

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

**ROOM SD-G50
DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING**

Tuesday, June 8, 2021

To conduct a hearing on the United States' strategic competition with China

(As prepared for delivery)

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for calling today's hearing. Congress has been talking a lot about China competition, but I haven't seen any hearings like this. Welcome to our witnesses.

This committee has explored the military dimension of our competition with China at length. The INDOPACOM commander told us "our combat edge against China is eroding." The threats get worse the closer you look and the longer we wait to address them.

China is a full-spectrum threat. They're competing with us in every arena — economics, technology, military, diplomacy, and information warfare.

Our witnesses today will give us a good idea of how China blends all its tools of national power to achieve its objectives. That's something we need to do better here.

The 2018 National Defense Strategy reoriented the U.S. military toward competition with China. I think we've done a good job of pressing the Pentagon to implement that strategy.

The Biden administration's interim national security strategic guidance should focus the entire federal government, not just the military, on long-term competition with China.

But it has failed to do that. To start, this year's budget does not resource our troops at the levels necessary to carry out the 2018 NDS.

President Biden wants to "lead first with diplomacy," but we know a strong military underwrites effective diplomacy—underfunding the military will undermine our diplomacy.

We've got a budget that cuts defense when we need real growth. You see the impact everywhere—underfunding of ships, aircraft, munitions, and more. On the Pacific Deterrence Initiative request, there was clearly a disconnect with the legislation we wrote last year.

We also just received the military's unfunded priorities. Let's be straight: These are not "wish lists." They are military commanders telling us the combat risk we're taking by not adequately resourcing our strategy.

We're not making hard choices—we're making bad choices.

We also haven't yet reoriented most of the U.S. government to great-power competition.

Our executive agencies don't coordinate very well. We constantly ask the military to do things it shouldn't do when other federal agencies have failed to take action.

We don't coordinate very well in Congress, either. For the last month or so, we've been working on a so-called "China" bill. But key national security committees—including this one—were not consulted at all in the hurried and chaotic approach to this bill.

To counter China's comprehensive strategy in this long-term competition, we need well- thought-out, bipartisan, and effective legislation instead of the rushed language we have now.

I know our witnesses can help us do that, and I look forward to their testimony, because we are likely to only get one good shot at an effective China competition bill. Mr. Chairman.