

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

**ROOM SD-G50
DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
Thursday, May 19, 2022**

*To conduct a hearing on the Department of Energy and National Nuclear Security Administration's Posture on Atomic Energy Defense Activities in Review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2023 and the Future Years Defense Program
(As prepared for delivery)*

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I also want to welcome our witnesses and thank them for their willingness to serve our nation.

One of the things I've been proud of over the past few years is this Committee's focus on rebuilding the foundation of U.S. national security – our nation's nuclear deterrent.

We've made a lot of progress in this area over the past several years, but even that progress is just the first step in a long journey to make up for decades of neglect.

A third of NNSA's facilities date back to World War II, and we have buildings where concrete falls from the ceiling on workers below. That's just unacceptable, and we have to do better.

In contrast, our adversaries clearly see value in prioritizing their nuclear programs. Our lack of focus on competing in the nuclear arena puts us in danger of falling even further behind, and puts our nation and our allies at risk.

China is expanding its military capabilities faster than any country in history. Its investments are shifting the global balance of power, and, based on recent testimony, China's nuclear modernization continues to outpace even our worst predictions.

Putin's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and his reckless threats of nuclear escalation have shattered the security of Europe, and, for the first time in decades, forced Americans to face the possibility of a nuclear attack.

Not to be outdone, North Korea is on a record pace for missile testing, and is reportedly preparing for another nuclear test. Half a world away, Iran's stockpile of nuclear material grows daily as it inches closer to its own nuclear weapon.

Unfortunately, the administration's fiscal year 2023 DOD budget doesn't give DOD and

NNSA the real growth they need to meet the National Defense Strategy. And while agreed on real growth last year, inflation has completely destroyed that.

In fact, I have a letter from the Administrator that says our plutonium pit production project is underfunded by \$500 million. If we are serious about meeting growing threats, we need to be honest about the level of resources needed to make that happen.

I look forward to your testimony on these issues and the rest of the Department of Energy's national security priorities. Mr. Chairman.

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