

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO CONSIDER 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;
AND MR. PETER J. BESHAR TO BE GENERAL COUNSEL
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

Tuesday, February 15, 2022

Washington, D.C.

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3 DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE; DR. LESTER MARTINEZ-LOPEZ TO BE
4 ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR HEALTH AFFAIRS;
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7 GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
8

9 Tuesday, February 15, 2022
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11 U.S. Senate

12 Committee on Armed Services

13 Washington, D.C.
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15 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:32 a.m. in
16 Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Jack Reed,
17 chairman of the committee, presiding.

18 Committee members present: Senators Reed [presiding],
19 Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King,
20 Warren, Peters, Manchin, Duckworth, Rosen, Kelly, Inhofe,
21 Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Sullivan,
22 Cramer, Scott, Blackburn, Hawley, and Tuberville.
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1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JACK REED, U.S. SENATOR FROM
2 RHODE ISLAND

3 Chairman Reed: I will call the hearing to order.

4 The committee meets this morning to consider the
5 nominations of Mr. Robert Storch to be the Inspector General
6 of the Department of Defense, Dr. Lester Martinez-Lopez to
7 be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, Mr.
8 Christopher Lowman to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for
9 Sustainment, and Mr. Peter Beshar to be General Counsel of
10 the Department of the Air Force. On behalf of the
11 committee, I want to thank each of you for your willingness
12 to return to public service.

13 I would also like to welcome the guests and family
14 members who are with us today. Mr. Storch, I welcome your
15 wife Sara and daughter Hannah.

16 Dr. Martinez, I welcome your son, Lucas.

17 Mr. Lowman, I welcome your wife Tracey, daughter
18 Shayne, and son Ian.

19 And, Mr. Beshar, I welcome your wife Sarah, son Henry,
20 and daughter Sophie.

21 I know each of the nominees have family members who are
22 proudly watching from home, and I thank them for their
23 support of your service as well.

24 Mr. Storch, you are well-qualified to be Inspector
25 General of the Defense Department. In addition to your

1 current role as the IG for the National Security Agency, you
2 served as the Deputy IG of the Department of Justice from
3 2012 to 2018.

4 There are a number of important duties that will
5 require your attention within the Department. It will be
6 your responsibility to conduct and supervise audits and
7 investigations relating to the Department, provide
8 efficiency and effectiveness in the administration of the
9 Defense Department, and lead the combatting of fraud, waste,
10 and abuse. You will also assist the Secretary of Defense in
11 addressing extremism in the military.

12 While we continue to believe that the number of
13 extremists in the ranks remains very, very small and does
14 not represent a systemic issue, even one is too many. The
15 DOD IG has an important role to play in assessing the extent
16 of this challenge. During your testimony I would ask for
17 your views on the issue and your objectives for this
18 position.

19 Dr. Martinez, you are nominated to be the Assistant
20 Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, or the ASD(HA). I
21 would note your extensive record of service in military
22 healthcare, both in and out of uniform, as having prepared
23 you well for this position.

24 The ASD(HA) is the principal advisor to the Secretary
25 of Defense and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel

1 and Readiness for the all of the Department's force health
2 protection policies, programs, and activities. The ASD(HA)
3 is also responsible for execution of the Department's
4 medical mission, including the readiness of medical services
5 during military operations and for ensuring the health of
6 the members of the military services, their families, and
7 other eligible beneficiaries.

8 In addition, you will govern the management of Defense
9 Department health and medical programs, the sponsorship and
10 oversight of medical research and development, and medical
11 education and training.

12 If confirmed, you will need to address a number of
13 pressing challenges for the Department, including the
14 implementation of COVID-19 vaccinations across the force,
15 improving the staffing of Walter Reed, and providing medical
16 support to the combatant commanders. I hope you will
17 address these challenges in your testimony.

18 Mr. Lowman, you are nominated to be the Assistant
19 Secretary of Defense for Sustainment. You bring more than
20 30 years of service as a Marine and Army Civil Servant to
21 this position; experience that will be invaluable given the
22 complex scope of responsibilities before you.

23 One of the most pressing issues for the Defense
24 Department is reducing its contested logistics
25 vulnerabilities. The "tyranny of distance" challenge is

1 often referenced in potential Pacific conflict scenarios,
2 and we saw it proven true during our combat operations in
3 Iraq and Afghanistan. Although there have been several
4 studies and table top exercises on this topic, the GAO found
5 the Defense Department has still failed to implement more
6 than 50 recommendations from a recent review. I would like
7 to know your perspective on how the Department can better
8 navigate a contested logistics environment.

9 Additionally, maintaining the operational readiness of
10 the force has always been expensive. Given the rising costs
11 of new platforms like the F-35, coupled with supply chain
12 impacts from the pandemic, I hope you will share your plans
13 for tackling these challenges.

14 Finally, Mr. Beshar, you are nominated to be General
15 Counsel of the Department of the Air Force. This position
16 has a broad scope of responsibilities, including serving as
17 legal adviser to the Secretary of the Air Force and other
18 offices within the Department, as well as to the Chiefs of
19 the Air Force and Space Force and their staffs. If
20 confirmed, you will be tasked with providing legal services
21 throughout the entire Department in a variety of
22 disciplines, including fiscal law, ethics, dispute
23 resolution, environmental law, labor law, and litigation.

24 In addition, the General Counsel exercises oversight of
25 intelligence and other sensitive activities and

1 investigations. These are wide-ranging and complex
2 challenges that will require astute legal guidance. I would
3 ask that you share how you plan to approach these issues and
4 what objectives you have for this important position.

5 Thank you, again, to our nominees. I look forward to
6 your testimonies.

7 [The statement of Chairman Reed follows:]

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1 Chairman Reed: Now, let me now recognize the ranking
2 member, Senator Inhofe.

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES INHOFE, U.S. SENATOR FROM
2 OKLAHOMA

3 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 And thanks to our witnesses for being with us and for
5 their willingness to serve additionally.

6 We have got quite a few challenges facing us, including
7 in your areas of responsibility. And while the world is
8 watching Beijing host the Olympics and whitewash an ongoing
9 genocide, China has also accelerated its economic and
10 military aggression.

11 The Russians are using their military might to try to
12 redraw the borders of a sovereign country, and they are
13 using energy as a weapon to try to split NATO. And Putin's
14 ambitions won't stop in Ukraine, and we learned this
15 firsthand when we spent some time in Romania just a few
16 weeks ago, and it is very clear: it maybe be Ukraine, but
17 Romania is next. And so, this is not something that just is
18 some speculation.

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

23 North Korea fired more missiles in the recent months
24 than ever before and apparently they are only pausing now
25 because of the Olympics that are taking place, and they

1 don't want to make China angry.

2 The 2018 Defense Strategy provides that it is still
3 good today, and it provides a roadmap to tackle these
4 challenges, but we need to stay focused, and we will need
5 your help to do so in the positions that you will be
6 assuming, if you are confirmed, and you will be confirmed.

7 At the same time, historic inflation is hitting every
8 part of the Pentagon, from servicemember benefits to
9 maintenance. It will make your jobs much, much more
10 difficult.

11 And lastly, Afghanistan, and on Afghanistan, I am sure
12 you all read the Washington Post reporting about the
13 military's own investigation of the withdrawal. It seems
14 like this review can teach us some really valuable lessons.

15 We are the committee of jurisdiction over the
16 Department of Defense. My colleagues and I have been asking
17 for weeks to see the reviews that they have made. It is
18 unacceptable for us to be finding out about these documents
19 in the Washington Post before they are shared with us. I
20 can't really say that in as strong of terms as I would like
21 to.

22 The last NDAA established a bipartisan commission to
23 investigate what happened in Afghanistan, and I supported
24 that, but this committee also has the duty to conduct its
25 own oversight. I think we will need to hear from some of

1 the folks involved with this after-action report very soon,
2 in open and closed sessions.

3 So, we need strong civilian leadership at DOD who will
4 work with Congress. So I look forward to hearing from you
5 all this morning.

6 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 [The statement of Senator Inhofe follows:]

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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Inhofe.

2 And now let me call on Mr. Storch for your testimony,

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1 STATEMENT OF HONORABLE ROBERT P. STORCH, NOMINEE TO BE
2 INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

3 Mr. Storch: My apologies.

4 Chairman Reed: No problem.

5 Mr. Storch: Thank you.

6 Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, members of the
7 committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before
8 you today with regard to my nomination to be the Inspector
9 General at the Department of Defense.

10 The work of OIGs necessarily reflects that of the
11 departments and agencies we oversee. The DOD, of course,
12 has a critical mission of securing our national defense, a
13 core function of government, and given the tremendous size
14 and scope of the Defense enterprise, the Department, in one
15 way or another, does essentially everything that government
16 does. This requires its OIG to have all the tools in the
17 oversight tool belt functioning well to effectively oversee
18 these critical and diverse efforts.

19 I am truly humbled to have been nominated to lead the
20 team at the DOD OIG and believe that I am well-positioned to
21 do so. I currently am in my fifth year serving as the
22 presidentially appointed, Senate-confirmed Inspector General
23 at the National Security Agency, within the Department of
24 Defense, and so I am familiar with both, the duties and
25 functions generally applicable to a PAS IG, and with

1 carrying out those responsibilities at an agency within the
2 DOD where there is important integration between civilian
3 and uniformed personnel, and under the rules and policies
4 applicable across the Department.

5 I am very proud of the efforts that my team and I have
6 made to enhance the independence and the impact of our
7 oversight work at NSA OIG, where I have emphasized getting
8 to the root causes of the issues we uncover and holding
9 agency leadership accountable for addressing them. I am
10 also proud of the strides we have made to enhance the
11 transparency of our work, including the launch of our
12 independent public website, where we now regularly post
13 unclassified versions of our Semiannual Reports to Congress,
14 and unclassified versions or summaries, of a number of our
15 underlying reports.

16 I also have emphasized the importance of engagement
17 with the Congress, which helps us to understand its concerns
18 and to provide oversight that may be helpful to inform its
19 constitutional, legislative, and oversight functions.

20 As the NSA IG, and before that as the Deputy IG and
21 Whistleblower Ombudsperson working with, and for, IG Michael
22 Horowitz at the Department of Justice, I have worked to
23 advance whistleblower rights and protections, which is
24 something that I believe is fundamentally important for the
25 operations of OIGs and, indeed, for good government.

1 Employees and others perform an important service when
2 they bring forward evidence of what they reasonably believe
3 to be wrongdoing, and they should never suffer reprisal for
4 doing so.

5 Of course, none of this work is possible without
6 people. As the NSA IG, and before that as the Deputy IG at
7 DOJ, I have been actively engaged in promoting diversity,
8 equity, inclusion, and accessibility, and in ensuring that
9 we provide a positive working environment for our team. I
10 am very proud of the efforts we have made in this regard at
11 NSA OIG, and if confirmed as the DOD IG, I will bring all of
12 these areas of emphasis and approaches to leading that very
13 important office.

14 Prior to joining the OIG community, I spent some two
15 dozen years as a federal prosecutor at two U.S. Attorney's
16 Offices and between them at the Public Integrity Section of
17 the Criminal Division, here in Washington.

18 I believe that being an IG and a prosecutor are similar
19 in important respects; both fundamentally call for doing
20 what is right and both call for the analysis of complex fact
21 patterns and the exercise of independent judgment to reach
22 that result.

23 Also, as a former federal prosecutor, and now as an IG,
24 I understand the importance of ensuring that my office's
25 work not be influenced or even perceived as being influenced

1 in any way by partisanship. I am honored to have been
2 nominated to be an IG by Presidents of both political
3 parties, and if confirmed, I shall continue to be true to
4 the principle of nonpartisanship that is a hallmark of the
5 IG system.

6 I have been actively involved in working across the IG
7 community over the past decade, founding and leading the
8 CIGIE Whistleblower Ombuds Working Group when I was at DOJ
9 OIG, and serving for several years now as Vice Chair of the
10 CIGIE Tech Committee, and as Chair of its Emerging
11 Technology Subcommittee.

12 As for the latter, I think it is essential that we, as
13 IGs, be prepared to conduct meaningful, impactful oversight
14 over the increasing use of new technologies within the
15 government and that we be able to use them ourselves
16 appropriately in our work.

17 I also was honored to be named, in 2020, to serve as
18 one of four IGs on the CIGIE Integrity Committee, and
19 recently to be named Vice Chair of the Committee, which has
20 the important role of considering allegations of misconduct
21 made against IGs and their senior staffs. If I am
22 confirmed, I believe that all these experiences will serve
23 me well in leading the diverse operations of the Defense
24 oversight community and coordinating with other IGs, as
25 appropriate.

1 I will end with what is most important to me, and
2 recognize and thank my brilliant and wonderful wife, who
3 somehow will have put up with me for 30 years of marriage
4 this May, and my two spectacular daughters. As I always
5 say, they are the center of the universe.

6 I would also like to thank my family and friends, who
7 are watching online, for their support.

8 Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

9 [The statement of Mr. Storch follows:]

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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much.

2 Dr. Martinez-Lopez, please?

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1 STATEMENT OF DR. LESTER MARTINEZ-LOPEZ, NOMINEE TO BE
2 ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR HEALTH AFFAIRS

3 Dr. Martinez-Lopez: Good morning, Chairman Reed,
4 Ranking Member Inhofe, and distinguished committee members.

5 Thank you for allowing me to speak with you today. I
6 am extremely honored and humbled to be here today as
7 President Biden's nominee for Assistant Secretary of Defense
8 for Health Affairs. I am thankful for the trust placed in
9 me by President Biden, Secretary Austin, and Under Secretary
10 Cisneros.

11 I was raised in Maricao, a small town in the mountains
12 of Puerto Rico. Not in my wildest dreams would I have
13 thought I would be here, in front of you today.

14 During medical school, I was blessed to receive the
15 Health Professions Scholarship. The financial support
16 allowed me to dedicate myself to my studies and to excel. I
17 was driven by an interest in saving lives through medicine
18 and serving the United States.

19 Upon graduation, I joined the active duty Army at Fort
20 Bragg, North Carolina, where I completed my family practice
21 residency. My plan was to fulfill my service obligation and
22 return to Puerto Rico, but after volunteering for the first
23 Multinational Force and Observers deployment to the Sinai, I
24 got hooked. I loved serving with the Army in the field.

25 My service led me to command soldiers for 12 years, at

1 home and abroad, serve with field units for 7 years, become
2 the Chief Medical Officer of the United Nation's mission in
3 Haiti, and serve as the senior medical officer during our
4 Hurricane Mitch Response in Central America. My final
5 assignment led me to command the United States Army Medical
6 Research and Development Command at Fort Detrick, Maryland,
7 where we worked on all aspects of medical research.

8 Working with soldiers willing to risk their health and
9 lives for our country inspired me to continue serving
10 alongside them and to deliver them the best medical care
11 possible. Those same factors would motivate me to care for
12 our active duty servicemembers, retirees, and their families
13 if I am lucky enough to be confirmed.

14 After retiring from the Army, I was fortunate to lead a
15 successful and fulfilling civilian life. I was the
16 administrator of the Lyndon B. Johnson Hospital, part of an
17 integrated governmental system that provides critical
18 healthcare service to the residents of Harris County, Texas;
19 thereafter, I became the first Chief Medical Officer for an
20 over 400-bed, acute care hospital in Brandon, Florida. I
21 learned a lot about patient safety, quality of care, and
22 efficient health care management.

23 One of my favorite experiences was being a member of
24 the Army Science Board where I participated in a multitude
25 of studies. Through these experiences, I quickly learned

1 that you don't need to wear a military uniform to serve the
2 country and our communities.

3 If confirmed, I believe that my previous military and
4 civilian experiences will serve me well as the Assistant
5 Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs. I will be honored
6 to have the opportunity to continue to serve our
7 servicemembers, their families, and our retirees.

8 I will strive for the highest level of force medical
9 readiness and the readiness of the medical force. The
10 future may bring difficult missions abroad and at home. To
11 face these challenges, it is vital that we have a medically
12 ready force. There must be a focus on prevention of
13 injuries; however, if injured, we owe our servicemembers the
14 best medical response we can muster as a nation. We must
15 continue to improve our care, develop solutions for new and
16 old challenges, and work closely with our interagency
17 friends and commercial partners to accomplish our mission.
18 Our servicemembers deserve no less.

19 I understand the military health care system is very
20 large and complex, but if confirmed, I will do my best to
21 improve the quality of the care, the quality of the service,
22 and the value proposition to all those served by the
23 Military Health System. I will work hard to complete the
24 Military Health System Reform in a way that will strengthen
25 the medical readiness of the Armed Forces and the readiness

1 of the medical personnel, by improving health care benefits
2 and services to millions of beneficiaries composed of
3 servicemembers, military retirees, and family members.

4 If confirmed, I commit to do my best for those serving
5 our nation, and I also commit to work with this committee
6 and Congress in a transparent and responsive way to meet the
7 health care needs of our servicemembers and their families
8 and our retirees.

9 Senators, I want to thank you for the opportunity to be
10 here today and I look forward to your questions.

11 [The statement of Dr. Martinez-Lopez follows:]
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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you.

2 Mr. Lowman, please?

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1 STATEMENT OF CHRISTOPHER J. LOWMAN, NOMINEE TO BE
2 ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR SUSTAINMENT

3 Mr. Lowman: Good morning, Chairman Reed, Ranking
4 Member Inhofe --

5 Chairman Reed: Your microphone, please.

6 Mr. Lowman: Good morning, Chairman Reed, Ranking
7 Member Inhofe and committee members. I am deeply honored to
8 come before you today as President Biden's nominee for
9 Assistant Secretary of Defense for Sustainment.

10 I would like to thank the President for nominating me
11 and Secretary Austin and Deputy Secretary Hicks for their
12 confidence in me. If confirmed, I am excited for the
13 opportunity to continue serving our nation in this critical
14 role during these extraordinary times.

15 I want to start off by acknowledging my wife Tracey,
16 who is here with me today and has been by my side for the
17 last 25 years. Tracey is the bedrock of our family, whose
18 support has made my career and service to this nation
19 possible. Our greatest joy are our four children; two of
20 which are here today with me, Shayne, a graduate of Virginia
21 Commonwealth University, and Ian, a high school senior.

22 Our other two children, Rhyane and Addison, are
23 currently students at the University of Virginia and are
24 watching virtually; in fact, my daughter Addison is
25 currently enrolled as a Navy intern with a focus on computer

1 science, and so she will continue the tradition of service.

2 I am also grateful to my immediate and extended family
3 for their sustained and honorable service to this country.
4 We are a multi-generational, multi-service family,
5 representing every service, and the Coast Guard, going back
6 80 years. My family's legacy of service has been a guiding
7 force during my 36-year career, which began in 1984 on the
8 well-known, yellow footprints at Parris Island. I started
9 my post-Marine Corps life with the Army as a young GS-5,
10 never in my wildest dreams did I imagine that I would, one
11 day, be a nominee for the Assistant Secretary of Defense.

12 I have served alongside both, women and men, soldiers
13 and civilians, who dedicated their lives helping to sustain
14 the readiness of our forces. I could not be more proud to
15 call them colleagues and friends, and if confirmed, I will
16 continue to serve at their side.

17 The purpose of the Department of Defense is to provide
18 military forces needed to deter war and ensure our nation's
19 security. To accomplish this mission, we must posture our
20 sustainment capabilities to enable the readiness and meet
21 the nation's requirements when needed. Sustainment is most
22 effective when integrated with the joint force and in
23 coordination with our allies and industry partners. I
24 appreciate the importance of sustainment and throughout my
25 career I have learned that resilient sustainment is critical

1 to enhancing our military's effectiveness.

2 The role of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for
3 Sustainment is to ensure the resources needed to execute the
4 Department's mission are readily available, while maximizing
5 execution and affordability. The Assistant Secretary must
6 ensure the services have the policies and processes
7 necessary to succeed, and the Department has the proper
8 oversight to ensure our strategic readiness posture is
9 sufficient. The ultimate goal is to provide our
10 servicemembers with the most modern, capable, and
11 sustainable military equipment and supplies necessary to
12 deter or defeat our adversaries.

13 Secretary Austin has laid out clear priorities in his
14 March 2021, Message to the Force: defend the nation; take
15 care of our people; and succeed through teamwork. To that
16 end, and if confirmed, my priorities will be to ensure our
17 supply chain is resilient and defended; our civilian
18 workforce is trained and equipped with the necessary
19 analytical skills and tools needed to sustain a military in
20 a complex, multi-domain environment; that our organic
21 industrial base is modernized and fortified to meet the
22 challenges of sustaining technologies required on a modern
23 battlefield; and finally, that our modernization programs
24 account for life-cycle and sustainment costs early in the
25 acquisition process.

1 I will work towards sustainment strategies that balance
2 readiness requirements with cost in order to produce the
3 maximum amount of combat power. There are numerous
4 challenges in each of these areas, but with the help of the
5 members of this committee and Congress, we will make the
6 necessary improvements to ensure sustained readiness far
7 into the future.

8 If confirmed, I pledge to work with Congress, the
9 services, industry, our partners and allies, and other
10 stakeholders to enhance and sustain military readiness. The
11 heavy responsibility and demands of this position are
12 evident. Given the critical nature of the role and the
13 importance of the mission I would dedicate myself fully to
14 this task.

15 Thank you. And I look forward to your questions.

16 [The statement of Mr. Lowman follows:]

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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you.

2 Mr. Beshar, please?

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1 STATEMENT OF PETER J. BESHAR, NOMINEE TO BE GENERAL
2 COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

3 Mr. Beshar: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe,
4 distinguished members of the committee, I consider it the
5 honor of my life to be nominated by President Biden to serve
6 as the General Counsel of the Department of the Air Force
7 and have the opportunity to appear before this committee.

8 A moment like this is really about all those who have
9 supported you, and at the top of that list is my dear
10 family. Mr. Chairman, thank you for recognizing my wife
11 Sarah, who has been at my side, my blessed side for 31
12 years, and our children: Isabel, Henry and Sophie.

13 I would like to offer my comments this morning in the
14 context of the three priorities set by Secretary Austin for
15 the Department of Defense.

16 First: Defend the nation. Non-kinetic attacks pose a
17 significant threat to our national security. As the Air
18 Force develops its next-generation air dominance program,
19 modernizes its nuclear enterprise, and builds out the Space
20 Force, cybersecurity and technological innovation will be
21 critical priorities. Over the past decade, I have developed
22 domain expertise in cybersecurity, with a particular focus
23 on public-private partnerships to protect our critical
24 infrastructure.

25 I have had the privilege of testifying before many of

1 you in prior appearances before the Senate Homeland
2 Security, Banking, and Commerce Committees about ways in
3 which government and industry must come together to protect
4 our critical infrastructure.

5 Second: Take care of our people. The brave men and
6 women of our armed forces represent the best of America. To
7 honor their commitment and sacrifice, society has a solemn
8 duty to protect them, as well as their families and our
9 veterans. As recent reports have shown, there is important
10 work that needs to be done to fully meet this
11 responsibility.

12 Early in my career, I had the great privilege of
13 serving as the Special Assistant to former Secretary of
14 State Cyrus Vance in the peace negotiations in the Balkans.

15 It was my first exposure to war and it sparked a
16 profound respect for our military and a deep interest in our
17 national security.

18 As Chair of the Veterans' Committee at John Jay College
19 for Criminal Justice and executive sponsor of our veterans'
20 program at Marsh McLennan, I spearheaded a series of
21 initiatives, under the banner "We've Got Your Six," to help
22 veterans with job opportunities and enhanced benefits.

23 If confirmed, one of my top priorities would be to
24 support Secretary Kendall and the rest of the Department's
25 leadership in implementing the sexual assault reforms

1 recently approved by Congress and fostering a culture of
2 integrity and inclusion.

3 Third: Succeed through teamwork. In this era of
4 strategic competition, the security challenges before our
5 country require intense collaboration across the Executive
6 Branch, with Congress, with industry, and with our allies.
7 For the past 17 years, I have served as the General Counsel
8 of Marsh McLennan, a global professional services firm.

9 With the support of my colleagues, I built a world-
10 class, and diverse, legal and compliance team. And I have
11 developed the project management skills to drive policy
12 change across an organization of more than 80,000 employees
13 in 100 countries.

14 If confirmed, I look forward to partnering with the
15 civilian and military lawyers within the Department of the
16 Air Force to provide sound and pragmatic advice in support
17 of the mission articulated by Secretary Kendall, "One Team.
18 One Fight."

19 I want to express my appreciation to all the members of
20 the committee for your consideration. I look forward to
21 your questions.

22 [The statement of Mr. Beshar follows:]

23

24

25

1 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much.

2 Gentlemen, I have a series of questions that are
3 directed at all nominees. You may answer in unison.

4 Have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations
5 governing conflicts of interest?

6 [All three witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

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

10 [All three witnesses answered in the negative.]

11 Chairman Reed: Exercising our legislative and
12 oversight responsibilities makes it important that the
13 committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate
14 committees of Congress receive testimony, briefings,
15 reports, records, and other information from the Executive
16 Branch on a timely basis.

17 Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify
18 before this committee when requested?

19 [All three witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

20 Chairman Reed: Do you agree to provide records,
21 documents, or electronic communications in a timely manner
22 when requested by this committee, its subcommittees, or
23 other appropriate committees of Congress, and to consult
24 with the requester regarding the basis for any good faith
25 delay or denial, in providing such records?

1 [All three witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

2 Chairman Reed: Will you ensure that your staff
3 complies with deadlines established by this committee for
4 the production of reports, records, and other information,
5 including timely responding to hearing questions for the
6 record?

7 [All three witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

8 Chairman Reed: Will you cooperate and provide any
9 witnesses and briefers, in response to congressional
10 request?

11 [All three witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

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

14 [All three witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

15 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much.

16 And just for information of my colleagues, we
17 anticipate a vote at noon. At that vote, we will hopefully
18 have a committee hearing off the floor to move military
19 nominations; military nominations alone. We would like to
20 get this done; otherwise, we will lose some valuable time
21 getting military personnel confirmed, including General
22 Kurilla, who has been appointed as the new CENTCOM
23 commander.

24 Now, Mr. Storch, the IG plays so many critical roles,
25 but one critical role is in maintaining the ethical

1 sensitivity and priorities of the men and women of the Armed
2 Forces. I think it springs from at least three sources,
3 probably more: the constitutional oath one takes, the
4 personal integrity one expects of the members of the
5 military services, and also the ethic of protecting, not
6 exploiting your subordinates.

7 How can the IG help raise the ethical standards and
8 insist on ethical qualifications?

9 Mr. Storch: Thank you for the question, Chairman Reed.

10 You know, IGs, I believe, play an important role in
11 that area in a number of different ways, one of which is by
12 doing audits, evaluations, and other oversight work that
13 examines different issues across the Department and ensures
14 that the Department is carrying out its responsibilities
15 appropriately and in compliance with all requirements.

16 On the other side, of course, we have an Investigations
17 Division and where people don't meet those standards, it
18 needs to be understood that IGs will appropriately
19 investigate administrative misconduct, making findings,
20 where appropriate, and also referring all matters for civil
21 or criminal investigation, if that is appropriate.

22 Additionally, beyond all of those sorts of functions, I
23 think IGs play a critical role in the communication of
24 ethical standards. I mentioned whistleblowers in my opening
25 statements. I think that it is critically important that it

1 be understood throughout an agency, up to the very top, that
2 we encourage people, and people are encouraged to come
3 forward if they see something that is wrong so that someone
4 can look into it, and if appropriate, take corrective
5 action. And so, that message needs to be disseminated
6 across the Department, really starting at the very top.

7 Additionally, IGs participate routinely in trainings
8 and other programs that help to make clear to the workforce,
9 the standards that are expected. So, I think there are
10 myriad ways in which that can be done, and, if confirmed,
11 I look forward to working on it.

12 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much.

13 Mr. Beshar, am I pronouncing that correctly, by the
14 way?

15 Mr. Beshar: More or less, Mr. Chairman: Beshar.

16 Chairman Reed: Beshar.

17 Well, in Rhode Island, it is Beshar, but Beshar for the
18 moment. Thank you.

19 I apologize.

20 Mr. Beshar: Anything works.

21 Chairman Reed: Yeah, I apologize.

22 In a similar vein, the General Counsel of the Air Force
23 will have a significant role in maintaining the ethical
24 standards of the Air Force and, again, springing from the
25 constitutional oath that we all take, the integrity of the

1 individuals we expect, and also, for particularly military
2 personnel, placing oneself behind the responsibilities for
3 subordinates.

4 Can you comment on your approach?

5 Mr. Beshar: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

6 I really think of the role in two ways. One is to
7 serve as the principal legal advisor, as you indicated, to
8 the Secretary and the leadership. Secretary Kendall has
9 articulated seven operational imperatives and I would want
10 to consult with the Secretary about how the Office of
11 General Counsel could best support him.

12 And the second is really as the chief ethics officer in
13 trying to inculcate an environment of integrity and
14 inclusion, not simply to comply with the law, but also to
15 engender trust with other stakeholders.

16 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much.

17 Mr. Lowman, congested logistics is a critical aspect.
18 Napoleon said, an Army moves on its stomach. And, well, we
19 are moving in the air, on sea, and on land, but we have got
20 to move.

21 Can you briefly comment on your approach to dealing
22 with this issue?

23 Mr. Lowman: Senator, thank you.

24 So, as you rightly point out, Senator, global
25 operations require secure access to supply chains and it

1 requires secure access to both, inter- and intra-theater
2 lift, whether that is surface lift or airlift capabilities.

3 And so, operations, for example, in the Indo-Pacific
4 would require the necessary posture and positioning of our
5 supplies. It requires the necessary end-to-end supply chain
6 oversight and visibility, such that we understand where the
7 supplies are, in fact, positioned, and that they are
8 positioned at echelon and ready for use in support of any
9 operation, regardless of where that is globally.

10 So, if confirmed, Senator, I would certainly work with
11 my staff on ASDS, as well as the COCOMs and the services, to
12 ensure that end-to-end visibility is available and that we
13 are reviewing the strategic positioning of supplies.

14 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much.

15 Dr. Martinez-Lopez, my time is short, but could I ask
16 you what you consider, and very briefly, the greatest threat
17 to the long-term viability of the military health care
18 system?

19 Dr. Martinez-Lopez: Senator, thank you very much for
20 the question.

21 I think readiness is the most important aspect to the
22 military health system, so if the challenge is what is
23 happening today in order to also sustain the readiness,
24 resources, how many resources we have available, and the
25 last question, and the tricky question is, what are the

1 threats?

2 Threats keep changing, especially in the medical field.
3 We never dreamed of having a COVID maybe 10 years ago and
4 now we are dealing with it.

5 So, what will be the next threat and how well are we
6 going to be equipped and resourced to deal with that threat.

7 So, we have to be nimble and we have to be ready, too;
8 I think that will be the biggest challenge the Department
9 will face.

10 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Doctor.

11 Senator Inhofe, please?

12 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 Mr. Beshar, the last NDAA, we just enacted some of the
14 most sweeping changes to the uniform code of military
15 justice since it has been created. To allow the military
16 services to implement these reforms, we put into place a 2-
17 year implementation period.

18 And with your background, people have heard me talk
19 about this, but why is it so important for the Air Force to
20 have time to implement these changes?

21 Mr. Beshar: Senator Inhofe, sexual assault in any
22 context is reprehensible. Sexual assault in the context of
23 the military is particularly destructive because of its
24 impact on unit cohesion and force readiness.

25 The changes that the Congress have approved, taking

1 specific crimes out of the chain of command, as well as the
2 IRC recommendations that have been embraced by the
3 Department of Defense, are substantial undertakings and are
4 going to require a really sustained commitment from military
5 commanders across the field, as well as the other senior
6 leaders within the organization.

7 And so, the goal is to get it right, naturally; and, if
8 confirmed, that is what I would try to do.

9 Senator Inhofe: And to get it right, it does take
10 time, sometimes.

11 Mr. Storch, I have heard some people recently calling
12 for the use of artificial intelligence to monitor
13 servicemembers' communications in order to root out
14 potential extremists before they act. To me, this is one of
15 the most outrageous things that I have ever heard.

16 And I would just ask you, in your view, what are the
17 risks to servicemembers' civil liberties from using
18 artificial intelligence to monitor their activities and how
19 would you ensure that servicemembers' civil liberties are
20 protected?

21 Mr. Storch: Ranking Member Inhofe, as indicated in my
22 initial statement, artificial intelligence and emerging
23 technologies is an issue in which I have taken particular
24 interest in the IG community and I lead the IG community's
25 subcommittee in that area, where we are looking at ways to

1 do oversight over its use.

2 Additionally, at NSA OIG, we have been looking at that
3 and we currently have a joint review that is pending,
4 actually, with the Department of Defense IG, looking at the
5 integration of artificial intelligence into the NSA CIGIE
6 activities to ensure that that is being done in compliance
7 with DOD and IC guidelines.

8 So, those are issues with which I am generally familiar
9 and, if confirmed, I would work with a team at the DOD IG to
10 examine the issues you have identified and I would welcome
11 the opportunity to engage with you and your staff on any
12 concerns.

13 Senator Inhofe: Sure. And I know, that is why I asked
14 you the question, because you have that familiarity and that
15 background.

16 Mr. Storch: Yes, sir.

17 Senator Inhofe: Now, Mr. Storch, there have been
18 thousands of requests from the servicemembers for religious
19 accommodations to the Department's COVID vaccine mandate and
20 there have only been 12 accommodations granted thus far;
21 that is three for Marines and I think nine of them for
22 airmen, and each of those servicemembers is already planning
23 to leave.

24 So, does it seem reasonable to you that services would
25 grant only 12 religious accommodations when they have

1 received over some-10,000 requests?

2 And I am not going to ask you, there wouldn't be time
3 to answer anyway, how you would want to correct this
4 situation, but will you commit to reviewing this issue and
5 so we can have something in place to correct that problem?

6 Mr. Storch: So, the OIG, obviously, has jurisdiction
7 over all programs and operations of the Department. I know
8 that the office has been engaged in looking at different
9 aspects of the COVID response and has a pending audit
10 related to the vaccine distribution plan. It is a rapidly
11 changing situation.

12 If I am confirmed, I certainly will commit to meeting
13 with the team at the OIG and discussing the situation as it
14 then exists, and if it is appropriate to do a review, then I
15 am looking forward to pursuing that. That is something I
16 would discuss with the team and would welcome the
17 opportunity to discuss with you, as well, sir.

18 Senator Inhofe: Thank you very much.

19 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Inhofe.

20 Senator Shaheen, please?

21 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 Congratulations to each of the nominees and thank you
23 to you and your families for being willing to come back into
24 public service and take on these important positions.

25 Dr. Martinez-Lopez, I want to begin with you because in

1 December with over 20 of my colleagues, we sent a bipartisan
2 letter to the Department of Defense expressing our concern
3 over the July 2021 DOD Inspector General Report on PFAS
4 blood testing for firefighters.

5 I am going to ask you about this, as well, Mr. Storch.

6 But I was pleased, the Department moved quickly to
7 provide a briefing, but I am very concerned that there still
8 requires oversight of all PFAS matters and that that is
9 going to require continuing attention.

10 So, I would ask you, Doctor, you talked about the focus
11 on the prevention of injuries, but, if confirmed, will you
12 commit to really doing something with this data so we can
13 assess what it says about the potential health impacts of
14 PFAS and those who are exposed to it?

15 Dr. Martinez-Lopez: Senator, PFAS and the threat it
16 presents is, you know, all those chemicals have been with us
17 for many, many years, 40 or more, and now we are learning
18 that some may be dangerous to us.

19 So, yes, if confirmed, I commit to look into this
20 issue, look at ways to, if we could, get help in working
21 with the services to get rid of those that we can get rid
22 of; and if not, figure out a way to mitigate the exposure.

23 And, again, working with the service, I will give them
24 the medical, environmental health experience that we bring,
25 and hopefully, we will come out with a solution set that

1 will, (A), prevent servicemembers and family members from
2 getting exposed to these chemicals, and if not, ways to
3 mitigate, and if needed, treated for the conditions.

4 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you.

5 One of the things that the Department is doing right
6 now is fulfilling its requirement to provide PFAS blood
7 testing for firefighters, but it doesn't encompass the
8 broader military family.

9 So, do you believe that blood testing for
10 servicemembers and military families stationed at
11 installations with known PFAS exposure should be offered
12 blood testing?

13 Dr. Martinez-Lopez: Senator, again, this is a
14 concerning issue to all of us. We need to come out with an
15 action plan.

16 If confirmed, I will work with a health affairs team to
17 try and figure out an answer to your question. Right now, I
18 am not prepared to answer one way or the other, because I
19 don't know. But I hope that, if confirmed, I will be able
20 to come back to you and give you a clinical answer that is
21 relevant to those exposed to these chemicals.

22 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. I really appreciate that
23 and I am sure that this committee will be interested in
24 working with you on that.

25 Mr. Storch, I talked about the DOD IG report back in

1 July on PFAS exposure. The report revealed that sufficient
2 protective measures have not been taken to reduce exposure
3 to PFAS substances and that PFAS blood testing programs for
4 firefighters were underutilized to track exposure.

5 So, can you talk about how you would see your role in
6 monitoring progress related to PFAS testing and remediation.

7 Mr. Storch: Absolutely, Senator.

8 You know, it is, I am familiar with the report that you
9 are talking about, obviously, and it is part of all OIG's
10 work, not just to issue reports, but then to follow-up, as
11 appropriate, right. So, we track the recommendations across
12 the IG community.

13 I am not, obviously, familiar with the particular
14 status of those, but if I am confirmed, I certainly would
15 look into that. And it is the IG's job to make sure that
16 the agency is taking timely and appropriate action to meet
17 the intent of our recommendations. So, I would work with a
18 team at the OIG to make sure that is being done.

19 And, additionally, as we do that, we often find areas
20 for additional review that are warranted and we would
21 continue to be open to that, as well, and if appropriate, do
22 such a review. Thank you.

23 Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

24 Again, I know this committee looks forward to working
25 with you on that and doing what we can to be responsive.

1 Mr. Lowman, again, if confirmed, you will be
2 responsible for overseeing energy and environmental policies
3 within the Department. Identifying the source of PFAS in
4 the environment is crucial to protecting safe drinking water
5 in our communities, particularly at DOD installations.

6 So, can you talk about how you will work with the EPA
7 to develop and employ new methods to address PFAS?

8 Mr. Lowman: Senator, thank you.

9 So, first, let me just say that the safety of our
10 servicemembers, families, and local communities is of
11 paramount importance. I understand that the Deputy
12 Secretary of Defense just signed out a memorandum
13 establishing an Assistant Secretary of Defense for energy,
14 environment, and installations.

15 And so, if confirmed, I will work very closely with the
16 new ASD EI&E to make sure that there is a deliberate and
17 efficient transfer of the personnel and resources and
18 policies from ASDS to the ASD EI&E to enable success and
19 continue the momentum in this area.

20 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you very much. I really
21 appreciate that.

22 And I am out of time, but Mr. Beshar, I would just
23 point out that the Air Force was very responsive when PFAS
24 showed up in the water at the former Pease Air Force Base in
25 Portsmouth, New Hampshire. And I would hope that you, in

1 your role, will continue to support those efforts and
2 encourage continued responsiveness on the part of the Air
3 Force when PFAS shows up at installations.

4 Mr. Beshar: I will, Senator.

5 Senator Shaheen: Thank you very much.

6 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

8 Senator Cramer, please?

9 Senator Cramer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10 Thank you all for being here, for your willingness to
11 serve, and congratulations to all of you.

12 I have a couple of questions, Dr. Martinez that I want
13 to focus in on with you. And a little feedback there. I am
14 going to start with, you are obviously familiar with
15 fertility awareness, so the fertility awareness-based
16 method, a natural type of pregnancy that is -- is used by
17 several women; obviously, it enables them to observe and
18 chart changes in one or biomarkers. It is a method, of
19 course, that has no side effects. It is relatively
20 inexpensive. Currently, though, there is a lack of access
21 to this at military installations or treatment facilities
22 and, of course, TRICARE doesn't cover it.

23 Would you commit to looking into adding fertility
24 awareness-based methods to the options that our
25 servicemembers have when they are doing their family

1 planning?

2 Dr. Martinez-Lopez: Senator, thank you very much for
3 the question.

4 You know, the healthcare of all servicemembers,
5 including female servicemembers, is of utmost importance to
6 the Department. If I get confirmed, I would commit to you,
7 we need to look at ways to bring parity for reproductive
8 health issues relating to our servicemembers.

9 So, yes, I will be looking into those kinds of issues
10 and we need to come out with a parity equation with the rest
11 of the nation for how we address all those issues.

12 Senator Cramer: I appreciate that. I will look
13 forward to that upon your confirmation and to following up.

14 Also, you know, DARPA's pandemic preparedness program,
15 Doctor, was really integral in lots of ways. I mean, it was
16 very successful, but it was particularly integral for
17 antibody-discovery programs and that, of course, led to a
18 therapeutic to combat COVID. And now, I think we see, as we
19 look back on that and as we look forward, that these
20 therapies are probably the best defense and maybe even the
21 best offense in combatting COVID and, perhaps, other viruses
22 in the future.

23 So, there is a company in North Dakota, Genovac that
24 has been leading and working with DARPA in antibody
25 discovery. And through them I have seen just how very fast

1 we are able to respond and quickly we can develop these
2 targeted responses to other viral threats.

3 So, do you agree that we should be devoting as much, if
4 not more, resources for therapeutic discovery and
5 development, and then, and maybe if you just want to
6 elaborate a little bit on what else DOD can do to prepare
7 for future pandemics along these lines.

8 Dr. Martinez-Lopez: Senator, my last post was at a
9 command at Fort Detrick and I am very proud that, to have
10 been part of that exercise, of bringing about new technology
11 that now we see all over, serving the country well. I was
12 partnered with DTRA. I was partnered with DARPA, trying to
13 advance this kind of technology and, by the way, mRNAs, you
14 know, vaccines, that is where they came about from.

15 Senator Cramer: Yes.

16 Dr. Martinez-Lopez: The genesis of all that new
17 technology was a DOD-based research, you know, program.

18 So, if confirmed, sir, I would love to keep being a
19 proud member of that team that advances science for the
20 country and comes out with new solution sets to the new
21 problems that we are going to be facing.

22 Senator Cramer: That is great, Doctor.

23 I might, then, use this opportunity, as I often like to
24 do, to invite you to North Dakota to Fargo, to see some of
25 what is going on right there. And you can either come in

1 February, that earns you a lot of street cred, or you can
2 come in June, which is just a, you know, nice time to visit.

3 With that, I yield back.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Cramer.

6 Now, via Webex, let me recognize Senator Gillibrand,
7 please.

8 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

9 And welcome to all our nominees.

10 First, for Mr. Storch, Mr. Storch, in your current
11 position as NSA Inspector General, are you familiar with the
12 DOD's IG's ongoing assessment of the response from DOD
13 components to the intrusions of unidentified aerial
14 phenomenon into controlled DOD airspace, as well as UAP
15 activities around naval and air operations; further, do you
16 think the NSA has been responsive to the DOD's IG inquiries?

17 Mr. Storch: Thank you for the question, Senator.

18 I am afraid that is not an issue with which I am
19 currently familiar; however, if confirmed, I certainly am
20 willing to look into that and to take any action that is
21 appropriate.

22 Senator Gillibrand: Well, thank you.

23 And, if confirmed, can I have your commitment to
24 sustain this comprehensive assessment until it reaches its
25 appropriate conclusion, including the possibility of follow-

1 on actions, such as audits or investigations, if the
2 assessment recommends as much?

3 Mr. Storch: Well, again, I honestly am not familiar
4 with that particular review, but as is typical, I think,
5 across the IG community, when a new IG comes in, if there
6 are pending matters, those would continue in the office and
7 it would be perfectly appropriate to examine them.

8 And if I am confirmed, I can assure you that anything
9 that is pending when I am in the office, I will give my best
10 attention to and if there is appropriate follow-up to be
11 done, we will do it.

12 Senator Gillibrand: Okay. So, since you are familiar,
13 can you please familiarize yourself with this issue and
14 respond to both of those questions in writing before your
15 confirmation, please?

16 Mr. Storch: Yes, ma'am.

17 [The information referred to follows:]

18 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Gillibrand: Okay. Mr. Lowman, recently,
2 Balfour Beatty Corporation, a privatized military housing
3 contract, pleaded guilty to defrauding the DOD and was
4 ordered to pay \$65 million in damages. Balfour Beatty's
5 lack of maintenance unnecessarily exposed military families
6 to toxic mold, insect infestations, water leaks, and burst
7 pipes, causing health problems like migraines, asthma, and
8 skin conditions. Despite the fraud, Balfour still manages
9 military housing on installations across the country.

10 In January, I joined 16 of my democratic colleagues in
11 sending the Department of Defense a letter asking how they
12 plan to protect servicemembers and their families going
13 forward.

14 If confirmed, how do you plan on correcting
15 deficiencies in military privitized housing systems to
16 protect servicemembers and their families from hazardous
17 living conditions?

18 Mr. Lowman: Thank you, Senator.

19 So, our servicemembers sacrifice much in the service to
20 this nation, along with their families, and at a minimum,
21 they deserve safe, clean housing to reside in. And so, I
22 understand, Senator that the Deputy Secretary of Defense
23 signed out memorandum yesterday creating an Assistant
24 Secretary of Defense for Energy, Installations, and the
25 Environment.

1 So, if confirmed, I will work with the ASD EI&E to
2 ensure that we have a deliberate and planned transition of
3 the resources, the policies, and the personnel necessary to
4 ensure that that organization is stood up and is able to
5 hold contractors, such as Balfour Beatty, accountable.

6 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

7 Mr. Beshar, congratulations and welcome. I have a
8 tough question for you, too. In November 2021 DOD IG Report
9 highlighted several deficiencies with the Department's
10 special victims investigation and prosecution capabilities.

11 The report specifically identified shortcomings within
12 the Air Force's prosecution of special victims cases,
13 finding that the Air Force only assigns special victims-
14 certified prosecutors in 6 percent of eligible cases, which
15 is, by far, the lowest among the services. It is
16 unacceptable to not assign trained personnel to deal with
17 these complex and sensitive cases.

18 If confirmed, do you intend to assist the Secretary in
19 addressing this issue and do you further commit to ensuring
20 there are enough trained personnel to handle these sensitive
21 cases?

22 Mr. Beshar: Senator Gillibrand, fostering a culture of
23 integrity and inclusion within the Department is
24 extraordinarily important. I think the diversity is what
25 makes our forces the greatest in the world.

1 I am not familiar in my current position, outside of
2 government, with the level of staffing, but certainly trying
3 to have a number of qualified investigators able to look
4 into those types of matters would be important, and, if
5 confirmed, I would work toward that goal.

6 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you very much, Mr. Beshar.

7 And with my last 10 seconds, for Dr. Martinez-Lopez, in
8 January, I wrote a letter calling on TRICARE to expand its
9 coverage to include at-home testing for servicemembers and
10 their families, without a physician referral.

11 Will you commit to expanding coverage of the at-home
12 testing in order to ensure our forces sustain readiness?

13 And I have three questions specifically on suicide and
14 mental health capacity, which I will forward for the record
15 so that you can respond to it after the hearing.

16 [The information referred to follows:]

17 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Dr. Martinez-Lopez: Senator, thank you very much for
2 the question.

3 You know, healthcare parity of the services we offer to
4 our servicemembers, family members, and retirees has to be
5 very important to us. So, if confirmed, I will look at,
6 with my team, I will work hard to understand better what
7 prevents us from achieving parity and I will strive for
8 that. If I need help, I probably may come back to ask for
9 help, but I commit that I will look at solution sets that
10 will bring healthcare parity for all.

11 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

12 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 And thank you to our nominees.

14 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Gillibrand.

15 Let me recognize Senator Blackburn, please.

16 Senator Blackburn: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 And to each of you, I want to say thank you for
18 willingness to serve our country and for your family's
19 willingness to allow you to serve our country.

20 Mr. Lowman, I want to come to you first. FSRM is
21 something that we in Tennessee talk about a good bit,
22 because as you are aware, we have a heavy military presence
23 in our state, and this is something important to us.

24 What is the current backlog on FSRM? What is that
25 deficit right now?

1 Mr. Lowman: Senator, thank you for that question.

2 So, FSRM is critical to sustaining the readiness of our
3 services.

4 Senator Blackburn: Yeah. What is the deficit?

5 Mr. Lowman: Ma'am, I am not familiar with the current
6 deficit.

7 Senator Blackburn: Okay.

8 Mr. Lowman: I would have to --

9 Senator Blackburn: I think we want to get that number,
10 because it is billions in backlogged projects.

11 [The information referred to follows:]

12 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Blackburn: And then, do you think it is an
2 issue of priority or under-resourcing that DOD has acquired
3 such a backlog?

4 Mr. Lowman: Senator, thank you again.

5 I understand, Senator, that the Deputy Secretary of
6 Defense has created a new position, Assistant Secretary of
7 Defense for installations, energy, and the environment. So,
8 this particular FSRM topic is no longer in the ASDS
9 sustainment portfolio; however, if confirmed, I would be
10 happy to work with the ASD EI&E to better under the issue
11 and to ensure that you get answers to your questions.

12 Senator Blackburn: Well, it is a portfolio that has
13 grown so large that it takes the attention of more than
14 one --

15 Mr. Lowman: Yes, ma'am.

16 Senator Blackburn: -- at this point. And it is, it
17 does have an impact, as you are aware, on recruiting, on
18 retention, and on the programs that are being implemented
19 and the projects that are being carried out inside those
20 facilities.

21 So, I would like a commitment from you that if you are
22 confirmed, that you will visit Arnold Engineering
23 Development Center in Tennessee with me. This is an Air
24 Force Base and at Arnold, they are carrying out our
25 hypersonics testing; that is where we have our Air Force

1 wind tunnels. It is where autonomous vehicles are being
2 tested for the Air Force. Its importance is growing because
3 of Space Force location in Huntsville, Alabama, which is in
4 cash flows proximity to Arnold on the Tennessee side of the
5 line. So, it is quite important to us.

6 Do I have your commitment?

7 Mr. Lowman: You do, ma'am.

8 Senator Blackburn: Thank you, I appreciate that.

9 Mr. Beshar, welcome. How does the Air Force balance
10 this initiative that Secretary Austin has started with a
11 working group on countering extremist activities?

12 And this is something that, from our families of
13 enlisted men and women, I am hearing a good bit about this,
14 because you have got to hit a balance with that so that you,
15 and you have to look at how it impacts the rights of the
16 person in uniform and their personal beliefs and the role
17 that the Department is going to have there in protecting
18 these civil liberties. So, how do you do that?

19 Mr. Beshar: Senator Blackburn, I think the
20 overwhelming majority of airmen and guardians, and, indeed,
21 the two-million-plus members of the total force serve this
22 country with honor and dignity and consistent with their
23 oaths.

24 There is the working group that has been established to
25 try to provide guidance around the contours of prohibited

1 activities, and, if confirmed, trying to strike the very
2 balance that you have spoken about between First Amendment
3 rights and the need for good and order and discipline would
4 be a priority.

5 Senator Blackburn: Thank you.

6 Mr. Storch, I want to come to you on this COVID vaccine
7 issue that we have with DOD. At Fort Campbell, we have
8 heard a little bit about this, as you can imagine.

9 And, by the way, Mr. Chairman, I notice that we have a
10 series of letters from Senator Johnson in his capacity.

11 Have these been submitted to the nominees or submitted
12 to the record for discussion?

13 Chairman Reed: Excuse me, ma'am?

14 Senator Blackburn: Okay. I am referencing the
15 letters.

16 Chairman Reed: There are a series of letters that
17 Senator Tuberville --

18 Senator Blackburn: Yes. Have they been submitted to
19 --

20 Chairman Reed: They have not been submitted for the
21 record yet, ma'am.

22 Senator Blackburn: Okay. Let's submit them to the
23 record --

24 Chairman Reed: Without objection.

25 Senator Blackburn: -- and questions for response. I

1 think that would be important to you, Mr. Storch.

2 [The information referred to follows:]

3 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Blackburn: I would like to know where your
2 views are on implementing the vaccine mandate on civilian
3 personnel and on our DOD contractors, and then with our men
4 and women in uniform, how the consideration is given for
5 their medical and religious procedures, how we are
6 addressing natural immunity, which is stronger than the
7 immunity received from a vaccine over time. So, let's do
8 all of that for the record. That gets you off the hook
9 right now.

10 And Dr. Martinez --

11 Mr. Storch: I have the answer ready to go.

12 [Laughter.]

13 Senator Blackburn: Well, okay.

14 Mr. Chairman, can he give his answer?

15 Chairman Reed: A brief answer, please, for Senator
16 Blackburn.

17 Mr. Storch: Yes, Senator.

18 All I was really going to say is that, you know, IGs
19 are authoritative when we speak based upon our work, and so
20 I am aware that the DOD IG is doing some work in the areas
21 you have discussed and as I indicated previously, if there
22 is additional work to be done after I am confirmed, we will
23 look into that, as well. I can't make that assessment now.

24 So, that is it; yes, ma'am.

25 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Blackburn.

1 And could I ask the witnesses to move their microphones
2 closer. That will help us all hear you much better. Thank
3 you very much.

4 Now, let me recognize Senator Blumenthal, please.

5 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 I want to second the remarks made by Senator Shaheen
7 about the importance of combatting pollution from PFAS. It
8 is very important to Connecticut, where some of the runoffs
9 from our military bases have threatened civilian
10 populations. But PFAS is only one of the chemicals that
11 seems to be emanating from bases around the United States,
12 maybe around the world.

13 I am sure that my colleague Senator Hirono has focused
14 on the Navy's Red Hill Fuel Storage Facility in Hawaii in
15 preparation for this hearing.

16 Camp Lejeune in North Carolina has, literally,
17 hundreds, maybe thousands of families severely, adversely
18 affected by toxic water that caused cancer and other very
19 serious health issues for thousands of veterans and their
20 families.

21 My colleagues and I, Senator Tillis and I have led an
22 effort to give those families a measure of justice. It is
23 called the "Camp Lejeune Justice Act; bipartisan legislation
24 that would correct unfair legal barriers and enable people
25 affected by toxic exposure at Camp Lejeune to present

1 evidence of exposure before a Court, which right now, they
2 can't practically do.

3 And I have called on the Department of Defense to
4 provide a national audit of all military installations to
5 determine where contaminants are present.

6 Mr. Lowman, will you commit to doing a national audit
7 of all military installations to determine where
8 contaminants are, what can be done to stop them and how to
9 provide justice to families and veterans affected?

10 Mr. Lowman: Senator, thank you.

11 So, our servicemembers deserve to serve on
12 installations free of contamination, and so, if confirmed,
13 what I can commit to is working very closely with the new
14 Assistant Secretary of Defense for installations,
15 environment, and energy to ensure that we gain an
16 understanding of where those contaminants lie -- I am sorry
17 for tripping on that word, Senator -- so, where those
18 contamination areas are on our installations and then
19 initiating the appropriate actions to remediate that
20 contamination.

21 Senator Blumenthal: Well, don't you think that a
22 national audit of military installations is a good idea?

23 And I know that you are going to work closely with the
24 new Secretary and so forth and so on, but you, personally,
25 don't we need to do it?

1 Mr. Lowman: Senator, I do believe that we need to
2 identify where those areas of contamination are and what is
3 driving the contamination and then taking on the necessary
4 and appropriate actions to remediate those, as necessary.
5 Our servicemembers absolutely deserve a clean environment to
6 live on and operate from.

7 Senator Blumenthal: Well, I really think that a
8 systemic change here is required. Appointing a new
9 Assistant Secretary maybe will help, but what is really
10 needed is action in this area.

11 And I would like to ask you, do you support the right
12 of individuals exposed to toxic water at Camp Lejeune since
13 1953 to bring legal action against the United States
14 Government, as would be provided in the Camp Lejeune Justice
15 Act?

16 Mr. Lowman: Senator, I am not familiar with that
17 particular issue, but believe strongly that wherever
18 contamination occurs and personnel that have been
19 contaminated, that there is redress available to those
20 servicemembers and that that be addressed appropriately.

21 I will commit to working closely within the Department,
22 within the senior Army leadership, and certainly with the
23 legal channels to better under that issue. And, if
24 confirmed as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for
25 Sustainment, wherever sustainment activities are

1 contributing to that contamination, developing the necessary
2 policies and processes to remediate that as quickly as
3 possible.

4 Senator Blumenthal: Well, I appreciate that answer. I
5 will be following up with more questions for the record.

6 Mr. Storch, you and I talked at some length about your
7 record at NSA, which I thought was commendable for
8 emphasizing transparency and I hope that you will cooperate
9 with this committee in trying to move toward declassifying
10 more information that the public needs and deserves;
11 particularly, for example, on civilian casualties of drone
12 strikes, where IG reports, I think, could be extremely
13 informative and valuable to public understanding of the,
14 perhaps, unforeseen and unintended effects that have to be
15 avoided in the future. So, I appreciate your commitment to
16 transparency and I believe we have your commitment to
17 continuing it.

18 Mr. Storch: Senator, I believe very strongly that a
19 core function of IGs is to promote transparency in the work
20 that we do and I am going to do everything I can, if I am
21 confirmed, to continue that.

22 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you.

23 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.

25 Senator Cotton, please?

1 Senator Cotton: Dr. Martinez, I want to speak about
2 the Defense Health Agency. When it was founded a few years
3 back, one concern that we heard is that services might pull
4 back staffing from joint medical billets if they perceive
5 higher needs in their own commands.

6 This was enough of a concern for the committee that in
7 the most recent NDAA, we passed a provision that required
8 the services to maintain an 85 percent of the manning
9 requirements from the 2016 joint table of distribution at
10 joint hospital and clinic settings.

11 I am concerned that what we heard at the time when the
12 DHA was founded, it may be coming to pass. I know you have
13 been out for a few years. As you prepared for the hearing,
14 prepared to take on this responsibility, is this a concern
15 that you have heard that services may be pulling back,
16 somewhat, from these joint medical billets to make sure
17 their own facilities are fully staffed?

18 Dr. Martinez-Lopez: Senator, as I am coming in, the
19 number one issue I am concerned about is the readiness of
20 the force. So, if I am confirmed, I will work with the team
21 to understand better your question and the particulars of
22 detriments or plus ops, whatever is required.

23 But the litmus test must be, are we going to create an
24 environment that encourages readiness, so, or are we taking
25 away from that?

1 If the answer is we are taking away from that, we have
2 to relook. If the answer is we are going in the right
3 direction, I will reinforce that issue.

4 So, if confirmed, again, I commit that that will be my
5 driving force and I hope that I can bring a positive change
6 to the military health system.

7 Senator Cotton: Well, thank you. I look forward to
8 working with you on that. Like I said, I know you have been
9 out for a while, so I don't expect you to have all the
10 details ready at your fingertips.

11 Maybe after you have been on the job, after
12 confirmation, in 30 days, we can talk about where the
13 manning stands at all the joint medical facilities and
14 especially at the crown jewel, at Walter Reed up the road.

15 Dr. Martinez-Lopez: Senator, it would be my honor.

16 Senator Cotton: Another issue that I have heard some
17 concerns about in recent years is the amount of time that it
18 takes to authorize military healthcare for all government
19 employees who are experiencing symptoms from what has been
20 called "anomalous health incidents," also known as the
21 "Havana Syndrome."

22 This is not a question or a concern about the source of
23 the so-called Havana Syndrome symptoms or who may or may not
24 be responsible for them; I know that has been in the media a
25 lot lately. This is simply about those people who are

1 experiencing those symptoms and making sure that they get
2 timely care.

3 Again, we were concerned enough about it on this
4 committee that in the most recent NDAA, we directed the
5 Secretary of Defense to provide timely access for an
6 assessment, subject to space and availability at the
7 National Intrepid Center or any other appropriate military,
8 medical treatment facility, and to furnish that care to all
9 U.S. Government employees and their family members who may
10 experience these symptoms.

11 If confirmed, can you ensure that government employees
12 and their family members who experience anomalous health
13 incident symptoms can get timely access to evaluation and
14 treatment at a military hospital or at the National Intrepid
15 Center?

16 Dr. Martinez-Lopez: Senator, I will work with the
17 other departments and agencies and, yes, I will work hard to
18 streamline the access to those that require it.

19 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

20 I think it is really important; obviously, these
21 incidents are centered mostly around our embassies, where we
22 do have uniformed servicemembers as Defense attaches or
23 other positions. But Americans who are serving in those
24 positions, whether at State or another government agency,
25 also need the benefit of the expertise, I think, that the

1 military brings to bear.

2 Mr. Lowman, a question for you. I have recently
3 introduced bipartisan legislation with Senator Kelly called
4 the REEShore Act that would secure the supply chain for
5 rare-earth elements and several other critical minerals.

6 It has recently come to my attention that the Defense
7 Logistics Agency's National Defense Stockpile has been
8 dangerously underfunded for years. I am greatly concerned
9 that we rely too heavily on Chinese processing facilities to
10 refine the raw materials necessary for our systems.

11 If confirmed, can you commit to me to making sure that
12 the National Defense Stockpile's budget and authorization
13 requests match the requirements that are set forth by law?

14 Mr. Lowman: Senator, there will be no greater advocate
15 in the Department for the necessary materials and the
16 resources needed; one, to sustain readiness, but, two, to
17 mitigate and build resiliency within our national defense
18 supply chains.

19 Senator Cotton: Thank you. I appreciate it.

20 And I just want to stress it again, this is a solvable
21 problem. The irony about rare-earth elements is that they
22 are anything but rare. You could probably go out on the
23 National Mall and dig up most of them. What is rare is the
24 actually mining and the manufacturing processing of it,
25 which we foolishly outsourced to China over recent decades

1 and it is vital that we get that production out of China,
2 back into the United States, and I also encourage our
3 partners to produce those minerals and refine them as well.

4 Thank you.

5 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Cotton.

6 Senator Hirono, please?

7 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 Welcome and congratulations to all of our nominees.

9 Normally, I start each nomination hearing with a series
10 of questions related to a nominee's fitness for service;
11 however, based on the severity of the ongoing water
12 contamination crisis on Oahu, I am going to submit those
13 questions for the record.

14 I am not sure how familiar you are with Red Hill. It
15 is a massive underground fuel storage facility, consisting
16 of 20 massive World War II tanks, located 100 feet over
17 Oahu's aquifer that holds 250 million gallons of fuel to
18 support military operations across the Indo-Pacific. The
19 storage facility has contaminated the Navy's water system,
20 displacing almost 4,000 families since December. As a
21 result, the State of Hawaii has directed the Navy to de-fuel
22 the tanks.

23 The Department of Defense estimates the cost of the
24 crisis response, alone to date, is almost \$500 million and
25 that does not include de-fueling the tanks or the cost of

1 upgrades to do so safely.

2 The Navy must immediately resolve the drinking water
3 crisis and the Department of Defense must develop a long-
4 term plan for strategic fuel storage. The people of Hawaii
5 deserve a resolution to the Red Hill crisis as quickly as
6 possible, including a decision regarding the potential
7 closing of Red Hill.

8 The fastest way to do this is through the State of
9 Hawaii's ongoing hearing to determine whether to provide or
10 deny a permit to operate Red Hill. At the end of the day,
11 the health and safety of the people of Hawaii and the
12 military members and their families is my top priority; a
13 goal shared by the Secretary of Defense. The fundamental
14 component of health and safety is access to clean drinking
15 water; a goal we should all be focused on.

16 A question for Mr. Storch. In November, I led the
17 effort, along with my colleagues from the Hawaii delegation,
18 in calling for the DOD Inspector General to start an
19 independent investigation into Navy oversight and operation
20 at the Red Hill bulk fuel storage facility. Even if the
21 State of Hawaii declines to give Red Hill a permit, it is
22 imperative that investigation continues. The people of
23 Hawaii deserve answers about what happened in order to mend
24 the distrust of the military that has resulted from this
25 crisis.

1 Mr. Storch, if confirmed, will you continue the current
2 IG investigation into Red Hill with the urgency it deserves?

3 Mr. Storch: Thank you for the question, Senator.

4 I am aware of the pendency of an evaluation. I am not
5 familiar with the current status of it. But if I am
6 confirmed, certainly, I will work with the term at the OIG
7 to ensure that it is appropriately followed through on and
8 any appropriate recommendations made and those are followed
9 through on, as well.

10 If I can, I would just mention, with regard to Senator
11 Gillibrand's question, I don't think I answered it very
12 articulately, but it would essentially be the same answer,
13 that I am not aware, as the IG of NSA, of the current status
14 of pending evaluations at other offices, but if I am
15 confirmed, I will make sure that we follow through, as
16 appropriate. Thank you.

17 Senator Hirono: Thank you.

18 Mr. Lowman, a long-term concern I know the military has
19 with respect to Red Hill is the national security impact
20 that de-fueling and shutting down the facility could have.

21 I have spoken with Deputy Secretary Hicks several times
22 about this concern. She has launched a thorough review of
23 the facilities long-term future to include the option of
24 permanently de-fueling Red Hill and is analyzing the
25 distribution of fuel reserves for operations in the Pacific

1 theater.

2 And you mentioned already in your testimony that you
3 indicate that the Indo-Pacific needs, which is, of course, a
4 huge AOR, and the supplies that will be required, that
5 includes fuel, so that is something that you have already
6 acknowledged. The Department needs a storage and logistics
7 solution for the strategic fuel reserves and this is an
8 issue that will likely require extensive funds and direction
9 from Congress.

10 Mr. Lowman, if confirmed, you will be responsible for
11 overseeing the fuel requirements for the Department. Very
12 briefly, how do you intend to approach this issue?

13 Mr. Lowman: Senator, thank you.

14 I am aware of a couple of ongoing initiatives. One you
15 referenced already, the DSD's sponsored study of the
16 strategic positioning of petroleum supplies in the Indo-
17 Pacific at echelon and whether any changes in the
18 positioning of that fuel can be made.

19 The second one, ma'am, are establishing an end-to-end
20 common operating picture of our petroleum supplies using
21 advanced data analytics and AI, where appropriate, so that
22 we can better manage the flow, the consumption, and the
23 overall transportation requirements.

24 So, if confirmed, I will work very closely with the
25 DLA, USTRANSCOM, the COCOMs, and the services to ensure

1 that, one, these initiatives have the appropriate oversight
2 at the Department and, two, that they remain records and on
3 track for successful conclusion.

4 Senator Hirono: Mr. Chairman, with regard to Red Hill,
5 it is highly likely that the State of Hawaii will not grant
6 a permit for the continuing operations of Red Hill and,
7 therefore, we are going to need to address how we are going
8 to meet the fueling needs of the Indo-Pacific AOR. I have
9 some other questions that I would like to submit for the
10 record.

11 Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

12 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Hirono.

13 Senator Tillis, please?

14 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 I will defer to Senator Sullivan.

16 Chairman Reed: Senator Sullivan, please?

17 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 And thank you to my friend Senator Tillis.

19 Gentlemen, congratulations on your nominations. You
20 know, as the chairman of this important committee knows,
21 Alaska constitutes three pillars of America's military
22 might. We are the cornerstone of Missile Defense for the
23 whole nation. All the radar ground-based missile
24 interceptors are almost all in Alaska.

25 We are the hub of air combat power. By the end of this

1 year, we will have over 100 fifth-generation fighters in,
2 based in Alaska. No place on the planet Earth has 100
3 fifth-gen fighters in one location.

4 And we are a platform for expeditionary forces to
5 deploy anywhere in the world on a moment's notice. We are
6 very close to a lot of the hotspots in Asia; much closer
7 than anyplace in the United States, even places, much closer
8 than places like Australia. A lot of people don't know
9 that.

10 So, whether you have been to Alaska or not, I would
11 like to get a commitment from each of you, early in your
12 tenure, to come up to Alaska, either with me or with your
13 team, to see firsthand, the critical importance of my state
14 to the national security of our nation.

15 Mr. Storch?

16 Why don't we just go down the line?

17 The answer is yes --

18 Mr. Storch: Yeah. No, I am trying to make sure my
19 mike is on.

20 Senator Sullivan: -- to a really easy question.

21 Mr. Storch: Yes, I would be, I have never been to
22 Alaska. I know it is an important place. I would be
23 honored to visit there and understand the issues.

24 Senator Sullivan: All right. So, you are committing
25 to come to Alaska?

1 Mr. Storch: Sure.

2 Senator Sullivan: Yes. Okay. Great.

3 Dr. Martinez-Lopez?

4 Dr. Martinez-Lopez: Sir, the answer is yes.

5 Senator Sullivan: Great. Thank you. Good.

6 Mr. Lowman: Senator, Alaska is critical and it is
7 positioned uniquely on the globe, so I would commit to, one,
8 coming to Alaska to better understand the unique environment
9 and challenges that exist there. I want to work with the
10 ASDA, as well as my staff and the services, to ensure that
11 the sustainment capabilities in Alaska are up to the task to
12 maintain readiness and ensure that combat power. So, yes, I
13 will come and visit.

14 Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

15 Mr. Beshar?

16 Mr. Beshar: Yes.

17 Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

18 I want to follow-up on Senator Hirono's talk about Red
19 Hill. I was recently out in the INDOPACOM AOR and I will
20 tell you, I mean, I don't have to, she is doing a great job,
21 but this is a huge issue and I certainly want to work with
22 her and this committee.

23 When we talk about strategic location, Mr. Lowman, I
24 would actually like to get your commitment. As you are
25 really looking at the really complex issues here, and they

1 are complex, but it is logistics in the INDOPACOM theater.

2 One area that hasn't gotten a lot of discussion on
3 this, the U.S. Navy has been thinking strongly about warming
4 up the very strategically located naval base, formal naval
5 base of Adak, Alaska. It is further west than Hawaii. It
6 is way out in the Aleutian Islands chain, but is a big
7 former base with massive fuel storage capabilities. I am
8 not sure it is the answer, but it is certainly something
9 that should be looked at, as this really complicated and
10 difficult issue in Hawaii is being addressed.

11 Can I get your commitment, Mr. Lowman, to just take a
12 look at that as one potential part of the solution?

13 As Senator Hirono mentioned, having the logistics and
14 fueling capability in the INDOPACOM region is enormously
15 important, especially to our Navy fleet. This is one
16 element of a potential solution that hasn't been looked at,
17 and I think it should be looked at.

18 Can I get your commitment to look at that?

19 Mr. Lowman: Senator, I think all options, in this
20 case, should be on the table. And so, if confirmed, I will
21 work with TRANSCOM, DLA, and the other OSD stakeholders to,
22 one, expeditiously complete the review and the study and
23 make the appropriate recommendations.

24 Senator Sullivan: Great. Thank you.

25 And I do want to work with Senator Hirono on this, as

1 well.

2 Mr. Storch and Mr. Beshar, one issue that I have been
3 focused on, because I think it has been misreported, and to
4 be perfectly honest, I think it has been a blight,
5 unfortunately, from some members of this administration, on
6 the military force itself, is this issue on extremism. We
7 don't want any extremist actions, actors in our military.

8 Unfortunately, I think when Under Secretary Kahl came
9 before this committee, he said that stamping out systemic
10 racism in the ranks was one of his top priorities. I asked
11 him, wow, that is a pretty broad statement.

12 Do you have any data on that?

13 He had no data, of course.

14 The media wildly reports this as some kind of giant
15 crisis in the military. We had a member here who actually
16 said estimates are 10 percent of the force would be, could
17 be branded as extremist or racist.

18 When the military actually did the study, finally, they
19 found that less than 100 cases in a force of over 2 million
20 were undertaking prohibited, extremist activities. Now,
21 look, we want -- we don't -- we want zero, but that is .005
22 percent of the force.

23 So, can I get your commitment as you are looking at
24 these issues to make sure that you are reminding people
25 that, as Mr. Beshar said, these are the best and brightest

1 in the country, and wild claims that the Washington Post and
2 other media constantly throw out there -- they are clueless
3 -- really besmirches the men and women in the force who do
4 what less than 1 percent of people in our country do, which
5 is raise their hand and volunteer to protect the
6 Constitution and their fellow Americans.

7 So, Mr. Storch and Mr. Beshar, can I get your
8 commitment on that issue to make sure you are looking at it
9 with the data and not with these wild claims?

10 Under Secretary Kahl was no help on this. But it is a
11 really important issue and a lot of members are feeling kind
12 of like these accusations are directed at them. It is
13 really outrageous.

14 Can I get a comment from both of you on this?

15 Mr. Storch: Senator, as you are now doubt aware, the
16 OIG is doing work in this area currently. I certainly can
17 tell you that if I am confirmed, I will ensure that we are
18 following the facts, wherever they are, and reporting them
19 out as appropriate. Absolutely.

20 Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

21 Mr. Beshar: Senator Sullivan, you have my commitment
22 to study the issue closely with the type of balance that you
23 just articulated.

24 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, gentlemen.

25 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

1 Next, I would like to recognize Senator King, via
2 Webex.

3 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 Starting with Dr. Martinez-Lopez, there is an epidemic
5 within the military and within our military veteran
6 community and that is suicide. I call it is a disease of
7 despair.

8 And we have taken various steps, but I hope that this,
9 attending to this matter and working on prevention, the
10 identification of high risks, how to intervene properly to
11 prevent it will be one of your priorities, because this is
12 literally killing both, active-duty military members and,
13 particularly, veterans.

14 Dr. Martinez-Lopez: Senator, thank you very much for
15 championing this cause.

16 One suicide is too many. It is a daughter. It is a
17 husband, brother, sister. And I have been on the receiving
18 end, as a physician, where I have dealt with this and it is
19 devastating not only to the families but devastating to the
20 who force.

21 So, I come with energy, if confirmed, to tackle this
22 issue. We need to bring new eyes. I will bring eyes from
23 academia, from other places. We need to bring about new
24 technology, no ways of looking at ways to mitigate this. We
25 need to look at expanding the mental health services in such

1 a way that they hit the mark and really prevent this awful
2 occurrence. So, again, if confirmed, I commit to really
3 work hard, initially, on this issue, sir.

4 Senator King: Thank you. I really appreciate that.

5 This is not strictly related, but this is not a medical
6 issue, but a software issue. We continue to have this
7 frustrating problem of a lack of interoperability between
8 the Department of Defense medical record system and the
9 Veterans Administration.

10 Will you give me a commitment to really dig into this,
11 because this is, as I say, this is software; this isn't, we
12 are not trying to, you know, cure all the world's diseases
13 here. We are just trying to have two systems talk to one
14 another. Please take this on, also, as a project.

15 Dr. Martinez-Lopez: Senator, the electronic health
16 record is key to many of the new ways to deliver healthcare,
17 right. So, it is a critical component to not only the
18 servicemember, but the veteran.

19 So, if confirmed, you have my commitment that I will
20 work with the Department of VA to promote this and make sure
21 that not only the employees in the Department of Defense but
22 the lessons learned from the Department of Defense are
23 transferred to the Department of Veterans Affairs, because
24 we owe that to our servicemembers and we owe that to the
25 veterans that have so proudly served.

1 Senator King: It also relates back to the suicide
2 issue. I have met with veterans and people working on this
3 issue, and it appears that a significant percentage of the
4 suicides takes place in the first 2 or 3 years after
5 separation from active-duty. So, again, this handoff should
6 be seamless and not tangled up in software confusion in
7 terms of conveyance of records. So, I appreciate your
8 attention to that.

9 Mr. Lowman, in terms of readiness, one thing I would
10 urge you to do is to benchmark our performance in the
11 Department of Defense against the private sector, whether it
12 is the private airlines, for example, in terms of their
13 readiness of their aircraft, commercial shipping compared
14 with the Navy. One of my mottos is, does it work and how do
15 you know?

16 And benchmarking is one way to achieve that kind of
17 knowledge. I hope this is something that you will focus
18 upon in your work on readiness.

19 Mr. Lowman: Thank you, Senator.

20 This will be a priority for me, if confirmed. One
21 thing the Department has spent quite a bit of time on over
22 the last decade is the introduction of prognostics; things
23 like Condition Based Maintenance Plus sensors, the ability
24 to develop very precise and very finite datasets to
25 understand where our readiness issues are. And so, that

1 ability, coupled with advanced data analytics, give us the
2 ability to begin benchmarking to common platforms in the
3 commercial sector and differentiate any deltas in
4 performance, given the uniqueness of military missions.

5 However, if confirmed, I will work with my staff to
6 continue the momentum in that area.

7 Senator King: Well, I am out of time. I am going to
8 submit a couple of questions for the record. One is,
9 ubiquitous 3-D printing capability on our ships and at our
10 bases and also the issue of the allocation of KC-46s in
11 terms of the aerial refueling capacity.

12 I thank you all for your testimony. Congratulations on
13 your nominations.

14 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator King.

16 Senator Tillis, please?

17 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 Congratulations, Gentlemen, on your nominations. I may
19 not be able to ask all of you questions, but you can leave
20 the room knowing that you have my vote for confirmation.

21 Mr. Storch, I want to start with you. Once you are
22 confirmed, what would you do to investigate the planning,
23 execution, and aftermath of the withdrawal from Afghanistan,
24 the DOD's role in it?

25 Mr. Storch: So, the OIG has jurisdiction over all

1 programs and operations of the Department and, additionally,
2 as I am sure you are aware, it serves as the lead IG for
3 Operation Freedom's Sentinel. So, while I am not in a
4 position to, you know, forecast any particular reviews or
5 the like, if I am confirmed, I would look forward to meeting
6 with the team at the OIG, to consulting with the Department
7 of State and the USA ID IGs, and also, coordinating, as
8 appropriate, with SIGAR, with the special investigative IG
9 for Afghanistan reconstruction, to determine what oversight
10 would be appropriate. And I would very much welcome the
11 opportunity to engage with the committee, as to its thoughts
12 in the area.

13 Senator Tillis: You know, one of the things that I --
14 thank you for that answer.

15 I was personally involved in August with trying to get
16 families and SIV holders, U.S. citizens out of Afghanistan.

17 We were successful, but we only scratched the surface
18 of the number of cases that my office is tracking.

19 One of the things that became very apparent to me is
20 that we were providing that incremental information to the
21 State Department and to the DOD on SIV holders; I mean,
22 literally, capturing paperwork and documentation that you
23 would have thought would have just been in the normal course
24 of business, how we keep track of those who are working
25 alongside of our servicemembers in combat situations.

1 So, I think that that needs attention; we need to
2 systemize it. We have taken a little bit of a hit,
3 reputationally, for how we have handled some of the SIV
4 holders, how thousands of people are still in Afghanistan.

5 So, I think I would be very interested in understanding
6 the system that is in place and why on Earth at 2:30 in the
7 morning, am I discussing the transmission of documents from
8 unit commanders and pictures of SIV holders to an agency
9 that you would have thought would have had some of that
10 information readily available. I think it would have
11 probably expedited some of their departures. So, that is
12 another aim.

13 And then, finally, on an interagency perspective, I
14 think I saw wheels kind of get sand in them with the
15 interagency handoff. I don't know how that works, because
16 that swims outside of your lanes, but it seems like there
17 has to be an analysis of the interagency interaction and how
18 we can do a better job if, God forbid, we ever find
19 ourselves in a situation like we did in Afghanistan last
20 year.

21 So, thank you for that.

22 Dr. Martinez, I know that you have been supportive of
23 the Center for Regenerative Medicine. My friend Dr. Atala
24 down at Wake Forest, that program in your past role, you
25 have been supportive of it.

1 Once you are confirmed, can I expect that you will
2 continue to support that and other similar efforts in your
3 new role?

4 Dr. Martinez-Lopez: Senator, the readiness of the
5 force's medical is critical to what we do. Part of that is
6 bringing in new solution sets to questions that we want to
7 answer and questions that we don't even know we need to ask;
8 that is how research works.

9 So, if confirmed, I will continue the effort across the
10 broad spectrum of research, medical research to bring
11 solution sets that our servicemembers so deserve.

12 Senator Tillis: Well, I think that what we are doing
13 at Wake and across research institutions nationwide is very
14 promising and something that I hope we can continue to
15 support and fund and encourage.

16 I just want to echo what, I want to take a slightly
17 different tack on the electronic health record. I am on the
18 VA Committee. We have been working on that implementation.

19 We have to understand that that is still several years
20 away before it is fully implemented within the VA.

21 But I was glad to hear the Secretary of the VA is
22 starting up a joint office with the DOD so that they can
23 start tracking and making sure that we have that seamless
24 transfer of data, at the right time, so that we can get to a
25 more precise analysis of a servicemember once they

1 transition, have the sorts of interventions and things that
2 we need in place, and the medical record is going to be
3 critically important.

4 So, do I have your commitment that you will be working
5 with the VA to make sure that as they implement, we don't
6 miss that opportunity to have that seamless transition, and
7 long-term cooperation so that these platforms continue to be
8 interoperable?

9 Dr. Martinez-Lopez: Senator, yes.

10 Senator Tillis: Thank you.

11 Now, Mr. Lowman, just very briefly, give me an idea of
12 what you think about the current reforms that we have seen,
13 acquisition reforms. This is an area where I spend a lot of
14 time.

15 I think that there is still gold on the floors for
16 additional reforms and efficiencies there. Tell me a little
17 bit about your perspective on the current reforms that have
18 been implemented and go-forward strategy.

19 Mr. Lowman: Senator, I think the reforms that have
20 been implemented are helping. We have got some more work to
21 do.

22 I will tell you that in the product support manager's
23 role in the early development of the sustainment strategies,
24 before you begin producing the end item, is critical to
25 containing life-cycle cost. And so, that will be one, if

1 confirmed as the ASDS, one of my focus areas will be to make
2 sure that the product support managers have the appropriate
3 authorities, they have the data and analytic tools, and they
4 are at the table, developing, along with their acquisition
5 brethren, developing the contract frameworks and the organic
6 industrial base strategies that will help to contain
7 sustainment costs, but also produce the readiness the
8 Department needs.

9 Senator Tillis: Thank you.

10 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

11 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Tillis.

12 Senator Warren, please?

13 Congratulations to all of our nominees and welcome to
14 your families who are here or watching remotely.

15 Mr. Lowman, you have been nominated to be the Assistant
16 Secretary of Defense for Sustainment, and that means that
17 for now, you will be overseeing the military's housing
18 program for servicemembers. Now, no one, no one should have
19 to live with black mold, leaking and collapsed roofs, or
20 exposed electrical wires in their home.

21 It is indefensible that that was the case for military
22 families. A Department of Defense Inspector General Report
23 last year found that the Department is dragging its feet on
24 two major reforms that Congress passed to address these
25 deplorable conditions: creating a public complaint database

1 for tenants and a tenants' bill of rights. Two years in and
2 neither of these have been done.

3 So, Mr. Lowman, I know these things take time to stand
4 up, but will you make sure that a publicly available
5 complaint database is created this year, I mean, 2022?

6 Mr. Lowman: Senator, thank you.

7 So, I couldn't agree more that our servicemembers
8 deserve the right to live in housing that is safe, that is
9 suitable, and it is healthy.

10 Senator Warren: Good. Thank you.

11 I just want a commitment here. Am I going to get this
12 database in 2022?

13 Mr. Lowman: Senator, the DSD just created a new
14 position and that is Assistant Secretary of Defense for the
15 environment, energy, and installations. So, that portfolio
16 has been removed from the Assistant Secretary of Defense for
17 Sustainment's portfolio.

18 What I can commit to, if confirmed, is working with the
19 ASD EI&E for a smooth and deliberate transition of resources
20 and, as well as the policies and personnel, to make sure
21 that these --

22 Senator Warren: But you can't put your name behind
23 getting this done?

24 It is a database, a complaint database. This is not
25 rocket science. And we are in year 3 of people who want to

1 be able to tell you about things like rat infestation and
2 black mold. I would think that the military would want to
3 know about this.

4 Mr. Lowman: Senator, I agree, and I will work very
5 closely with the ASD EI&E to make sure that that
6 organization makes progress on this.

7 Senator Warren: Well, I would like to hear you make
8 your commitment on this.

9 And the same is true for a tenant's bill of rights, is
10 this also just a lateral pass to somebody else?

11 Mr. Lowman: No, ma'am. I will commit to my personal
12 involvement and a better understanding the issues
13 surrounding the --

14 Senator Warren: I appreciate the involvement.

15 I want a commitment to get it done. We are in year 3.
16 This is not hard.

17 Mr. Lowman: Senator, I certainly understand your
18 question, and if confirmed as the Assistant Secretary of
19 Defense for Sustainment, I will do everything in my
20 authority to make sure that these two things get completed
21 this year.

22 Senator Warren: Well, I am not doing great here, but I
23 have got more requests, but I will put those in my QFRs.

24 Let me ask another line of questions here. Mr. Storch,
25 you have been nominated to serve as the DOD Inspector

1 General, which makes you the Pentagon's top watchdog. Your
2 job, obviously, is going to be shine a light on waste and
3 misconduct and abuses of power and also to tell us when
4 officials or organizations are thwarting your investigations
5 or trying to hide your findings from the public.

6 And there are a lot of ways that that might happen, but
7 I want to talk to you about the one that is keeping me up at
8 night right now. I am becoming very concerned about how
9 much the Pentagon is keeping from the public through pseudo-
10 classification; that is, classifying something that doesn't
11 need to be kept secret, classifying it just so that there is
12 less public scrutiny.

13 Mr. Storch, do you commit to notifying this committee
14 if you believe that your work is being wrongfully restricted
15 or pseudo-classified or over-classified?

16 Mr. Storch: Senator, this is an area in which I do
17 have some experience; not necessarily with pseudo-
18 classification, but when I came onboard as the NSA IG, we
19 weren't doing any public reporting at all at our office. As
20 I said, we basically just had a page on the agency's site,
21 which didn't have any content.

22 And we have worked hard to advance transparency in our
23 oversight work there in the ways that I discussed in my
24 opening statement and worked very well with the agency to
25 make sure that that happens. And I have got to say we have

1 gotten good cooperation with agency leadership, so I am
2 going to work on that.

3 I would work with the agency to make sure that it is
4 done right and if I have any problems, I absolutely wouldn't
5 hesitate to come to the committee.

6 Senator Warren: That is what I want to hear.

7 You know, I want to give you an example of where this
8 pseudo-classification hinders the oversight process.

9 Numerous investigations by the press, by independent
10 analysts, and by civil society watchdogs have shown that our
11 investigations into civilian casualties are seriously
12 flawed, and that is probably too kind a statement.

13 It is a broken system. The DOD IG has looked into this
14 as well, but many of the DOD IG's findings about these
15 failures are completely redacted. Not because they are
16 classified, but because they are marked "for official use
17 only."

18 I suspect that more oversight from DOD IG would help us
19 fix this broken system, but it is not going to happen unless
20 we enhance transparency significantly. So, I appreciate
21 your comments on this. I anticipate you are going to be a
22 partner in getting this done. If you have problems, you are
23 going to come talk to us and we will get it straightened
24 out. We have a right to know. The public has a right to
25 know.

1 Thank you very much.

2 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator.

4 Senator Hawley, please?

5 Senator Hawley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 Congratulations to all the nominees. Thank you for
7 being here.

8 Mr. Storch, let me start with you. The special IG for
9 Afghanistan, SIGAR, has provided invaluable reporting on
10 Afghanistan reconstruction efforts and activities through
11 audits, through inspections, through investigations, and in
12 my view, an unyielding commitment to transparency.

13 Now, that office, unfortunately, has not been well-
14 supported, I don't think, by this committee; in fact,
15 various members have tried to shut it down multiple
16 different times.

17 Let me ask you this, in the aftermath of the botched
18 withdrawal from Afghanistan, it is my view, it is more
19 important than ever, that SIGAR be able to perform its
20 duties in an independent manner. And I underline and
21 emphasize independent, without interference.

22 So, do I have your commitment to ensure that SIGAR is
23 able to continue doing its work, free from interference from
24 anybody, including your office, if you are confirmed?

25 Mr. Storch: Senator Hawley, I am not familiar with all

1 the background that you described, but I can tell you that I
2 have spent my entire time in the IG community working with
3 other IGs collaboratively to try to advance oversight.

4 So, whether that is with SIGAR or other IGs who might
5 have, you know, interest in that very important space, I
6 would anticipate working collaboratively, as appropriate.

7 Senator Hawley: That is not quite the answer I am
8 looking for. I want a commitment from you that SIGAR will
9 be able to do its work, free from interference from your
10 office, if you are confirmed.

11 Mr. Storch: I don't believe any IG should interfere
12 with the work of another IG and, certainly, if I am
13 confirmed, I will make sure that that doesn't happen. I
14 would do everything I could to ensure that we are working
15 collaboratively and cooperatively, as appropriate.

16 Senator Hawley: Okay. So, that is a yes; you will
17 not, if you are confirmed, you will not in any way interfere
18 or undermine the independence of SIGAR, who does not report
19 to you under current --

20 Mr. Storch: Well, that is, I am sorry, that is what I
21 am trying to get at is they don't report to me, so I don't
22 have any jurisdiction over them.

23 Senator Hawley: Good.

24 Mr. Storch: But I certainly --

25 Senator Hawley: You won't try to absorb them. You

1 won't try to take away their --

2 Mr. Storch: I am not familiar with any issues like
3 that, Senator, about jurisdiction.

4 So, my understanding is --

5 Senator Hawley: Well, I am not asking if you are
6 familiar or not; I am asking you what your intentions are.

7 And what I would like to hear, and would hope to hear,
8 this should be an easy question, is that you will not
9 interfere with SIGAR in any way. You will let them continue
10 to be independent. You will not engage in any mission-creep
11 from your office that would seek to undermine SIGAR's
12 independence and authority.

13 Can you say yes to that?

14 Mr. Storch: I certainly would not do anything, yes,
15 that would interfere with the independence and operations of
16 another IG.

17 When you talk about mission-creep, I just want to be
18 completely clear, there are many times in the IG community,
19 are issues regarding who is going to work on what, right?

20 And so, what I am committing to you to do is that if
21 there are such issues, I would work with the other IG with
22 my team and with their team to determine what the right
23 result is. So, that is, I am not in a position to give you
24 any more of a specific answer, but that is the way I have
25 always worked in the IG community and if I am confirmed, it

1 is the way I will work.

2 Senator Hawley: Let me ask you this, do I have your
3 commitment to support this committee's efforts and others'
4 efforts to fully investigate DOD's role in the disastrous
5 Afghanistan withdrawal, including by, this is the important
6 part, conducting your own investigations, sharing data, and
7 any other relevant measures, would you commit to working
8 with us?

9 Mr. Storch: So, I would be pleased to work with the
10 committee to identify any and all areas for appropriate
11 oversight and will certainly report robustly to the
12 committee regarding the results of that.

13 I can't, and I am not in the position to identify
14 particular areas, at this time, but both, in our roles as
15 the lead IG for OFS and, generally, with jurisdiction over
16 all programs and operations of the Department, we would
17 examine any appropriate issues.

18 Senator Hawley: Let's come back to SIGAR for a second.

19 Mr. Storch: Yes, sir.

20 Senator Hawley: SIGAR has long reported that DOD has
21 overclassified information regarding the Afghan Force's
22 performance and other aspects of the Afghanistan
23 restructuring effort, including limiting SIGAR's ability to
24 provide the American people with a full account because of
25 this.

1 Do you share SIGAR's concerns about overclassification
2 related to the Afghanistan restructuring effort, and now
3 that that effort has ended, would you support efforts to
4 declassify as much of that information as possible?

5 Mr. Storch: Sir, I am not familiar with specific
6 concerns in that area. I will tell you, as a general
7 matter, I have worked very hard to promote transparency and
8 to do everything I can to fight overclassification.

9 I don't think things should be marked E for
10 embarrassing or anything like that; as I have said, we have
11 gotten good support at NSA in our oversight work there. And
12 if I am confirmed, I am going to keep working to promote
13 transparency.

14 Senator Hawley: So, when it comes to SIGAR's specific
15 concerns about overclassification over a period of years and
16 decades, you are not familiar with that? You don't have a
17 view on that?

18 Mr. Storch: No. And nor do I believe it would be
19 appropriate for me to express one; I haven't been confirmed.

20 But if I am confirmed, I certainly will look into the
21 issue and I will commit to you that we will do the right
22 thing. I am happy to engage with you on any of these
23 specific issues.

24 Senator Hawley: Well, when you say you don't think it
25 would be appropriate to express a view, I mean, are you

1 willing to express a view on the dangers of
2 overclassification?

3 I mean, here is what I am getting at, I have heard
4 multiple members of this committee, since the fall of
5 Afghanistan, say that it is unbelievable that we didn't know
6 that the Afghan Security Forces were so badly prepared. I
7 mean, who could have thought that they would have collapsed
8 in the fashion they did?

9 I will tell you who could have thought it: SIGAR.

10 Why?

11 Because they issued report after report saying that the
12 Afghan Security Forces weren't appropriately trained, that
13 they weren't prepared, that the Pentagon was making it
14 difficult for SIGAR to get any information, that DOD kept
15 changing the metrics by which to assess the readiness of the
16 Afghan Security Forces.

17 SIGAR has warned for years that what would happen in
18 Afghanistan is exactly what did happen. So, I think it is
19 important that that entity be able to get the information it
20 needs and actually report to the American people, because,
21 frankly, I think the American people were pretty much lied
22 to for years by multiple administrations, unfortunately.

23 Multiple administrations of both parties,
24 unfortunately.

25 So, I am pretty concerned about this issue, but what I

1 would like to hear from you is a commitment to say that you
2 think that over-classifications are a problem, that you are
3 going to work with SIGAR to make sure that they can get the
4 classified material that they need, and that, ultimately, we
5 make as much of this material available to the American
6 public.

7 Can you commit to that?

8 Mr. Storch: Senator, I am committed to doing
9 everything I can in my current job, and if I am confirmed,
10 in a future job, as the DOD IG, to fighting
11 overclassification and ensuring that all appropriate
12 information is out.

13 What I was trying to say, respectfully, is, I don't
14 have the information currently as the NSA IG regarding the
15 nature of information at DOD IG or SIGAR. But what I can
16 tell you is that if I am confirmed, I will do everything
17 appropriate to fight overclassification and ensure that
18 appropriate information is made public.

19 Senator Hawley: My time is expired. I will have some
20 additional questions for the record for the rest of you.

21 Thank you for being here.

22 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Hawley.

24 Now, let me recognize, via Webex, Senator Manchin,
25 please.

1 Senator Manchin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank
2 all of you for your willingness to serve.

3 Let me start with Mr. Storch. Mr. Storch, the Office
4 of Department of Defense Inspector General has consistently
5 reported on problems DOD has in protecting its cyber system,
6 its networks, and the data.

7 Coming from the National Security Agency, I know you
8 are very aware of how important cybersecurity protection is.

9 So, if confirmed, what would be your plan for assessing
10 and reporting on the effectiveness of controls and processes
11 being implemented by DOD intelligence within the agency to
12 protect our classified systems from inside and external
13 threats?

14 Mr. Storch: Senator, as you say, I have been very
15 involved in doing oversight regarding cyber issues as the
16 NSA IG and also in my role as the Vice Chair of the CIGIE
17 Tech Committee, where we recently started a Cyber Working
18 Group, in which my folks are very actively participating.

19 These are significant issues across the entire
20 government, and if I am confirmed, I would look forward to
21 working with a team at DOD IG to identify the areas of
22 greatest risk in the cyberspace and ensuring that we are
23 doing robust oversight over it.

24 At NSA, we have an active cyber and IT group within our
25 audit division that does that sort work, and if I am the IG

1 at DOD, I will look forward to continuing in that.

2 Senator Manchin: Mr. Lowman, we need to ensure our
3 military installations are able to carry out the critical
4 missions, even in the event of interruptions to the
5 commercial power grid, off-post water supplies, or other
6 challenges surrounding land, water, and airspace, whether it
7 comes from bad actors or just extreme weather.

8 So, if confirmed, how will you make this a priority in
9 your portfolio and have you already evaluated or have you
10 all been looking at that?

11 Mr. Lowman: Senator, thank you.

12 So, our installations play a critical role in
13 projecting power, regardless of where that is required. So,
14 energy independence on our installation and building
15 resilience on those installations to include alternative
16 energy is critically important. That includes, of course,
17 water.

18 I understand, Senator that the Deputy Secretary of
19 Defense published a memo yesterday, creating, because of the
20 importance of this portfolio, a separate Assistant Secretary
21 of Defense for energy, installations, and the environment.

22 If confirmed, I will work very closely to ensure a
23 deliberate transition of personnel, resources, and policies
24 needed to achieve these energy-independent goals.

25 Senator Manchin: Thank you.

1 Mr. Lowman, back to you again. As the military
2 refocuses on the great power of competition, we are going to
3 need to understand that a future conflict may be fought in
4 an environment where access to our logistics networks would
5 be contested. Unlike the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, that
6 we will not be able to necessarily count upon a reliable and
7 constant flow of supplies from the United States.

8 We kind of saw hints of this predicament during the
9 withdrawal from Afghanistan. They are a landlocked nation
10 and our important relations with the neighbors complicated
11 our efforts to retrograde personnel, material. So, the
12 brunt of the retrograde was kind of borne by a limited
13 number of strategic lift assets, such as our 130s, C-130s
14 and C-17s, completing multiple, 3,000-mile roundtrips
15 between Kuwait and Afghanistan.

16 So, what will you do as Assistant Secretary of Defense
17 to ensure the resilience of our global logistics networks
18 and prepare the whole force to sustain and fight and win in
19 a contested environment?

20 Mr. Lowman: Senator, thanks for that question.

21 As you know, global operations require a global supply
22 chain, and so this includes not only posture at echelon,
23 where we position those supplies, but it also includes the
24 sustained readiness of our inter- and intra-theater lift
25 capabilities represented by the C-130, C-17, and others, but

1 also, our sealift capabilities.

2 And so, if confirmed, I will work with the military
3 Departments, the ASDS staff to, one, ensure the necessary
4 resources are allocated and balanced with the modernization
5 program to sustain readiness of those current capabilities,
6 but in the sealift fleet, work with the Navy and TRANSCOM to
7 understand the recapitalization strategy, to ensure that we
8 are balancing the buy new versus recapitalization, buy used,
9 and then, finally, Senator, I would work very closely with
10 the services and ASD acquisition to ensure that we are
11 balancing the service modernization strategies and we are
12 appropriately allocating the necessary resources to sustain
13 the readiness of our current fleets.

14 Senator Manchin: Thank you. I appreciate so much all
15 of your input.

16 And thank you, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate you.

17 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Manchin.

18 Let me recognize Senator Peters, please?

19 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 And to each of you, congratulations on your nomination.
21 It is good to see you all here before us.

22 Mr. Storch, as I am Chairman of Homeland Security and
23 the Governmental Affairs Committee, and I have been a long
24 advocate for reforms that safeguard the integrity of the
25 Inspector General; that role is absolutely critical for us

1 to maintain integrity of the Government and the independence
2 of IGs is particularly important.

3 And so, certainly, I hope if confirmed, I will continue
4 to count on your support for that work, but could you give
5 this committee some indication as to how you approach the
6 job as IG, particularly, as it relates to the independence
7 necessary to perform the job effectively and professionally.

8 Mr. Storch: Absolutely, Senator.

9 I think that is one of the most critical aspects about
10 our IG system is that the IGs are able to independently
11 exercise oversight and that is what I think gives our work
12 credibility and makes it authoritative.

13 And critical to that are a couple of things. One is, I
14 think, maintaining the appropriate posture, vis-à-vis, the
15 agency and its leadership. It is sort of, you don't want to
16 be too close and you don't want to be too far away. You
17 want to be close enough so you are getting the information
18 so they understand you are going to be an honest broker; you
19 are going to look at the information and report things out
20 that will help the agency to improve its operations. But,
21 on the other hand, you want to get too close and be captured
22 by the mission, particularly, places with a compelling
23 mission. And so that is really critical. I think it is
24 something, I watched IG Horowitz do it justice
25 extraordinarily well and I tried to learn from him, and I

1 have tried to do that at NSA, and if I am confirmed, I will
2 do that at DOD.

3 The final thing I will say quickly is I think the dual-
4 reporting and the relationship with the Hill is critical to
5 maintaining that independence so that the agency understands
6 that we not only keep the agency fully and timely informed,
7 but we also keep the Congress fully and timely informed.

8 And maintaining both of those lines of communication is
9 critical to ensuring the independence that we need.

10 Senator Peters: You know, I am also very committed to
11 ensuring that whistleblowers are protected. They play an
12 incredibly valuable role for us to identify potential waste,
13 fraud, and abuse all across all levels of the federal
14 government.

15 But in 2019, a GAO report found that the Department of
16 Defense IG and the military service IGs did not meet
17 timeliness and quality goals for handling whistleblower
18 complaints.

19 So, my question to you, sir, is, if confirmed, will you
20 commit to making whistleblower protection a top priority in
21 your office and implementing the GAO's recommendations, as
22 soon as possible, if confirmed?

23 Mr. Storch: Senator, if I am confirmed, whistleblowers
24 and their rights and protections will be amongst my very
25 highest priorities. It always has been and it always will

1 be; as you say, they are critical to our system.

2 I will also examine the results of the GAO report and
3 make sure if they are not implemented, that we are
4 implementing any necessary measures to not only meet, but to
5 exceed, and ensure that we are doing everything we can in
6 that area.

7 Senator Peters: Very well. Thank you.

8 Mr. Lowman, the recent tensions with Russia have
9 certainly reminded our country how critical it is to ensure
10 cybersecurity for critical infrastructure, especially
11 energy-related infrastructure.

12 If confirmed, your office will clearly play a
13 significant role in reducing cyber risks to ensure that we
14 can maintain reliable power for critical Defense missions.

15 So, I would like you to tell the committee how you
16 believe the Department of Defense should approach ensuring
17 cybersecurity for Department of Defense energy systems.

18 Mr. Lowman: Senator, let me first start by commending
19 the members of this committee and the Congress for your
20 interest in this area. A couple of years ago, the Congress
21 passed Section 1647 and 1650, which required the Department
22 to develop a process to routinely assess vulnerabilities,
23 not only in our weapon system platforms, but also in our
24 installation control systems.

25 So, speaking from experience, in my last job as

1 performing the duties of Under Secretary of the Army, the
2 Army has taken this challenge on, and, if confirmed, I will
3 work very closely with the other services and my staff to
4 ensure that the necessary resources, policies, and processes
5 are in place, such that the services can routinely scan
6 their installation control systems, identify those
7 vulnerabilities, and then rapidly address the
8 vulnerabilities and mitigate them.

9 Senator Peters: Very good.

10 Mr. Lowman, the pandemic also demonstrated how
11 vulnerable our supply chain are to global disruptions and
12 the drawback to the fact that we have offshored too much of
13 critical manufacturing and other sources of supplies. This
14 was especially apparent at the beginning of the pandemic
15 when we struggled to get PPE equipment in the hands of first
16 responders all across the country and other front-line
17 workers. So much of that production had moved to China.

18 So, my question to you is, if confirmed, how will your
19 office work with the Department and with private sector
20 partners to shore up our supply chains that are absolutely
21 critical to the national defense; certainly, things such as
22 PPE, but also pharmaceuticals and other industrial supplies
23 that are important, not just for the Department of Defense,
24 but for the civilian sector, as well.

25 Mr. Lowman: Senator, resilient supply chains,

1 especially in the national defense arena, are critical to
2 our ability to prosecute global operations.

3 So, if confirmed, I will work with the interagency
4 community to, one, to develop the policy necessary to
5 promote domestic competition, but also work with our
6 commercial partners and the services to build resiliency in
7 our domestic, commercial supply chains, as well as increase
8 capacity.

9 In some cases, this will necessitate onshoring
10 capability back into the nation.

11 Senator Peters: Good. Well, if confirmed, I look
12 forward to working with you on that critical issue.

13 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Peters.

15 I would now like to recognize, via Webex, Senator
16 Duckworth.

17 Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 I would congratulate all the participants today on your
19 nominations.

20 I would also like to thank Mr. Lowman for our call last
21 week. A combat, credible, logistics backbone is crucial to
22 deterring our adversaries and I appreciated our discussion
23 on how to strength and mature this capability.

24 I would like to start off with the balance between
25 modernization and maintaining readiness rates of our current

1 assets. Our military remains reliant on 1980s, and in some
2 places, 1970s technology. A 2020 GAO report reviewed annual
3 readiness rates for 46 different aircraft from 2011 to 2019
4 and only three of these aircraft hit their annual readiness
5 goals for all 9 years and 24 of them did not meet their
6 goals in any of the years covered; this is types of
7 aircraft, not individual aircraft.

8 Yet, we must also remain ready today to mobilize and
9 respond to a global crisis, which we are seeing play out now
10 with our need to transfer thousands of troops to the
11 European theater. While I understand that there is an art
12 to balancing current mission readiness needs with
13 modernization, I am concerned that the Department does not
14 have a strong glide slope and transition plan for key
15 mobility and logistical assets, in particular.

16 Mr. Lowman, if confirmed, how will you work with the
17 program offices, services, and combatant commands to build
18 strong transition plans that roll out much-needed modernized
19 assets, without divesting of legacy platforms so quickly
20 that we create a near-term capacity gather that endangers
21 mission accomplishment?

22 Mr. Lowman: Senator, thank you for that question.

23 So, it is really a balance, as you rightly note,
24 between modernization and sustainment and the need to
25 appropriately allocate the resources to sustain our

1 currently capabilities, especially in the inter- and intra-
2 theater lift, as you noted, but also, to modernize those
3 fleets in a sustainable fashion over time.

4 The second balance, Senator, that you didn't mention,
5 but I think is important to note here, is the balance across
6 the active and reserve components to make sure that the
7 resources, the reserve components need to sustain their
8 fleets and that have the sufficient lift capability built
9 into the COCOM logistics plans, so that the Department not
10 only sustains the lift capability that they need, but also
11 modernizes it over time.

12 Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

13 I am glad that you brought up the reserve forces. I
14 hope that we are not going to be modernizing, for example,
15 active-duty Air Force, at the expense of the Air National
16 Guard, in particular.

17 I do want to move on to another issue, another source
18 of our readiness issues. In that same 2020 GAO report, it
19 was noted that in addition to aging aircraft, a noteworthy
20 factor in our low-readiness rates is lack of parts.

21 I am interested in opportunities to collaborate with
22 commercial industry to reduce the wait times and the cost of
23 parts. One approach is to take advantage of used,
24 serviceable material from commercial derivative aircraft.

25 Under this program, the FAA provides the Department of

1 Defense certified, overhauled parts from 737 and 767
2 aircraft at a reduced cost. The initial estimates for
3 material savings over the next 7 years at around \$1 and a
4 half billion. Not insignificant.

5 This program also reduces the supply chain lead times.
6 The program already exists within the DOD, but it is not
7 standardized across all programs and services. And I have
8 seen reports where purchasing officers have a program F
9 function on their keyboard, F7, where they just hit a
10 function and it populates a form and they can buy brand-new
11 parts, but it is multi-steps to use this program that exists
12 for used parts.

13 Mr. Lowman, if confirmed, what will you do to require
14 or incentivize program offices of services to take advantage
15 of proven programs like used serviceable materials, and are
16 there any barriers to this collaboration that Congress can
17 work to remove to encourage its use?

18 Mr. Lowman: Senator, so part of addressing supply
19 chain risk and building resilience is identifying
20 alternative sources of supply. And so, the USM program, as
21 you accurately note, is used by industry today. And in some
22 components, I am aware it is used within the Department of
23 Defense.

24 If confirmed, I will work closely with the services,
25 and the ASDf staff to make sure there are no policy barriers

1 to use of the USM, and I would work with the interagency
2 community and, particularly, the FAA, to make sure that the
3 necessary airworthiness documentation is available to
4 guarantee the life of the part, the repair history, for
5 example, the hours currently consumed by that particular
6 part. So, I look forward to taking this on.

7 Senator Duckworth: Wonderful.

8 I don't think the pacing item here is the lack of
9 documentation on the life, the serviceable life of the
10 parts; I think it is resistance within DOD and program
11 offices and the services to using the program and using
12 these parts, because it is just easier to buy new every
13 time.

14 But I am happy to work with you on this. I look
15 forward to it.

16 Mr. Lowman: Thank you.

17 Senator Duckworth: I have two additional questions
18 that I will submit for the record.

19 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Duckworth.

21 Now, via Webex, I would like to recognize Senator
22 Rosen.

23 Senator Rosen: Well, thank you, Chairman Reed, and, of
24 course, Ranking Member Inhofe, for holding this hearing.

25 And I want to thank all the nominees for your testimony

1 today and, really, for your willingness to serve and all the
2 service you have given already to this country.

3 And I want to talk a little bit today about affordable
4 housing for servicemembers. So, Mr. Storch, last year's
5 NDAA included one of my provisions to hold the Pentagon
6 accountable for not yet utilizing existing authorities to
7 support our most junior servicemembers, when transitioning
8 off-base to private housing. The provision requires the
9 Secretary of Defense to brief Congress on DOD's plan to
10 provide partial dislocation allowance payments to junior
11 enlisted troops who are forced out of military-provided
12 housing, due to shortages and they have to incur moving
13 costs and the like, before they are eligible to receive
14 their basic allowance for housing, the BAH.

15 So, Mr. Storch, if confirmed, can we count on you to
16 hold the Pentagon accountable for developing and executing a
17 plan to provide our most junior servicemembers with the
18 dislocation allowance they earn as they are authorized to do
19 under existing law?

20 I have heard this time and time again at Nellis and
21 Creech, as I do roundtables with young, enlisted members,
22 servicemembers. This is one of the number one things that
23 they are concerned about.

24 Mr. Storch: Thank you, Senator.

25 I am aware that housing is one of the top management

1 challenges that was identified by the DOD and its DOD IG in
2 its recent assessment of the top challenges. And if
3 confirmed, I would work with the team at the OIG to assess
4 the issues that you have identified and do all appropriate
5 oversight to make sure that the agency is following the law
6 and providing the housing that servicemembers deserve.

7 Senator Rosen: Thank you. I sure appreciate that.

8 I want to move on to something else I have been hearing
9 about, which is maternal health for our servicemembers and
10 their families.

11 So, Dr. Martinez-Lopez, Nellis Air Force, of course, in
12 Nevada, offers some of the most robust maternity-care
13 services compared to military installations the nation. But
14 because some installations can't provide that wide array of
15 maternity services that we offer at Nellis, the TRICARE
16 enrollees often pursue such services through a community
17 provider.

18 So, Dr. Martinez-Lopez, what improvements can we make
19 to maternity-care services offered to TRICARE enrollees and
20 how would you approach that, if confirmed, and do you
21 believe that you have the existing authorities to allow the
22 Department to make such improvements?

23 Dr. Martinez-Lopez: Senator, the health of all
24 servicemembers and family members entrusted to us is the
25 reason why the military health care system said that

1 maternal health for both, servicemembers and family members,
2 has to be of the most importance and we have to make sure
3 that the quality of the care and the quality of the service,
4 how we deliver that, is right on target.

5 So, if I am confirmed, I commit to work with my team
6 and look at ways that we can bring parity in such a way that
7 servicemembers and family members can rest assured that they
8 will get the best care, either inside the medical treatment
9 facility or outside in the TRICARE, you know, service area.

10 Senator Rosen: So, if confirmed, would you consider
11 conducting a DOD-wide satisfaction survey for servicemembers
12 who have either recently or are currently receiving
13 maternity care through TRICARE?

14 That might help guide us into some of the things that
15 we have to do. Will you commit to working on that with me,
16 please?

17 Dr. Martinez-Lopez: Senator, getting feedback from the
18 people we serve is critical, so if I am confirmed, I will
19 work with you, not only to get feedback regarding maternal
20 healthcare, but we need to get feedback regarding all
21 healthcare we deliver, inside and outside, so yes, ma'am.

22 Senator Rosen: And I am just going to build on that a
23 little bit, because with military retirees, because we want
24 to be sure they have full and equal access to the healthcare
25 that they have really earned over the course of their

1 service. There are about 30,000 military retirees in my
2 state; unfortunately, our retirees, they just face the
3 anxiety of the potential rollback of these health service
4 available to them.

5 And, like now, the Defense Health Agency, their current
6 plan is to right-size the military health system. Moving
7 200,000 TRICARE beneficiaries to private medical networks,
8 closing a bunch of the Department of Defense military
9 treatment facilities.

10 So, what steps will you take to be sure that our
11 military retirees have the full access to the quality
12 healthcare that they deserve and have earned?

13 Dr. Martinez-Lopez: Senator, I am one of those
14 retirees, so, you know, first and foremost, the important
15 thing is that we keep readiness, so that is the reason that
16 we have a military health system; as well as, we also have
17 to honor what we tell the servicemembers, family members,
18 and retirees that we are going to care for them.

19 So, as we finish transformation, which is probably, is
20 it one of my priorities, to finish out the intent of the
21 Congress and the execution of a military health system
22 transformation, I will never lose sight of the fact that we
23 need to honor that. So, as we transfer care to the
24 civilian, to the TRICARE network, I need to make, I
25 personally need to make sure that those retirees and

1 servicemembers and family members are cared for.

2 And if not, how can we close that gap? We cannot
3 disengage just to disengage. We owe them better and if I am
4 confirmed, I will work really hard to honor that commitment.

5 Senator Rosen: Thank you. I appreciate that.

6 My time has expired.

7 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

8 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Rosen.

9 Senator Kelly, please?

10 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for
11 holding this hearing.

12 And thank you, all of you, for being here today.

13 I want to follow-up on Senator Duckworth's questioning
14 about parts, but, specifically, with a connection to
15 Arizona. Mr. Lowman, the 309th Aerospace Maintenance and
16 Regeneration Group, AMARG, located at the Davis-Monthan Air
17 Force Base is a major component of our organic industrial
18 base, commonly referred to as the "Bone Yard." The 309th
19 provides not just storage and preservation, but aerospace
20 depot, maintenance, and modifications, as well as aircraft
21 regeneration. It also provides some spare parts for the
22 fleet.

23 A few years ago, the 309th was able to regenerate a B-
24 52 that has been in the Bone Yard for nearly 10 years and
25 return it to service after the Air Force lost one of its

1 bombers; a truly remarkable fleet.

2 In the 1990s, I dropped off an A-6 Intruder at the Bone
3 Yard, but that has been now 25, maybe over 25 years ago. I
4 am not so sure that one is coming back.

5 [Laughter.]

6 Senator Kelly: But the 309th is also able to salvage
7 parts to contribute to important research and innovation
8 work within our military, including modernizing the B-52
9 fleet and as a supply of parts when we can't find one. This
10 capability that, it is a capability that we have to continue
11 and it needs to be preserved.

12 So, if confirmed, how will you work with this committee
13 to ensure that our nation's organic industrial base is
14 properly resourced?

15 Mr. Lowman: Thank you, Senator.

16 Senator, you rightly note that the organic industrial
17 base is a critical component of the overall industrial base
18 in this nation and the AMARG is a great example of a
19 capability resident within that organic industrial base to
20 not only regenerate capability, but also, to provide long-
21 term storage, repair capability, and, in some cases, parts
22 reclamation.

23 I can tell you in the late 1980s, as a young Marine
24 stationed at Yuma, I spent a little bit of time up at Davis-
25 Monthan, recovering parts for an A-4 Skyhawk, also long out

1 of service.

2 So, Senator, if confirmed, I will work with the
3 services. I will work with my staff and this committee to
4 make sure that the organic industrial base capabilities,
5 resident within all the services, are modernized and capable
6 of continuing sustainment of our fleets as we modernize
7 those fleets. That includes training personnel. That
8 includes new plant and equipment to sustain these new
9 capabilities, such as directed energy, hypersonics, fifth-
10 generation fighters, onward, and so forth. So, this is a
11 priority for me.

12 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Lowman. I look forward
13 to working with you and your team.

14 Dr. Martinez, last year, I introduced bipartisan
15 legislation aimed at bringing TRICARE plans in line with
16 private insurance plans. The Healthcare Fairness for
17 Military Families Act would allow the children of
18 servicemembers to stay on their parents' health insurance,
19 TRICARE, until they are 26 years old.

20 I remain very concerned about the fact that military
21 families don't have the same healthcare coverage that other
22 Americans enjoy, and the disparity is even more troubling as
23 we continue to battle this pandemic and its detrimental
24 impact on health and employment.

25 I believe this common sense proposal will help

1 countless military families as we come out of this pandemic
2 and it will help our economy recover, which is why I pushed
3 for it to be included in the NDAA.

4 What are your thoughts on expanding TRICARE coverage to
5 military dependents until the age of 26?

6 Dr. Martinez-Lopez: Senator, I think, you know, the
7 healthcare of our servicemembers and family members is
8 critical. So, if I am confirmed, I am going to be looking
9 at ways to bring parity, healthcare parity.

10 So, we should be offering, you know, insurance coverage
11 just like the rest of America is seeing. So, I commit to
12 working with my team to try to close the gap and maybe have
13 to come back and get some help, but you will get my
14 commitment that I will strive for that healthcare parity.

15 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Dr. Martinez.

16 It just seems like also just a fundamental question of
17 fairness, you know, that, you know, dependents of members of
18 the military get the same treatment as folks in the civilian
19 world. So, thank you.

20 And I have another question for you I am going to
21 submit for the record.

22 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Kelly.

24 Gentlemen, thank you for your testimony today. Thank
25 you for your distinguished public service and your

1 commitment to serve again.

2 And with that, let me call this hearing adjourned.

3 Thank you.

4 [Whereupon, at 11:55 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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