

21 So, Ms. Dalton, very briefly, how do you intend to  
22 address infrastructure across the Air Force? And I would  
23 really like to see a request and leading up to the next  
24 NDAA about the -- in particular with regard to the ramp  
25 situation at Hickam.

1 Ms. Dalton: Senator, I agree with you that we need to  
2 ensure that we have resilient and operable infrastructure,  
3 particularly for the Indo-Pacific given the PRC pacing  
4 challenge. And the runway that you highlight is one of  
5 those critical nodes for our access basing and overflight.

6 And so, if confirmed, you have my commitment to ensure  
7 that we are making the necessary investments to ensure that  
8 we have resiliency in our infrastructure to meet our  
9 operational objectives.

10 Senator Hirono: My time is up, but Mr. Chairman, I  
11 just want to mention. For Dr. Ericsson, I am very glad  
12 that you are so focused on the need to support STEM,  
13 particularly for women and minorities, because we are not  
14 paying attention to, I would say, 50 percent of our  
15 population.

16 And I actually have a bill that would support and  
17 promote STEM education for women and minorities, and that  
18 bill happens to be in the Judiciary committee, but  
19 obviously, you have a lot of familiarity with how important  
20 STEM backgrounds are for our hiring purposes and the people  
21 that we need for DOD so that we can keep our competitive  
22 advantage.

23 So, should you be confirmed, I am really going to be  
24 very interested in what kind of programmatic things you are  
25 going to pursue to make sure that in your, what we call in

1 Hawaii, kuleana, your area of responsibility, that you are  
2 very much promoting STEM for women and minorities. Thank  
3 you, Mr. Chairman.

4 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Hirono. Senator  
5 Tuberville, please.

6 Senator Tuberville: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks  
7 for being here today. Huge responsibility. I think we all  
8 hopefully well understand here and your position that we  
9 all -- we don't work for a President, we don't work for a  
10 party, we work for the taxpayers and the citizens of this  
11 country.

12 I have been here three years. We are going on \$1  
13 trillion a year budget in the military. The biggest threat  
14 to our national security is going to be our debt. We will  
15 be at \$40 trillion before we know it. And so, you all have  
16 huge responsibilities protecting our country, building the  
17 best military ever, and also making sure that we are able  
18 to afford it in the future.

19 Dr. Ericsson, I am proud of what you have been saying  
20 about STEM. I am from Alabama, Huntsville. You have been  
21 in Huntsville several times being at NASA. We are huge in  
22 the ESOP business, you know, employee owned small  
23 businesses.

24 What are your thoughts about those? And again, my  
25 thoughts of just knowing what I know about Huntsville, with



1 400 or 500 of them, we couldn't survive. You know,  
2 anything to do with NASA and missile defense, if we didn't  
3 have the small businesses and take care of them, make sure  
4 that they are competitive.

5 Dr. Ericsson: Senator Tuberville, thank you for  
6 acknowledging our Huntsville facilities. I have also had  
7 the fortune of having an Alabama student this year working  
8 with me, an intern. I wrote 17 different recommendations  
9 for him, and he is now in grad school.

10 So, it is critical, the small business. I believe  
11 that America is built on the back of small businesses. We  
12 don't get to big without small, right. And so, for me, it  
13 has been something that I have been very vehemently, you  
14 know, supporting because that community is -- and it is  
15 just so important.

16 So, my ideas are to listen, learn, and share, to  
17 create roadshows and workshops to help small businesses  
18 through this onerous process that they often have to invoke  
19 on to just get selected, and then also helping them through  
20 the valleys of death that we have identified.

21 It is critical that we are ultimately going to provide  
22 other sources of resources like venture capitalism,  
23 commercial industry, partnering with them to maybe bring  
24 that to bid and manufacture.

25 So, I look at several different ways that we hope we

1 will support those small businesses and ultimately provide  
2 the innovative technology we need.

3 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. Secretary Dalton, I  
4 am sure you are fed up a little bit with this border wall.  
5 We all are. I know people in Alabama that just bought  
6 border wall for \$0.10 on the dollar, \$300,000 worth for  
7 \$30,000. Razor wire for \$0.20 on the dollar.

8 The American taxpayer, I mean, we are all in this  
9 together. They don't deserve this. They don't deserve to  
10 pay this top dollar and then lose money on something that  
11 we probably should be using anyway.

12 And you are getting ready to go into a job that is  
13 going to control \$200 billion in the Air Force. And as you  
14 get into this job, if confirmed, hopefully you will look  
15 back going, hey, I have got to do a better job. Whether it  
16 is my responsibility or somebody else's, we all see what is  
17 going on.

18 And so, we have got to protect our country. We got to  
19 protect the taxpayer. Dr. Ericsson, what is your  
20 assessment of the defense systems that we have sent to  
21 Ukraine and Israel, the success that we have had? What is  
22 your thoughts?

23 Dr. Ericsson: Senator, did you mean to direct that  
24 Dr. Schmidt --?

25 Senator Tuberville: I mean, Dr. Schmidt, Dr. Schmidt,

1 yes.

2 Dr. Ericsson: Thank you.

3 Dr. Schmidt: Senator Tuberville, I have not had a  
4 chance to understand yet, because I haven't been confirmed,  
5 what we are actually providing to Ukraine. But if  
6 confirmed this position, I will take a very careful look at  
7 that, especially from the point of view of ensuring that  
8 the systems that we do provide are effectively -- are  
9 effective, suitable, survivable, and lethal. And would be  
10 happy to meet with you and your staff.

11 Senator Tuberville: The one thing I want you to look  
12 into is that recently I met with some sailors, some naval  
13 officers that have been on some of these ships, shooting  
14 down some of these drones in the Red Sea.

15 And their concern is we are spending \$1 million on a  
16 missile shooting down a \$5,000 drone. And that is  
17 something we can't afford. So eventually we have got to  
18 get to the point where -- we understand that we don't need  
19 to lose any vessel.

20 We got to make sure that we protect ourselves. But we  
21 also need to be able to identify and use the right things  
22 that we need to use that are not costly, because as I said,  
23 we are getting close to \$1 trillion. What is your thoughts  
24 on that?

25 Dr. Schmidt: Senator Tuberville, that is an

1    incredibly important issue.  As I understand it, there is a  
2    lot of work on lighter weight, cheaper, yet still effective  
3    weapon systems such as directed energy.  Many of those  
4    weapon systems are based on advanced R&D.

5           I would be very committed, if confirmed, to making  
6    sure the testing procedures we used for those systems, make  
7    sure that they are, in fact, capable of doing their job at,  
8    as you mentioned, a fraction of the cost in order to  
9    protect the warfighters who are in harm's way.

10           Senator Tuberville:  Thank you.  And one other thing I  
11    just want to say real quick is saving money, but we spent a  
12    lot of money, and we need to have the best, I will say  
13    that.  But, for 10 years we have been trying to build this  
14    KC-46, and we continue to give a company a second and third  
15    and fourth chance.

16           Talking to Admiral Aquilino in the Indo-Pacific, we  
17    need a long range tanker.  We have got to have -- and to  
18    continue to give a company second, third, fourth, fifth  
19    chances to build something that it obviously can't build,  
20    we need to sometimes look at another alternative.

21           So, hope you would do that well, you, Secretary  
22    Dalton, you, Dr. Schmidt when you get in your position.

23           Dr. Schmidt:  Absolutely, Senator, yes.  I will do  
24    that.

25           Senator Tuberville:  Thank you.  Thank you, Chairman.

1 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Tuberville.

2 Senator King, please.

3 Senator King: I want to follow up on Senator  
4 Tuberville's questions. It is actually worse than he said.  
5 The missiles that we are using to shoot down a \$2,000 drone  
6 cost \$2 to \$4 million apiece. That is like shooting a duck  
7 with a howitzer.

8 And we are woefully behind on the issue of directed  
9 energy. Dr. Ericsson, that is one of the areas where we  
10 have -- hypersonics and directed energy, we have lost the  
11 race, or we are badly losing the race.

12 There is a ship now, to you Dr. Schmidt, there is a  
13 ship called USS Preble that has directed energy capability.  
14 It is in San Diego. It ought to be in the Red Sea. Don't  
15 you think the Red Sea would be a good place to test the  
16 ship right now rather than on who knows what in the  
17 Pacific?

18 Dr. Schmidt: Senator, I don't have enough knowledge  
19 to know what state of readiness that system is in. But to  
20 your point, the faster we can get these systems to the  
21 fight and make sure they are going to work when they get  
22 there, the better.

23 Senator King: Well, my understanding is that this  
24 ship is in testing and training in San Diego. Then it is  
25 going to Japan. I hope you will take back to the

1 Department that maybe it ought to go to the Red Sea, so we  
2 are not spending \$2 million for every bullet that we are  
3 firing at \$2,000 Houthi drones.

4 Dr. Ericsson, hypersonics and directed energy. We got  
5 a lot of catch up to do. This should be a hair on fire  
6 urgent priority. Do you agree?

7 Dr. Ericsson: Senator, yes I do. I am always excited  
8 when I hear about hypersonics, and I am hoping that maybe  
9 some of the technology we are developing at NASA,  
10 particularly with the X-59, if there is ways that we can  
11 infuse that and bring together the two different agencies,  
12 the Department of Defense and our agency to maybe further  
13 that technology.

14 Senator King: Well, the other piece is defense  
15 against hypersonics. That is another place where we have  
16 fallen down. Chinese hypersonic advantage renders a lot of  
17 our forward deployment strategy in the Pacific ineffective  
18 if we don't have a defense against their hypersonic  
19 missiles. I hope defense against hypersonics is a high  
20 priority as well.

21 Dr. Ericsson: Yes, sir. I will definitely -- it is  
22 part of my portfolio to make sure we transition that  
23 critical technology early. And so, I will work with  
24 -- across the Departments to help us do that.

25 Senator King: I would like to see urgency here. Now,

1 you mentioned several times about small businesses. We  
2 have had testimony before this committee, and I have talked  
3 to a number of small businesses in the tech sector, that  
4 have simply given up doing business with the Department of  
5 Defense. Too much bureaucracy, too much forms, too much  
6 time.

7 So, if you are serious about tapping the energy and  
8 inventiveness of our small businesses, that has got to  
9 change. And I would urge you to set up some kind of  
10 listening program to find out where the bottlenecks are,  
11 where the problems are.

12 Why is a 12 person engineering firm that's on to  
13 something important simply not going to bother coming to  
14 the Department of Defense? Which, is that something that  
15 you think you might be able to undertake in order to try to  
16 find why smaller businesses aren't doing business with us?

17 Dr. Ericsson: Senator, you know how they say great  
18 minds think alike? Well, that is actually what I have in  
19 mind. I am looking forward to having roadshows and  
20 opportunities to have workshops, and to listen and learn.

21 I understand that some of the problems that the  
22 Department of Defense has with their SBIR, STTR programs  
23 are very similar to what we have experienced in NASA, and  
24 those are some of the things that we were able to do.

25 So, bringing those lessons learned to this community

1 would be an asset, I think, which is valuable, if I am to  
2 be confirmed.

3 Senator King: I would I urge you to do that. And I  
4 would suggest you think about how do we make fewer forms,  
5 how many pages have to be submitted, how big is the RFP. I  
6 don't have it with me, but the RFP for a new handgun was  
7 this thick. We have got to be thinking about setting  
8 reasonable requirements.

9 Dr. Schmidt, as far as testing, your concern, a lot of  
10 testimony we have had with regard to the Chinese approach  
11 to these things, like hypersonics, is they are not afraid  
12 to fail. SpaceX has that same philosophy. They learn from  
13 failure. We seem to have this idea that every test has to  
14 be successful.

15 I hope that you will think about and look at the way  
16 the Chinese conduct their R&D, which involves testing,  
17 testing, testing, failing, failing, failing, and then  
18 getting it right. Rather than a focus entirely on every  
19 test has to work. Do you see my point?

20 Dr. Schmidt: Senator King, having worked in  
21 commercial software technology for decades, the fail fast,  
22 learn fast model is something that I am very deeply aware  
23 of and appreciate.

24 Naturally, we also have to balance that with making  
25 sure we don't harm things when we test, but that is where



1 particular technology advances in high fidelity synthetic  
2 environments and modeling and simulation environments where  
3 we can fail repeatedly and learn from our lessons without  
4 necessarily putting people in harm's way.

5 Senator King: Final question. Secretary Dalton, KC-  
6 46, the 101st Refueling Wing in Bangor, affectionately  
7 known as the MAINEiacs, could use those airplanes. We have  
8 got to get them out there.

9 We have got to have that technology of air supply, of  
10 fuel supply. We are facing a gap if we don't get this  
11 right. So, I hope that continued pressure is being put on  
12 Boeing to solve the visual problem and to get those  
13 airplanes out there, and I hope to see some of them going  
14 to Bangor.

15 Ms. Dalton: Senator, first of all, my mom is from  
16 Bangor, so I have a special corner of my heart for Bangor.

17 Senator King: Congratulations --

18 Ms. Dalton: But --

19 Senator King: You just got my vote.

20 [Laughter.]

21 Ms. Dalton: To the point, for the KC-46, this is  
22 vital for us to be able to win the war with that refueling  
23 capability.

24 It provides, you know, also opportunities as we look  
25 at the strategic basing process to see what are the

1 requirements, what can line up in terms of the installation  
2 to support those requirements.

3 And so, you do have my commitment to look at this  
4 particular issue set to make sure we are meeting our  
5 objectives.

6 Senator King: Thank you. Thank you all very much.  
7 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator King. Senator  
9 Budd, please.

10 Senator Budd: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank  
11 you, and good morning to the nominees for being here.  
12 Secretary Dalton, thanks for being in my office last week.  
13 I got a few questions. Appreciate a simple yes or no, when  
14 able, so that we can get through all these.

15 So, in your current role, you have direct  
16 responsibility for policy and planning oversight of defense  
17 support of civilian authorities, including the military  
18 support of the Department of Homeland Security at the  
19 Southwest border. That is correct?

20 Ms. Dalton: Yes.

21 Senator Budd: Right. Thanks. So, in our discussion,  
22 you mentioned taking multiple trips to the Southwest border  
23 in the last year and witnessing firsthand the immigration  
24 crisis. Is that correct?

25 Ms. Dalton: Yes.

1           Senator Budd: So, in our meeting, you acknowledged  
2 that there is, in your words, some utility in employing  
3 barriers at the border. Is that correct?

4           Ms. Dalton: Senator, as part of a system of border  
5 security --

6           Senator Budd: Let's try to stick to a yes and no, if  
7 you could.

8           Ms. Dalton: As part of a system of border security  
9 management, in my personal view, I believe a border barrier  
10 can --

11          Senator Budd: So, I am just going back to, in our  
12 meeting, you did acknowledge that there is some utility  
13 employing barriers, correct?

14          Ms. Dalton: As part of a system of border security  
15 management.

16          Senator Budd: So, I take that as a yes. So, it  
17 should come as no surprise to anyone that employing  
18 barriers would help redirect the movement of large groups  
19 of people to ensure economy of force.

20           And if Border Patrol is able to deploy more  
21 effectively, then DHS demand for DOD support would  
22 ultimately go down. And it seems that would be in  
23 everyone's best interest. Do you agree with that, it would  
24 be in everyone's best interest if DHS demand for DOD  
25 support ultimately go down?

1 Ms. Dalton: Senator, I believe that if DHS was fully  
2 resourced for its mission, its statutory lead role in  
3 border security, then we could reduce the demand on D)D.

4 Senator Budd: And that would be good, correct?

5 Ms. Dalton: Yes.

6 Senator Budd: Okay. So, it is why my colleagues and  
7 I are concerned about the Administration's decision to  
8 auction off border wall materials rather than install them  
9 and actually and help -- actually help Border Patrol do  
10 their job. And I have been there. We talked about that.  
11 I have seen the materials feet away from the intended wall.

12 So, what really concerned me, though, was when I  
13 asked, given your border visits, whether you had either  
14 advocated personally for a change in policy regarding the  
15 use of border wall materials, or even been part of any  
16 conversation internally to do so? And you stated, and I  
17 quote, "it is not my job to advocate for a change in  
18 policy. It is my job to implement what the Administration  
19 tells me."

20 Now, Secretary Dalton, you have been nominated to  
21 serve as the number two civilian in the Air Force and that  
22 position demands independent judgment and leadership. So,  
23 when faced with tough decisions, including the ones you may  
24 disagree with, are you just going to do what those over you  
25 tell you to do, or should we expect different?

1 Ms. Dalton: Senator, the President made a day one  
2 decision to halt construction of the border wall. I am a  
3 member of the Administration, and so I am part of the team  
4 that is implementing his policies across the board.

5 The border barrier issue and the disposition of  
6 materials does not fall into my portfolio. If confirmed as  
7 Undersecretary of the Air Force, the job would be to advise  
8 --

9 Senator Budd: I understand, but you have taken it  
10 upon yourself to go on personal fact finding missions,  
11 which you said a few questions ago. So, I appreciate the  
12 latitude that you do have. I wish you would have used some  
13 here.

14 So, I want to change gears, Secretary Dalton. I have  
15 been a strong advocate for not letting the fighter capacity  
16 gap between the United States and China continue to grow.  
17 We spoke briefly about that.

18 So, what do you think is the proper tactical fighter  
19 inventory mix that the Air Force should maintain? And what  
20 is the right mix of fourth and fifth generation aircraft  
21 that we should maintain, while at the same time, we are  
22 investing in sixth generation?

23 Fighters are in demand around the world, not just for  
24 a potential China fight. So, what are your thoughts there?

25 Ms. Dalton: Senator, well, first of all, thank you so

1 much for your support at Seymour Johnson. And I did enjoy  
2 our conversation about the support that your State is  
3 providing.

4 If confirmed, I would look forward to supporting  
5 Secretary Kendall in his vision to re optimize the  
6 Department of the Air Force for great power competition,  
7 and that includes looking at the Force Design for the Air  
8 Force and the Space Force going forward to ensure that we  
9 strike the right balance between modernizing our  
10 capabilities, but also being ready for any contingencies  
11 that we may face today or in the current security  
12 environment going forward.

13 There is a balance to be struck there. It is a  
14 strategy that is not without risk, but it is far riskier to  
15 find ourselves in a conflict with the PRC and not have the  
16 right capabilities to operate in a congested environment.

17 Senator Budd: Thank you. I yield.

18 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Budd.  
19 Senator Warren, please.

20 Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And  
21 congratulations to all of our nominees, and welcome to your  
22 families.

23 Dr. Schmidt, you have been selected to head up the  
24 testing office that was created to provide Congress and the  
25 public with the unvarnished truth about whether the planes

1 and tanks and ships that servicemembers operate are safe  
2 and effective. There is no greater responsibility.

3 In November, a V-22 Osprey crashed during a training  
4 accident in Japan, killing eight, including one of my  
5 constituent, Staff Sergeant Jake Galliher. An  
6 investigation is currently underway, but we already know  
7 that the Osprey has had a troubled history of safety  
8 problems. The job of the testing office that you would  
9 head up is to bring those concerns to light and to help  
10 prevent future accidents like this one and save lives.

11 One of the ways that the office is supposed to do that  
12 is through its annual report. While we need to keep our  
13 most sensitive secrets classified, this committee often  
14 sees DOD using designations like, "controlled unclassified  
15 information," to keep the public in the dark, meaning that  
16 the information is not actually classified, but the  
17 military wants to keep the information away from the  
18 public, nonetheless.

19 Dr. Schmidt, if confirmed, do you commit to ensuring  
20 that the testing offices report informs the public as much  
21 as possible about the problems that we need to fix in order  
22 to make sure that our weapons are safe?

23 Dr. Schmidt: Yes, Senator, to the maximal extent  
24 possible.

25 Senator Warren: That is what I want to hear. You

1 know, defense contractors and even our military services  
2 sometimes have other priorities, like making the testing  
3 process faster or glossing over problems, to keep these  
4 weapons programs on schedule. But the testing office is  
5 supposed to be an independent referee.

6 If the testing office determines that a weapon is  
7 unsafe, you have an obligation to say that you can't  
8 recommend buying more of it, even if we have already spent  
9 billions of dollars on it and even if the contractors are  
10 pounding on your door, pressuring you to give your stamp of  
11 approval.

12 So, Dr. Schmidt, do you promise that you will come to  
13 this committee and tell the public if you conclude that a  
14 system is not safe for our service members to operate?

15 Dr. Schmidt: Senator, the independence of this office  
16 is crucially important, and I will do everything and work  
17 with you and your committee as much as possible to make  
18 sure we get the systems to fight that work and safeguard  
19 our servicemen and women.

20 Senator Warren: And you will come to this committee  
21 if you feel like there's inappropriate pressure on your  
22 office?

23 Dr. Schmidt: Senator, if I see inappropriate issues  
24 that I am not able to address through my own means, I will  
25 come and discuss them with the committee.



1           Senator Warren: All right. Because ensuring the  
2 safety of our service members means standing up for  
3 transparency and against any pressure that would compromise  
4 the integrity of the testing process, it is essential that  
5 your conduct be above reproach.

6           Even the appearance of bias in your assessments of the  
7 safety of our weapons programs would be a mortal wound to  
8 your office and to your ability to advocate for our service  
9 members.

10           I do not ever want us to have to tell another military  
11 family that we ask their son or their daughter to buckle  
12 into a piece of equipment that we knew was unsafe. Thank  
13 you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14           Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Warren. Senator  
15 Mullin, please.

16           Senator Mullin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ms. Dalton,  
17 I did enjoy visiting with you, and actually, all three of  
18 you all in the office.

19           And I asked you this question why you are in there,  
20 and I would like for you to be as precise as possible.  
21 Could you please explain in roughly 60 seconds why you are  
22 qualified to be the Undersecretary of the Air Force?

23           Ms. Dalton: Senator, I have deep appreciation for our  
24 service members. And though I have not worn the uniform  
25 myself, I have been on the same team with them since I was

1 22 years old, and I have family members that have also  
2 served.

3 If confirmed, I would work with officers and enlisted  
4 leaders to ensure that we are providing the best possible  
5 care and support for our Airmen and Guardians that they  
6 certainly deserve. I also wanted to share just a very  
7 short story.

8 In 2010, when I was a career civil servant, I turned  
9 down an opportunity at the White House to serve on the  
10 National Security Council to deploy as a civilian advisor  
11 to Afghanistan because I believe that is where my country  
12 needed me the most at that time.

13 And as a defense civilian, I thought it was important  
14 to understand what it was like to work in an operational  
15 command in wartime. In my over 20 years in defense, I have  
16 learned that civil military dialog is vital to provide the  
17 best possible options and potential solutions to the  
18 Secretary of Defense and the President. And in our  
19 democracy --

20 Senator Mullin: Ma'am, what I am trying to do here is  
21 --

22 Ms. Dalton: -- Senator, we are fortunate to have  
23 civilian oversight of the military.

24 Senator Mullin: Okay. Listen, I am trying to give  
25 you as much leeway as possible for you to describe why you

1 are qualified to be the Undersecretary of the Air Force. I  
2 understand the duties, and I will read it pretty plain.

3 Here are the duties and responsibilities, responsible  
4 for the affairs of the Air Force, Space Force, including  
5 organizing, training, equipping both services for the  
6 welfare of approximately 700,000 active duty guards,  
7 reserves, civilian, and personnel.

8 Oversees an annual budget of more than \$173 billion in  
9 direct strategies, policy development, risk management,  
10 purchasing of weapons, technology investment, and human  
11 resource management. I am just looking for qualifications.  
12 You didn't give me any qualifications, you gave me your  
13 history, your story.

14 But what makes you qualified to be the Undersecretary  
15 of the Air Force? We are at a serious, critical time right  
16 now in this country, and we need the best and the  
17 brightest. And I am sure you are great, and I am sure you  
18 are extremely bright, but are you the best to be the  
19 Undersecretary of the Air Force? I don't see it.

20 And not -- that is no stab. I am just saying that at  
21 a time when we are training over transitions from future  
22 fighters, from aircraft, from weapons systems, we are  
23 getting at transition out of the war on terror going into  
24 conventional warfare, we are behind in a lot of systems  
25 that we are trying to get to.

1           The Air Force plays a pivotal role in this. The  
2 National Guard is getting divested of aircraft on a daily  
3 basis with nothing in reserve for the interval to pick up.  
4 That is a direct reflect to our homeland. And the  
5 Undersecretary is going to be involved in all this with  
6 decision making. And I am having a very hard time to see  
7 your qualifications on this. This is why I gave you time  
8 to explain it.

9           And you go into a story about being on the same team  
10 and about, you know, you turned down a position to  
11 -- another political position to be able to run in and to  
12 be, you know, sent to Afghanistan, which I don't undermine  
13 that at all. I just don't see how that makes you  
14 qualified. It doesn't make you a bad person, I just don't  
15 think you are the best person for the job right now.

16           And that is what we are looking for right now. We are  
17 trying to recruit the best and the brightest men and women  
18 to join our armed services to begin with. We need to know  
19 that they had the best and the brightest leading them too.  
20 And unfortunately, I don't feel like that is you. I yield  
21 back.

22           Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Mullin. Senator  
23 Peters, please.

24           Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ms. Dalton,  
25 as I believe you know, the Air Force has recently announced

1 that Selfridge Air National Guard Base in Michigan will  
2 receive a future squadron of 12 new KC-46 refueling  
3 tankers, which will replace an aging, fleet of tankers that  
4 we currently have.

5 I think this announcement certainly demonstrates  
6 Selfridge's tremendous value to the Air Force, but it also  
7 ensures that Selfridge will continue to play a key role in  
8 securing our national defense for decades to come.

9 And while I am thrilled, and folks all around the  
10 Selfridge Air National Guard Base are thrilled with the  
11 decision, we are also, all of us together in a strong  
12 bipartisan way, are committed to making sure that we can  
13 have a future fighter mission to replace aging A-10s that  
14 are currently stationed there.

15 So, with this in mind and in the formal basing  
16 announcements we had with Secretary Kendall, he expressed  
17 in no uncertain terms so that Selfridge in no way is  
18 precluded from getting a fighter mission, even though we  
19 have just received this KC-46 mission and an increase in  
20 aircraft, we are still will be considered for future  
21 fighter missions.

22 And so, my question for you ma'am is, if confirmed,  
23 will you maintain the Air Force's ongoing commitment to  
24 ensure that Selfridge is not precluded from competing for a  
25 future fighter mission?

1           And will you also commit to ensuring that Selfridge is  
2 fully, fully considered for future fighter basing missions?

3           Ms. Dalton:   Senator Peters, first of all, thank you  
4 and to your State for hosting Selfridge and the tremendous  
5 capability that it has afforded the Air Force.

6           Going forward, I know the Department of the Air Force  
7 is looking at bringing new capabilities online and its new  
8 requirements are therefore defined. We have to look at  
9 what is the right fit for any given installation and  
10 working through the strategic basing process to ensure that  
11 we have got analytic rigor to back that up that is  
12 repeatable no matter what basing location that the  
13 Department is looking at.

14           So, if confirmed, you have my commitment to have an  
15 open conversation and ongoing dialog with you, with the  
16 local authorities, with the installation commander as the  
17 Air Force reviews what requirements we have going forward,  
18 if confirmed, and to ensure that we have got the right  
19 match for any given base to include Selfridge.

20           Senator Peters:   Well, very good. Ms. Dalton, as you  
21 know, the Indo-Pacific is certainly the DOD's priority  
22 combatant theater right now.

23           The return of great power competition as a threat to  
24 the United States is on full display that we watch every  
25 day with China and Russia trying to alter the rules based

1 international order.

2 And this theater comes with some unique challenges and  
3 significant challenges that you are well aware of,  
4 requiring both strategic and versatile aircraft like the  
5 KC-46 that will be stationed at Selfridge Air and National  
6 Guard.

7 So, with this in mind, would you please share for the  
8 committee the role that the KC-46 are going to play in the  
9 Indo-Pacific and as part of the broader national security  
10 strategy and why these are going to be essential aircraft  
11 for decades to come.

12 Ms. Dalton: Senator, thank you. And as you  
13 highlighted, the PRC is our most consequential strategic  
14 competitor.

15 And it is with a great sense of urgency that we need  
16 to move forward to ensure that we are investing in the  
17 capabilities that can deter aggression, and if called upon,  
18 to fight and win the nation's wars.

19 The fact of the matter is, in any given scenario, our  
20 tanker refueling capability is vital for us to be able to  
21 conduct and sustain operations over great distances that we  
22 may find ourselves in and certainly in the Indo-Pacific.

23 And so, I understand that the Department of the Air  
24 Force is moving out on the modernization efforts for the  
25 KC-46, and also to ensure the uninterrupted

1 recapitalization of current capabilities so that we don't  
2 have a gap in being able to deliver for our warfighting  
3 capability.

4 And if confirmed, you have my commitment to review  
5 that Force Design and to ensure that we continue to meet  
6 the moment in terms of the capability that needs to be  
7 delivered.

8 Senator Peters: Right. Well, thank you. Thank you,  
9 Mr. Chairman.

10 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Peters.  
11 Senator Schmitt, please.

12 Senator Schmitt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to  
13 direct my questions to Secretary Dalton. You have  
14 mentioned in your opening statement that you promised to  
15 timely account -- to in a timely manner account for  
16 information.

17 You want to provide information to this committee.  
18 That is a statement about what you intend to do. But I  
19 think what has been brought out in this committee thus far  
20 is you haven't done that.

21 And so, when you are before this committee for a  
22 promotion, all we can do is look at your track record and  
23 that isn't your track record. And on an issue that, by the  
24 way, is not some footnote in a white paper. We are talking  
25 about the border wall that has been the topic of much



1 conversation in this country for a long time. And I know  
2 you have your prepared statement.

3 And I find it perhaps more alarming that your response  
4 is, you keep saying it is not in your portfolio. With all  
5 due respect, you are the Assistant Secretary for this  
6 -- actually for homeland defense. And if that doesn't cut  
7 it, I can't -- so in Missouri, in most places in the  
8 country, \$130,000 is twice the amount an average family  
9 makes in a year.

10 Under your watch, we were paying to store these  
11 materials \$130,000 a day. In any other time in this town,  
12 prior to now with the new cycle so fast, that would have  
13 been a scandal. But the idea that we are just supposed to  
14 wish this away now by saying it is not on your portfolio  
15 falls short.

16 So, either you knew, and you didn't do anything about  
17 it, or you didn't know, which is what you are saying, until  
18 the letter came before you and then you engaged in your  
19 fact finding mission, which perhaps is more concerning.

20 And then after that, in the letter, you say, well, we  
21 are mitigating those costs now. It is not \$130,000 a day,  
22 it is \$160,000 a month because we are selling this off.  
23 So, to add insult to injury, by one account, one  
24 contractor, one company was able to purchase \$4.4 million  
25 worth of steel tubes for just \$156,000. Do you think

1 -- ma'am, do you think that is a good deal for the  
2 taxpayers?

3 Ms. Dalton: Senator, you have my commitment for any  
4 resources that fall under my portfolio that --

5 Senator Schmitt: No, no. Okay. Forget about your  
6 portfolio. What is in your portfolio. We have established  
7 that you don't take responsibility. I am asking you, is  
8 that a good deal for taxpayers?

9 Ms. Dalton: No.

10 Senator Schmitt: Okay. And so, now we are in a  
11 situation -- and by the way, it is worth pointing out too,  
12 in the auction of these materials, it has been reported  
13 that they are purposely not to be referred to as anything  
14 related to Trump, Mexico, or the controversial border wall.

15 So, I think it is important for the American citizens  
16 to understand that this is being described to contractors  
17 on this auction, I guess, that they are referred to as  
18 steel tubing and sticks for industrial construction.  
19 Ma'am, do you think that is obfuscating what is happening  
20 here of the selling off of these materials, to not be  
21 honest about what is actually happening?

22 Ms. Dalton: Senator, I did not write the way that  
23 that was described, so I would have to defer to those that  
24 that did. I believe that we need to provide transparency,  
25 certainly to Congress and to the American people, on all

1 matters related to national defense.

2 Senator Schmitt: So, I think, in my limited time, I  
3 just want to say, it is not personal, but I think what you  
4 are gathering from the tenor of these questions, you are  
5 being nominated for the number two civilian position at the  
6 Department of Defense.

7 That has enormous responsibility. And the idea that  
8 everything that is bad or on such an issue that is high  
9 profile -- the American people want our border to be  
10 secure. They also want us to be good stewards of their tax  
11 dollars. Neither one of those things are happening. It is  
12 sort of the worst of all worlds.

13 And now this Administration is actually, I guess,  
14 starting to construct a border wall -- parts of it. But  
15 the idea that your unwillingness to sort of account for  
16 this and take responsibility to me is a much bigger issue,  
17 because there is going to be something that happens where  
18 this committee and the United States Senate or Congress has  
19 to rely on you being forthcoming.

20 You have shown that you won't be take responsibility,  
21 you have shown that you won't be, in a very dangerous time.  
22 And you were charged with a very important job that had to  
23 do with our Southern border, and your response time and  
24 time again was, I have no responsibilities here whatsoever,  
25 and that is unfortunate. I yield back.

1 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Schmitt. Senator  
2 Rosen, please.

3 Senator Rosen: Well, thank you, Chairman Reed. I  
4 appreciate you holding this hearing. And I really want to  
5 thank the nominees for being here today, for your  
6 willingness to serve and do these jobs here and our  
7 country.

8 I want to talk a little bit about, just switching  
9 gears altogether, our mental health resources and support  
10 systems, because we know how important they are. It is  
11 critically important for our service members, particularly  
12 in my State of Nevada, for those facing the high  
13 operational demands at installations like Creech and Nellis  
14 Air Force Base, right.

15 So, given the unique challenges of these Airmen,  
16 Guardians, and their families encounter, including the  
17 crews at chief -- they fly at remotely piloted aircraft,  
18 they fly the drones, they fly in overseas combat.

19 More needs to be done to ensure that they have  
20 adequate mental resources -- are available for that type of  
21 work. They are not in the theater, but they are, right.  
22 They may be piloting from Nevada.

23 So, Secretary Dalton, if you are confirmed, how would  
24 you further strengthen mental health support systems within  
25 the Department of Air Force? And specifically, what

1 targeted initiatives could the Department implement to  
2 ensure that our Airmen and Guardians, as well as their  
3 families, have better access to more robust support as the  
4 mission is -- newer missions, right, with technology?

5 Ms. Dalton: Senator, thank you so much for raising  
6 this vital issue. And I believe that service members and  
7 their families deserve the best possible care for their  
8 service and sacrifice to our country. Health care is also  
9 important for readiness of the force.

10 And whether you are flying drones out of Creech Air  
11 Force Base or you are deployed in the Indo-Pacific, there  
12 are unique stressors that may be particular to the  
13 individual, to the unit, and we need to be cognizant of  
14 that variation across the force.

15 And so, I believe that we need to take deliberate  
16 efforts to destigmatize mental health. So, you know, there  
17 is more that certainly can be done in that regard. I know  
18 the Department of the Air Force is working to implement the  
19 Brandon Act, working with Congress and OSD to implement  
20 that.

21 I think that will go a long way to providing more  
22 programing and access for those that are experiencing  
23 mental health issues. And we need to lower the barriers  
24 for those that are seeking help as well, to ensure timely  
25 access, to ensure that resources are targeted for the

1 particular individual.

2 And also, given the national shortage of mental health  
3 providers, we need to be able to connect the right people  
4 in the right place. So, you have my commitment, if  
5 confirmed, to address this.

6 Senator Rosen: I want to keep on this just a little  
7 bit because I want to talk again about the remotely piloted  
8 crews, like at Creech. They are eligible to receive mental  
9 health services.

10 But for them, for them, when they hang up their  
11 uniform and leave the service, there is no identifier on  
12 their record for their combat operations, although they are  
13 flying the plane in combat operations.

14 So, they don't get to, they aren't allowed to receive  
15 their guaranteed mental health services through the VA.  
16 And of course, in Fiscal Year 2024, the NDAA included my  
17 amendment that requires, report establishing a combat  
18 status identifier so that RPA crews, well, they have  
19 something to justify their need for mental health services  
20 from the VA once they complete their time in service.

21 So, if confirmed, how would you seek to rectify this  
22 kind of unique problem?

23 Ms. Dalton: Senator, thank you for highlighting the  
24 unique features that are facing our service members serving  
25 at Creech. And you have my commitment, if confirmed, to

1 understand what more we can do in terms of creative  
2 solutions to ensure that there is equitable access to  
3 mental health programs and resources.

4 Senator Rosen: Thank you. I am going to move on now  
5 to Dr. Ericsson and talk about maintaining our defense  
6 technological edge, because our global competition,  
7 declining R&D, contracting challenges, and the STEM  
8 workforce gap, well, these are just a few of the  
9 impediments that we know are eroding our technological edge  
10 over our adversaries, particularly China.

11 Compounding these issues is a lack of available and  
12 easy, accessible private capital to support defense focused  
13 small business, which has stunted growth and innovation  
14 across our country.

15 So, Dr. Ericsson, if confirmed, you would oversee an  
16 extensive portfolio that includes a small business  
17 innovation research and small business technology transfer  
18 programs, both of which are crucial for fostering  
19 innovation across the defense sector.

20 So, can you talk about how this public, private  
21 partnership model helps scale defense contracted small  
22 businesses? We have a lot of those in Nevada. And what  
23 can you do to ensure that that is continued, and their  
24 continued success?

25 Dr. Ericsson: Senator Rosen, thank you for kind of

1 highlighting all of that under the particular portfolio for  
2 this role. And if I have confirmed, I am committed to  
3 really supporting the small businesses. It is something  
4 that I have been doing for some time at the NASA Goddard  
5 Space Flight Center and for the agency.

6 I mentioned before that it actually is the backbone of  
7 our country, and that is why it is such a critical  
8 component. They offer unique ideas in these small  
9 businesses. And what I see is, is it really -- listening  
10 to them and hearing the issues that have really sort of  
11 retarded their ability to do it in a timely fashion.

12 Ultimately, we want to transit these -- transition  
13 these components, or what we say at NASA, infuse them into  
14 our missions. I want to also be able to really reach out  
15 to the younger generation, graduate students who have that  
16 ability to apply for the SBTR programs as well. I had one  
17 in your State this summer, Abraham Castada, and he was from  
18 Nevada. He also had issues with the mental capacity with  
19 his family members.

20 And so, I am very sensitive to how we treat our  
21 people, and how we can infuse them and partner with the  
22 STEM ecosystem that you mentioned. So, I hope that I look  
23 forward to really working with you in your State and  
24 reaping some of the awards from Nevada.

25 Senator Rosen: Well, thank you. We don't get enough



1 of those awards. And so, we look forward to you coming to  
2 Nevada and talking to our businesses, so we can contribute  
3 as well. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Rosen. Senator  
5 Scott, please.

6 Senator Scott: Thank you, Chairman. Ms. Dalton, the  
7 350 Spectrum Warfare Wing, activated in 2021, will be a  
8 critical player in the fight against communist China. They  
9 currently have over 330 positions to fill that they can't  
10 because they don't have the mission space to allow these  
11 people to work. So, can you tell me what you are going to  
12 do to rectify that?

13 Ms. Dalton: Senator, thank you so much for the call  
14 last week, and thank you for hosting of the Spectrum Wing,  
15 as well as your considerable support from the State of  
16 Florida for space operations.

17 As we discussed, Senator, given the contested  
18 operating environment that we find ourselves in, and  
19 certainly would find ourselves in a conflict with the PRC,  
20 it is absolutely critical that we both have the --

21 Senator Scott: Let me stop you just for a second.

22 Ms. Dalton: Yes.

23 Senator Scott: You can just give me -- what are you  
24 going to do to fix it? That is one issue. That is all I  
25 really care about.

1 Ms. Dalton: Senator, you have my commitment to dig  
2 into the particulars, if confirmed, and to work with you on  
3 a pathway forward.

4 Senator Scott: Okay. Can we just go back. When you  
5 were secretary -- Undersecretary of Homeland Security, did  
6 you feel responsible for the border?

7 Ms. Dalton: I did, Senator, and that is why I have  
8 made repeated visits there.

9 Senator Scott: So, did you ever tell Secretary  
10 Mayorkas that he was doing a crappy job?

11 Ms. Dalton: No, Senator.

12 Senator Scott: So, do you think -- does it bother you  
13 that 70,000 people are dying of fentanyl overdose in the  
14 country?

15 Ms. Dalton: It does very much.

16 Senator Scott: What did you do? You sold off  
17 property. You didn't build the wall. We got terrorists  
18 come across our country. We got criminals across our  
19 country. We have many people come in unvetted. You are  
20 the Undersecretary of Homeland security.

21 It is the biggest issue in my State. I can't imagine  
22 what it is like in Texas or Arizona right now. You are the  
23 Undersecretary, and I have not heard one thing you say  
24 today that you took any responsibility for what happened.

25 Ms. Dalton: Senator, since I have been Assistant

1 Secretary for Homeland Defense and Hemispheric Affairs,  
2 Secretary of Defense has authorized 2,500 National Guard  
3 personnel year over year in support of DHS at the Southwest  
4 border. He has also authorized 1,500 active duty personnel  
5 --

6 Senator Scott: Go through the numbers --

7 Ms. Dalton: as a surge layer.

8 Senator Scott: That happened -- I mean, if you, if  
9 -- like I am a business guy. If in business, if it didn't  
10 work, you do what -- you change something. The numbers are  
11 not getting there. The numbers aren't going down. You are  
12 responsible for this. You are the Undersecretary, and you  
13 are responsible. And nothing got better.

14 Ms. Dalton: Senator, it is the responsibility of the  
15 Department of Homeland Security for border security.

16 Senator Scott: Okay, so what is your responsibility?  
17 Did you have none?

18 Ms. Dalton: I receive requests from the Department of  
19 Homeland Security on how they needed the Department of  
20 Defense to support them.

21 And I provide options to the Secretary of Defense on  
22 pathways that are legal, that are appropriate per posse  
23 comitatus for our forces, and do not negatively impact  
24 training and readiness.

25 Senator Scott: So, and -- but you never told

1 Mayorkas, you never told anybody else that they weren't  
2 doing their job?

3 Ms. Dalton: No, Senator.

4 Senator Scott: Just, why not? I mean, you look at  
5 the numbers just like we do. You got a family. You care  
6 about your family.

7 Ms. Dalton: I do very much.

8 Senator Scott: Yes. I mean, so why wouldn't you say  
9 something?

10 Ms. Dalton: Senator, I have attended many meetings in  
11 terms of the Department, in the interagency, focused on  
12 what is happening at the Southwest border.

13 I have routinely visited there. In fact, just two  
14 weeks ago was down in San Diego where unfortunately we see  
15 a number of special interest migrants coming through the  
16 border.

17 I have taken this incredibly seriously in my role.  
18 There are limits to what I can do per statute from the  
19 Department of Defense --

20 Senator Scott: But you didn't say anything. I mean,  
21 you said you didn't -- you never said this is not working.

22 Ms. Dalton: Senator, it is not within my purview to  
23 make changes to our -- over a border security policy. That  
24 falls to the Department of Homeland Security.

25 Senator Scott: So, Undersecretary of Homeland

1 Defense, right?

2 Ms. Dalton: Assistant Secretary of Homeland Defense  
3 and Hemispheric Affairs.

4 Senator Scott: I mean, just look at the numbers.  
5 Look at the look at the criminals, the terrorists, the  
6 drugs.

7 And so -- and then -- like, do you feel responsibility  
8 to give us information, and then you -- it took forever to  
9 even get information on what you were selling off. Doesn't  
10 that bother you?

11 Ms. Dalton: Senator, if I may, on that point, it does  
12 bother me because I take my responsibilities as Senate  
13 confirmed official very seriously.

14 I am disappointed that we have not met the  
15 expectations clearly of this body or of Congress. We are a  
16 learning organization at the Department of Defense, and you  
17 have my commitment going forward in this role, and if  
18 confirmed as Undersecretary of the Air Force, to do better.  
19 To provide timely and accurate information when Congress  
20 requests it.

21 Senator Scott: Thanks.

22 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Scott. Senator  
23 Manchin, please.

24 Senator Manchin: Thank you, Chairman. Thank you all  
25 for your service and willing to continue to serve.

1 Dr. Schmidt, this is for you. Directly, you oversee  
2 the operational testing and next generation of weapons.  
3 And the war in Ukraine, now the conflict in Israel, United  
4 States, we have transferred significant amounts of our  
5 personal munitions stockpile to Ukraine to stand forces,  
6 and you know, of course, Israel wants our assistance also.

7 I am just asking, do you believe that leaves us in  
8 this untenable position where we might be stockpiling short  
9 ourselves for our national defense?

10 Dr. Schmidt: So, Senator, my understanding in the  
11 role of Director of Operational Testing and Evaluation, I  
12 would be in the position to assess any systems that we may  
13 provide to our allies and our coalition partners.

14 I am not sure if it would fall within my purview to  
15 deal with stockpile issues, but clearly, our stockpile and  
16 making sure that those capabilities are effective and  
17 lethal are very important as well, so I would make sure to  
18 follow that.

19 Senator Manchin: Maybe this is -- better -- doctor,  
20 in recent war games -- you have probably seen the outcome  
21 of recent wargames that we have showing that basically we  
22 only have an eight day supply if China, if we engaged --

23 Dr. Schmidt: That is correct.

24 Senator Manchin: Is that concerning?

25 Dr. Schmidt: Very concerning, indeed. Yes. Yes,

1 Senator.

2 Senator Manchin: Can you produce more?

3 Dr. Schmidt: I am sorry?

4 Senator Manchin: Can you produce more -- are we  
5 capable of producing more?

6 Dr. Schmidt: I am sure, Senator, we would be capable  
7 of producing more and in my position, if confirmed, we need  
8 to make sure that whatever we produce is going to be  
9 survivable and lethal when used in combat.

10 Senator Manchin: Ms. Dalton, I would also like to  
11 stay with the topic of current stocks of weapons to support  
12 supply of allies or replace them as rapidly as we can with  
13 our new next generation systems we are needing for our own  
14 stockpiles.

15 Two perfect examples are the Army Tactical Missile  
16 Systems, which is ATACMS, and the Dual Purpose Improved  
17 Conventional Munitions, which is DPICMs. Both are due for  
18 either replacement or disposal, but it took so long for  
19 them to basically be put in to use in Ukraine. Can you  
20 explain that or why it took so long to transfer that in?

21 Ms. Dalton: Senator, thank you for highlighting the  
22 critical need for rejuvenating our approach to our  
23 munitions stockpiles, given the multiple crises in which  
24 our allies and partners are engaged in around the world and  
25 what that means for us going forward. I believe there is a

1 lot of lessons learned that --

2 Senator Manchin: No, I am saying, your input right  
3 now -- if we are going to get rid, I will use the DPICMs  
4 -- I mean, the ATACMS. They are like 1.2 million we had  
5 stockpiled, and we are going to get rid of them -- it took  
6 us a long time to get those back into where we agreed to  
7 send X amount to Ukraine who needs them desperately.

8 That type of decisions, knowing what we are going to  
9 deplete in the stockpile that we are not using them and are  
10 never going to use them. Rather than disposing of them,  
11 giving them to our allies who need them desperately. That  
12 is the concern.

13 I will give you another one. The aging unmanned  
14 aircraft like the MQ-9, the Reaper, they can be used as  
15 disposable assets to target ground ship based Russian anti-  
16 aircraft equipment which allow manned Ukrainian aircraft a  
17 fighting chance.

18 However, the request hasn't been taken seriously by  
19 the Department. Has it been brought to your attention?

20 Ms. Dalton: It has not.

21 Senator Manchin: Could you raise that to that level?  
22 The Reaper as we know it has a tremendous platform to  
23 deliver a lot of the weapons that we have available that we  
24 are not going to use.

25 And it would help them tremendously within this. And



1 for some reason, I have been bringing to people's  
2 attention. Can't get it up towards a concern.

3 Ms. Dalton: Senator, I would be happy to look into  
4 it.

5 Senator Manchin: We will give you more of that to  
6 your people.

7 Ms. Dalton: Thank you.

8 Senator Manchin: And, to Dr. Ericsson, I would say  
9 this. I have been bringing civilian and military  
10 leadership to West Virginia throughout my entire Senate  
11 career to highlight our academic programs, our workforce,  
12 and DOD owned Alleghany Ballistics Laboratory.

13 Unfortunately, the Department continues to spend an  
14 awful lot of taxpayers' money and going into high cost  
15 living areas. Ours is not a high cost living area. And if  
16 you don't, just ask the FBI. They put their whole outfit  
17 in Clarksburg, West Virginia and it has been the best  
18 return on investment they have ever made.

19 So, I am asking, do you have -- would you come to  
20 visit West Virginia and try to bring some of those  
21 resources to a quality of life they would enjoy and a low  
22 cost of living, which I think the Department would enjoy  
23 spending less money on?

24 Dr. Ericsson: Senator Manchin, thank you for your  
25 time and getting to know you. As I mentioned during our

1 meeting, I am committed to West Virginia. I have a mini  
2 chapter from the Nesby Junior National Society of Black  
3 Engineers that partner with me, and so I am committed to  
4 your region. I definitely would look forward to coming to  
5 view more of the capabilities you have.

6 Senator Manchin: We have a lot of success stories  
7 there and I think it would be worthwhile to take a visit to  
8 show what is being produced right now with these -- with  
9 some of these sophisticated systems that we do -- it is a  
10 blessing -- it is really unbelievable. But also, the FBI  
11 operation. I think you would enjoy that too.

12 Dr. Ericsson: I appreciate that --

13 Senator Manchin: Thank you all. Appreciate it very  
14 much. Thank you --

15 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Manchin. And thank  
16 you, Senator Cramer, for your patience. You are  
17 recognized.

18 Senator Cramer: My patience results in my learning a  
19 lot more, Mr. Chairman. And it has been fascinating, so  
20 thank you all. Quickly, there is not one damn thing that  
21 anybody prepared for me that I am not ready to talk about,  
22 because so many other things have come up that I want to  
23 talk about.

24 And I don't have time to get a lot of answers, but I  
25 do want to mention to Dr. Ericsson and Dr. Schmidt, I want

1 to put a finer point on the discussion you had with a  
2 couple of my colleagues, and especially Senator King,  
3 regarding more appropriate countermeasures to these drones  
4 that are coming at our military men and women.

5 The final point is, last night I went over to Walter  
6 Reed, and I met with the family of a North Dakota soldier.  
7 It was with Chief Warrant Officer Garrett Illerbrunn is his  
8 name. His parents were there. His wife, Lorna, who was  
9 also an army aviator. He was injured on Christmas Day in  
10 Erbil. I think it was attack number 115 or something like  
11 that, that finally got a few of our guys. And he is  
12 recovering over in Walter Reed.

13 And the one thing Lorna told me that I could say, she  
14 said, please check into why there is not a better  
15 countermeasure. Now, this is a hero herself, married to a  
16 hero with a seven year old little boy. And they are  
17 thinking, where is our Government when 115 times small  
18 drones come after us and one gets through, and now they are  
19 dealing with this.

20 So, I am just illustrating that point for Chief  
21 Warrant Officer Illerbrunn and his family, and all of the  
22 people that he represents. We have got to do better than  
23 firing missiles at them. Secretary Dalton, I had several  
24 things on ISR and other things I wanted to visit with you,  
25 but we might have to get back together, frankly.

1           And I appreciated your visiting with me before. But  
2 your response regarding the spy balloon to Senator Rounds  
3 causes me to just want to drill down a little bit more.  
4 You said you clearly were in the value chain of advisors.

5           When did you first learn about the spy balloon, and  
6 what was your initial advice to Secretary Austin?

7           Ms. Dalton: Senator, Secretary Austin first learned  
8 of the PRC spy balloon on January 27th, and I learned about  
9 it the same day.

10          Senator Cramer: What was your initial --

11          Ms. Dalton: My initial advice was that we absolutely  
12 needed to understand what capabilities were on the PRC high  
13 altitude balloon. NORAD, NORTHCOM was tracking it and  
14 characterizing it. But we needed to get to the bottom of  
15 what it was doing, what its intentions were.

16          Senator Cramer: So here is -- to me, here is the  
17 bigger question, given your role. Why didn't -- why was  
18 there never an internal review? Why didn't you initiate an  
19 internal review of all the policies, the processes, the  
20 siloing of the various, you know, the intelligence  
21 agencies, and NORAD, and DOD, and all of that?

22          In the absence of that, we did it. This committee put  
23 in the NDAA a review. Did it ever occur to you, this is  
24 something maybe we should dig into a little bit and see  
25 where our failings are?

1 Ms. Dalton: Senator, in fact, we have incorporated  
2 that in the development of our homeland defense policy  
3 guidance over the last year. It was signed by Secretary  
4 Austin in December.

5 It has benefited from the lessons learned from the  
6 PRC's experience, and there are ample lessons to be gleaned  
7 from that in terms of what we need to do for our air and  
8 -- the homeland in terms of NORAD modernization, and a  
9 number of other elements that I could discuss in a  
10 classified environment.

11 Senator Cramer: But my point isn't that you didn't  
12 benefit tremendously from the review that it was initiated  
13 by this committee and put it into law. Why didn't -- why  
14 wasn't that instinctive to do that?

15 And in answering that, as I go into my final minute, I  
16 would add to that, now that you have had the review, now  
17 that you have seen the review, now that you have thought  
18 about this and been challenged, what would you do  
19 differently if you knew on that date, December 27th, what  
20 you know now?

21 What mistakes were made that you -- that you made,  
22 perhaps, in your counsel to the to the Secretary that you  
23 would improve on?

24 Ms. Dalton: Senator, I --

25 Senator Cramer: It is okay to have been wrong then,

1 you know. A correction is what we are looking for.

2 Ms. Dalton: Thank you. And we are all human. But  
3 the -- I think the benefit of having the investments to  
4 come in NORAD modernization would allow us to better  
5 characterize these types of threats sooner, and then to be  
6 able to develop options for policymakers and certainly for  
7 the secretary and the President.

8 The other big lesson learned for me is that as soon as  
9 we have threats that are actionable, policy decisions  
10 before they are made public, or any other DOD activities  
11 that we owe oversight answers to Congress, that we need to  
12 provide that in a timely fashion.

13 And I understand that we have fallen short, based on  
14 what I have heard from members today, and we will  
15 incorporate that into our response is going forward.

16 Senator Cramer: Well, that is a common theme  
17 throughout all of the services, throughout, you know, the  
18 entirety of my existence here for sure is, not getting back  
19 to us in a timely matter. But my point was more about the  
20 crisis itself. What would you -- would you do anything  
21 differently, now?

22 Ms. Dalton: Senator, I think that we, as a community,  
23 could have had better national level integration at the  
24 local level. What I saw in the early days of the PRC have  
25 was that we were very well wired for responding to

1 hurricanes, to wildfires.

2 And, you know, that is the day to day existence for  
3 defense supportive civil authorities. But it hadn't been  
4 since WWII that we had had an incursion over U.S. territory  
5 from a foreign adversary.

6 And so, you know, getting -- that national to Federal,  
7 State, and local integration happened, but I think in real  
8 time, we could have been more expeditious about it, and we  
9 will do so going forward.

10 Senator Cramer: Thank you for that. Thank you, Mr.  
11 Chairman.

12 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Cramer. Senator  
13 Gillibrand, please.

14 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  
15 Secretary Dalton, congratulations on your nomination. And  
16 thank you for your service to the Department thus far,  
17 including your engagement on the support for the anomalous  
18 health incident reviews. As DOD's lead for the AHI cross-  
19 functional team, can you describe those efforts for the  
20 committee and where you see them going in the future?

21 Ms. Dalton: Senator, thank you so much for your  
22 support for the AHI-CFT so that we can ensure that we are  
23 providing the best possible support to DOD personnel and  
24 other U.S. Government personnel that have reported such  
25 incidents. There have been three lines of effort that we

1 have been pursuing through the cross-functional team.

2 First and foremost is taking care of our people,  
3 ensuring that they have the medical and holistic support to  
4 navigate through their physiological or mental health  
5 effects. The second is one that we have been pursuing  
6 quite robustly with Congress's support, and thank you for  
7 that, is research into the types of technologies that might  
8 be causing these types of physiological effects.

9 That is happening across multiple arms of the DOD  
10 research enterprise to include the service laboratories, to  
11 include DARPA and NSA. And then the third line of effort  
12 has been on adaptation.

13 If this is to be a future of the operational  
14 environment going forward, how does the Joint Force need to  
15 adapt to those realities, and what can we be building in  
16 terms of force protection, in terms of other measures to  
17 ensure that they can operate through that type of  
18 disruption.

19 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you. We continue to hear  
20 warnings about the ability of the PRC to target our  
21 critical infrastructure.

22 Not only does this infrastructure provide critical  
23 services to Americans across the country, but things like  
24 electricity, water ports are also necessary to mobilize  
25 American military might in the event of a crisis.



1           Given that most of the infrastructure belongs to non-  
2 Federal entities, it is essential that the DOD work with  
3 those entities and other Federal agencies to ensure the DOD  
4 is able to execute its mission whenever it is called to do  
5 so. And it is your responsibility as Assistant Secretary  
6 for Homeland Defense to oversee DOD's mission assurance and  
7 responsibilities.

8           Understanding that this is an open venue, what do you  
9 see as the most significant challenges to DOD's work in  
10 this space? How would you characterize your relationship  
11 with sector risk management agencies?

12           Are they providing the cooperation you need to ensure  
13 DOD interests are protected? What is your assessment of  
14 the work of the Critical Infrastructure Defense Analysis  
15 Center, and what is your relationship with non-DOD critical  
16 operators look like?

17           Ms. Dalton: Senator, first of all, I want to thank  
18 you for your support of our efforts on defense critical  
19 infrastructure, the conversations we have had with you and  
20 your staff, and your advocacy for the resourcing that the  
21 Department needs to be able to do the analysis through the  
22 CIDAC for example, but also looking to work across  
23 committees.

24           Because we cannot succeed in building the resiliency  
25 of our defense critical infrastructure and protecting those

1 most critical nodes for our warfighting missions without  
2 the cooperation of other Federal Departments and agencies.

3 So, thank you so much for that cross committee support  
4 too. In terms of what we have been focused on, it is  
5 really prioritizing where are the most critical -- defense  
6 critical infrastructure nodes for our warfighting missions,  
7 and how can we mobilize resourcing internal to the  
8 Department for the areas that we own and control to address  
9 and develop risk mitigation and build resiliency for those  
10 nodes.

11 And then looking outside the wire, how do we need to  
12 build partnerships? How do we need to declassify or reduce  
13 the classification of sensitive information to provide to  
14 the private sector, to State and local authorities, to  
15 other Departments and agencies to help us do that risk  
16 mitigation?

17 There is, of course, more that we could discuss in a  
18 classified venue. I am delighted that we did get the  
19 homeland defense policy guidance signed by Secretary  
20 Austin, because that will provide us with a real driver  
21 going forward to focus the Department's efforts on DCI.

22 Senator Gillibrand: Could you speak to your  
23 relationship or outreach to the private sector?

24 Ms. Dalton: Absolutely, Senator. So, as the sector  
25 risk management agency for defense critical infrastructure,

1 we convened the Government Coordinating Council for the  
2 defense industrial base, and we also convened the GCN  
3 Sector Coordinating Council meeting with defense industrial  
4 base partners, bringing together both worlds. That has  
5 been an opportunity to share cybersecurity best practices,  
6 to share our prioritization framework, and identify next  
7 steps together.

8 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you. Thank you, Mr.  
9 Chairman.

10 Chairman Reed: Thank you -- Senator Duckworth,  
11 please.

12 Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good  
13 morning to our witnesses and thank you all for appearing  
14 today. Ms. Dalton, we talked a little bit about  
15 aeromedical evacuation.

16 Evacuating our wounded troops, like all other  
17 logistics functions, would prove difficult in the Indo-  
18 Pacific, should a conflict arise. And a conflict in the  
19 region would force our militaries flying ambulances to  
20 reckon with thousands of miles of open ocean. DOD would  
21 not have full service health facilities within the Indo-  
22 Pacific region. The nearest would be Guam and then Hawaii.

23 And there would be challenges transporting and cooling  
24 medical supplies in a contested environment. Successful  
25 and professional aeromedical evacuation saved thousands and

1 thousands, tens of thousands of our troops lives in Iraq  
2 and Afghanistan. I am concerned that the vast distances  
3 within the Pacific would affect capacity for lifesaving  
4 aeromedical evacuation in the region by basically making  
5 the golden hour impossible.

6 If confirmed, Ms. Dalton, how would you prioritize the  
7 Air Force's investments in aeromedical evacuation  
8 capabilities in the Indo-Pacific? And what ideas do you  
9 have for expanding and extending the golden hour for  
10 service members wounded in potential conflict in that  
11 region?

12 Ms. Dalton: Senator, thank you so much for meeting  
13 with me last week. And I enjoyed our conversation on this  
14 and other quite important topics. I think you highlight an  
15 area where, frankly, in the Department overall, and I have  
16 seen this in my current role, we are not investing the  
17 right amount of attention, given, as you illustrated, how  
18 we have seen the strain on our medical corps and capability  
19 in wartime.

20 And given the complexity of what we would find in the  
21 Indo-Pacific, we need to dig further into this. I have  
22 seen in my current role, some of the scenarios in which we  
23 may be called upon in the homeland to defend the American  
24 population, to provide defense in support of civil  
25 authorities, and to protect power forward that may actually

1 draw upon critical capability in areas like medical.

2 And we need to do more scenario based work to  
3 understand, what are those requirements across those  
4 different demand signals and how are we going to source  
5 that. So, I think that type of approach could be quite  
6 useful for other military Departments, to include the  
7 Department of the Air Force, to take on board to have a  
8 scenario based approach to stress testing the capability  
9 and capacity shortfalls that may exist.

10 And so, if confirmed, I would look forward to taking  
11 that analytically based approach.

12 Senator Duckworth: I also think and I would urge you  
13 to consider involving our allies in those scenario based  
14 approaches as well.

15 Ms. Dalton: Thank you, Senator.

16 Senator Duckworth: Thank you. Preparing for the  
17 possibility of conflict in the Pacific would require the  
18 DOD to invest in critical infrastructure and installations  
19 within the region.

20 So, continuing this conversation, our adversaries  
21 could disrupt our sustainment operations in the region by  
22 damaging or destroying airfields, fuel storage, and  
23 maintenance facilities. It is critical that we  
24 recapitalize strategic assets and bases in the region to  
25 make them more resilient and ready for contested

1 environment, including making them more resilient to  
2 climate change.

3 Ms. Dalton, how important is it for the Air Force to  
4 invest in your critical infrastructure and installations in  
5 the Indo-Pacific to prepare them for the effects of climate  
6 change, to improve their energy security, and also to  
7 harden them against kinetic strikes?

8 Ms. Dalton: Senator, thank you. And this is an area  
9 where I believe, again, my current experience can be  
10 helpful in bringing a lens forward for the Department of  
11 the Air Force, if confirmed.

12 As you note, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, there  
13 are a number of stressors facing our critical  
14 infrastructure and our installations. Whether it is  
15 operating through a contested environment, given the cyber  
16 and space challenges that we potentially see from the PRC,  
17 or the effects of extreme weather, storm surge, you know,  
18 unprecedented storms and typhoons hitting key locations  
19 that have subverted our ability to conduct exercises, we  
20 need to take a holistic view at what that security  
21 environment means for installations and ensure that we are  
22 building in resiliency to our critical infrastructure going  
23 forward.

24 That is then compounded by the great distances that we  
25 have to field and project power in a contest with the PRC.

1 And so, looking for energy efficient, renewable energy  
2 sources that could be potentially pre-positioned in certain  
3 locations as part of our logistics chain, I think these are  
4 all different avenues that we need to explore, and I would  
5 certainly look forward to doing that, if confirmed.

6 Senator Duckworth: Thank you. Yield back, Mr.  
7 Chairman.

8 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator  
9 Duckworth. Senator Sullivan is trying to make his way  
10 here, and we are going to allow him a few minutes to do  
11 that. But we have a vote on, so at some point, I will have  
12 to close the hearing.

13 But let me ask a question. Dr. Schmidt, we are  
14 learning quite a bit from the Ukrainian conflict, where  
15 they are improvising, using techniques, and creativity. I  
16 assume we will start doing the same things.

17 And how will you help expedite that by testing or by  
18 validating the credibility of these spontaneous, ad hoc  
19 developments?

20 Dr. Schmidt: Senator -- Chairman Reed, one of the  
21 most valuable things we have at our disposal in the  
22 operational testing evaluation field is data and access to  
23 data.

24 What we are getting from conflicts around the world,  
25 this includes the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, from Ukraine,

1 and so on is tremendous amount of data about how systems,  
2 our systems, our adversary's systems, our allies' systems  
3 are behaving.

4 And taking that data, and being able to analyze it,  
5 and make sense of it, and then turn it into actionable  
6 courses to make our systems more effective, suitable,  
7 survivable, and when necessary, lethal is critically  
8 important.

9 So, I think, if confirmed for this role, making sure  
10 we have the right investments in technologies and training  
11 for the workforce to be able to make sense of that data  
12 would be crucially important. And Ukraine is just one  
13 place where that would be valuable.

14 Chairman Reed: In a related issue, we are moving into  
15 digital testing techniques, which, at least conceptually,  
16 could replace the physical testing of systems, platforms,  
17 etcetera. What is your sense of our position now and our  
18 progress forward?

19 Dr. Schmidt: Senator, this is a big passion of mine,  
20 modeling, simulation, digital technologies. We clearly  
21 have made a lot of progress in this space. There is a lot  
22 that remains to be done. One of the great things that we  
23 get with synthetic environments is the ability to test with  
24 threat densities that are next to impossible to achieve  
25 outside of actual conflict.



1           And it also provides us with a way of being able to  
2 test our systems without subjecting the servicemen and  
3 women to actual harm during the tests. Having said that,  
4 live fire testing is crucially important in order to be  
5 able to give the service people competent systems actually  
6 work.

7           So, I would be in favor of continuing to invest in  
8 live testing to get the information, and then make sure we  
9 feed it back effectively into our models.

10          Chairman Reed: No, I think you are exactly right.  
11 You like to know it shoots and moves before you get in it,  
12 in my experience.

13          Dr. Schmidt: Absolutely, Senator. Yes.

14          Chairman Reed: And then, at this point, let me  
15 recognize Senator Sullivan. And, because of the vote  
16 pending, Dan, we will try to hold it to five minutes.

17          Senator Sullivan: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  
18 Thanks for holding the hearing open. I want to focus  
19 primarily on, Ms. Dalton, position.

20          And, you know, the State of Alaska, my State, plays a  
21 really, really critical role in a whole host of areas in  
22 terms of our military. I like to say we constitute three  
23 pillars of America's military might. We are the  
24 cornerstone of missile defense.

25          So, all the ground based missile interceptors that

1 protect the whole country are in Alaska. All the radar  
2 systems that protect the whole country are in Alaska. We  
3 are the hub of air combat power for the Arctic. In the  
4 Indo-Pacific, you probably know we have over 105th  
5 generation fighters based in Alaska. There is no place on  
6 the planet Earth that has 100 combat coated fifth gen  
7 fighters, but my State does.

8 And then we are a platform for very well-trained  
9 expeditionary forces can get anywhere in the world -- the  
10 Northern Hemisphere within 7 to 8 hours because of our  
11 strategic airlift. The Army redesignated the 11th Airborne  
12 Division in Alaska, Arctic Tough Airborne Division.

13 So now the U.S. Army is two airborne divisions, Mr.  
14 Chairman, 82nd and the 11th. Good competition between our  
15 great Army airborne divisions. But the one thing I wanted  
16 to -- so that is very important. I think everybody  
17 recognizes that.

18 We are also becoming a kind of logistical hub for  
19 Arctic operations with the building of a strategic port in  
20 Nome. An icebreaker is being built home stationed in my  
21 State. But the big issue I want to talk to you about are  
22 gaps in terms of domain awareness with regard to defense of  
23 the country.

24 Anything that is going to attack the United States,  
25 Chicago, New York City, Miami, it doesn't matter, is going

1 to come over and through Alaska. You know, that is just  
2 physics. And in terms of emerging threats like  
3 hypersonics, unmanned aerial systems, advanced ballistic  
4 and cruise missiles, and we saw, even slow moving Chinese  
5 spy balloons, they are all going to come over Alaska first.

6 Of course, I don't want them to hit my State, but I  
7 don't want them to hit my country either. So, in terms of  
8 gaps in our capability to counter these --

9 Chairman Reed: Excuse me, Senator Sullivan, may I  
10 interrupt?

11 Senator Sullivan: Yes.

12 Chairman Reed: I have a call with the CENTCOM  
13 Commander. I would, now, at the conclusion of your  
14 testimony, conclude the hearing.

15 Senator Sullivan: Okay. Sounds good, Mr. Chairman.  
16 Thank you.

17 Chairman Reed: And thank you to all witnesses for  
18 your excellent testimony.

19 Senator Sullivan: So, I guess, my main question is,  
20 how do we upgrade our domain awareness and ability to  
21 defend our nation through what we currently don't have in  
22 Alaska, which, as you know, is a big gap.

23 I mean, we don't have -- I mean, we don't talk about  
24 it, but right now, hypersonics is something we are not  
25 being able to defend against. But a lot of that is going

1 to take place in my State, as you know -- or, a, do you  
2 agree with me? Hopefully you do.

3 But, b, what are we doing to close those gaps? And  
4 those are really important because the Air force is going  
5 to play the critical role.

6 Ms. Dalton: Senator, thank you so much for raising  
7 this vital capability gap, frankly, that I believe we have  
8 right now.

9 This has been an area of focus that the Commander of  
10 NORTHCOM and I have been digging into with regards to NORAD  
11 modernization, looking at how we can improve all domain  
12 situational awareness, how we can strengthen command and  
13 control, how can we invest in capabilities to deter  
14 aggression and be ready to fight and win the nation's wars?

15 How can we be investing in research, development, and  
16 testing and evaluation? I know colleagues here at the  
17 table also have a role to play, if confirmed.

18 We have developed a joint plan with the Canadians to  
19 help drive forward the combine -- or joint approach that we  
20 are taking with them when it comes to NORAD modernization.  
21 But frankly, Senator, far more, needs to be done. And so,  
22 I am grateful for the support of Congress for the over the  
23 horizon radars.

24 That investment, along with other capabilities, are  
25 going to be quite important for NORAD modernization. As

1 well as the reauthorization of the Section 130i authority  
2 for counter UAS. And just as a note, Senator, I had an  
3 opportunity to travel to Alaska last March and was really  
4 struck by the tremendous capability, as you walked through.

5 Had an opportunity to visit Eielson and see the  
6 considerable power projection capability of the F-35s, Fort  
7 Greely for missile defense, and up to Clear Space Force  
8 Base for the LDR. And, you know, Billy Mitchell's, quote, I  
9 think, carries on in terms of he who holds Alaska, holds  
10 the world.

11 I was really struck to see a map, it is unclassified,  
12 that you can reach just about every strategic location in  
13 the world from Alaska within 5 to 10 hours. And so, you  
14 have a commitment certainly in my homeland defense role,  
15 and if confirmed, as Undersecretary of the Air Force to  
16 work with you on these priorities.

17 Senator Sullivan: Great. Thank you. I -- you  
18 mentioned Eielson, Clear, Fort Greely. It is about 40  
19 below in all those places right now, so it is tough duty  
20 too, right. So, we need to support our military up there.  
21 I am going to keep my word here to the chairman and gavel  
22 out here in a couple seconds.

23 I do want to just get your commitment. When the  
24 NORTHCOM Commander was here, he made a commitment during  
25 his confirmation hearing. And you have talked about NORAD

1 modernization.

2 We have great, you know, allies in terms of Canada.  
3 The one thing, though, Canada, to be perfectly blunt, and I  
4 asked them in a hearings like this, has -- not been good on  
5 is actually defense spending, right.

6 And I got the commitment from the incoming NORTHCOM  
7 Commander when he meets with his Canadian counterparts, and  
8 in your NORAD role, I would like you to make the same  
9 commitment to talk to the Canadians and say, hey, come on.  
10 It is a dangerous world, right. The United States can't be  
11 pulling the weight for everybody.

12 Canada has spent about 1.2 percent of GDP on defense.  
13 They are supposed to be spending 2 percent minimum as a  
14 NATO member. They consistently don't hit that. Their  
15 prime minister has indicated he has no plans to hit that.  
16 It is really pathetic. And in terms of North American  
17 defense, they often just rely on us.

18 They don't do anything on missile defense. They rely  
19 on us. And I think hopefully, like the NORTHCOM Commander,  
20 you will commit to us -- and this is a bipartisan issue, by  
21 the way. I was over at the NATO summit with three  
22 Republican Senators, three Democrat Senators.

23 We had all the leaders who aren't hitting their 2  
24 percent commitments like, hey, come on, joke is over. It  
25 is a really dangerous world, folks. We got global

1 commitments the United States does, but the Canadians need  
2 to step up, and certainly in NORAD modernization.

3 So, if confirmed, in those discussions, can you  
4 commit, like the NORTHCOM Commander did, to have a frank  
5 discussion with Canadians that it is -- you know, meet your  
6 obligation. It has only been 10 years at least since all  
7 the NATO leaders had said, we are going to hit the 2  
8 percent GDP.

9 Prime Minister Trudeau thinks that was a suggestion  
10 not a commitment, and it looks like Canada is not even  
11 close. And it is -- it is not good.

12 Ms. Dalton: Yes, Senator. I commit to that.

13 Senator Sullivan: Great. Okay, on behalf of the  
14 chairman, I want to thank all the witnesses and their  
15 families and supporters here. And for now, this meeting is  
16 adjourned.

17 [Whereupon, at 11:58 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25