

**OPENING STATEMENT OF U.S. SENATOR JIM INHOFE  
RANKING MEMBER, SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**ROOM SD-G50  
DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING  
February 15, 2022**

*To conduct a confirmation hearing on the nominations of Honorable Robert P. Storch to be Inspector General of the Department of Defense; Dr. Lester Martinez-Lopez to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs; Mr. Christopher J. Lowman to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Sustainment; Mr. Peter J. Beshar to be General Counsel of the Department of the Air Force*

*(As prepared for delivery)*

*Thank you, Chairman Reed, and thanks to our witnesses for being with us and for their willingness to serve the nation.*

*We've got quite a few challenges facing us, including in your areas of responsibility. While the world is watching Beijing host the Olympics and whitewash an ongoing genocide, China has also accelerated its economic and military aggression.*

*The Russians are using their military might to try to redraw the borders of a sovereign country, and they're using energy as a weapon to try to split NATO. Putin's ambitions won't stop in Ukraine.*

*Last week, we heard from General Kurilla that Iran is the "number one destabilizing threat" in the Middle East, and about the risks of Iran using sanctions relief to support proxies that attack U.S. forces in the region.*

*North Korea fired more missiles in recent months than ever, and apparently they're only pausing now for the Olympics so they don't make China angry.*

*The 2018 National Defense Strategy provides a roadmap to tackle these challenges, but we need to stay focused, and we'll need your help to do so, if you're confirmed.*

*At the same time, historic inflation is hitting every part of the Pentagon, from service member benefits to maintenance. It will make your jobs much, much harder.*

*Lastly, on Afghanistan. I'm sure you've all read the Washington Post reporting about the military's own investigation of the withdrawal. It seems like this review can teach us some really valuable lessons.*

*We are the committee of jurisdiction over the Department of Defense. My colleagues and I have been asking for weeks to see the reviews they've made. It is unacceptable for us to be finding out about these documents in the Washington Post before they are shared with us.*

*The last NDAA established a bipartisan commission to investigate what happened in Afghanistan, and I supported that. But this committee also has a duty to conduct its own oversight.*

*I think we'll need to hear from some of the folks involved with this after-action report soon, in both open and closed hearings.*

*We need strong civilian leadership at DOD who will work with Congress. So I look forward to hearing from you all today. Mr. Chairman*

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