

Stenographic Transcript  
Before the

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

## **UNITED STATES SENATE**

HEARING TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATIONS OF:  
MR. JOHN SHERMAN TO BE CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE;  
MR. ASHISH VAZIRANI TO BE DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY  
OF DEFENSE AND PERSONNEL AND READINESS; AND  
MS. CARRIE RICCI TO BE GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

Thursday, October 28, 2021

Washington, D.C.

ALDERSON COURT REPORTING  
1111 14TH STREET NW  
SUITE 1050  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005  
(202) 289-2260  
[www.aldersonreporting.com](http://www.aldersonreporting.com)

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3 DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE;

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5 AND PERSONNEL AND READINESS; AND

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7 THE ARMY

8  
9 Thursday, October 28, 2021

10  
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 9:30 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, Kaine, King, Warren,  
20 Peters, Manchin, Duckworth, Rosen, Kelly, Inhofe, Ernst,  
21 Tillis, Scott, Hawley, and Tuberville.  
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1           OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JACK REED, U.S. SENATOR FROM  
2 RHODE ISLAND

3           Chairman Reed: Good morning. And let me call the  
4 hearing to order. The Committee meets today to consider the  
5 nominations of Mr. John Sherman to be Chief Information  
6 Officer of the Department of Defense, Mr. Ashish Vazirani to  
7 be Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and  
8 Readiness, and Ms. Carrie Ricci to be General Counsel of the  
9 Department of the Army.

10           I thank the nominees for their long careers of service  
11 to the United States and their willingness to assume these  
12 important responsibilities.

13           I would also like to welcome the family members who are  
14 with us today. Mr. Sherman, I welcome your wife, Liz;  
15 daughter, Savannah; and son, Brad.

16           Mr. Vazirani, I welcome your wife, Deborah.

17           And Ms. Ricci, I welcome your brother, doctor John and  
18 daughter Maria. I had to get the "doctor" in there.

19           Mr. Sherman, you are nominated to be the Chief  
20 Information Officer of the Department of Defense. The CIO  
21 is the principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense for a  
22 broad range of information and technology issues, including  
23 national security systems and information resource  
24 management.

25           I would note your long record of distinguished public

1 service, including your tenure as the CIO for the  
2 intelligence community.

3 The Defense Department is struggling with all aspects  
4 of IT, which is critical to defense systems and the  
5 operations of the Department as an effective enterprise. We  
6 have seen continuous cybersecurity failures in the face of  
7 ever-increasing threats, as well as failures in acquisition  
8 programs ranging from the JEDI cloud computing effort to  
9 software failures on the F-35 to the recent termination of  
10 the Navy's contract-writing system programs.

11 At the same time, the Defense Department is struggling  
12 to hire IT professionals to work in software development,  
13 cybersecurity, IT operations, and IT acquisition.  
14 Furthermore, the IT industrial base, especially the  
15 important hardware that runs these systems like  
16 microelectronics and printed circuit boards are increasingly  
17 moving offshore and will not remain trusted parts in Defense  
18 supply chain.

19 I look forward to hearing how you will address these  
20 challenges if you are confirmed.

21 Mr. Vazirani, you are nominated to be Deputy Under  
22 Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. If  
23 confirmed, you will assist the Under Secretary in addressing  
24 many challenges for the Department, including first and  
25 foremost, ensuring that our military has adequate numbers of

1 ready and trained servicemembers of sufficiently high  
2 character and talent to meet our defense objectives. You  
3 will be responsible for assisting the Under Secretary in  
4 military and civilian personnel policy; military, family,  
5 and childcare programs; the Defense Department-run school  
6 system; and working with the military servicemembers to  
7 ensure the health and welfare of the force.

8 As the former CEO of the National Military Family  
9 Association, and as a Navy veteran, I would ask that you  
10 share what military family issues you believe need to be  
11 addressed most and what recommendations you have to improve  
12 readiness. In addition, the challenge of sexual harassment  
13 and sexual assault in the military has eroded trust and  
14 faith in leaders' ability to effectively address this issue.  
15 I would ask that you share your plans for addressing this  
16 problem.

17 Ms. Ricci, you are nominated to be General Counsel of  
18 the Department of the Army. This position has a broad scope  
19 of responsibilities, including serving as legal advisor to  
20 the Secretary of the Army, Chief Legal Officer of the  
21 Department of the Army, and coordinating legal and policy  
22 positions Army-wide. Your extensive legal career in the  
23 Army, including prior service in the Army General Counsel's  
24 Office while on active-duty should serve you well.

25 There are a number of important duties that will

1 require your attention within the Department. It will be  
2 your responsibility to assist the Secretary of the Army in  
3 addressing extremism in the military and implementing the  
4 Independent Review Commission's recommendations regarding  
5 prevention and response to sexual assault.

6 As a member of the Fort Hood Independent Review  
7 Committee yourself, I would ask that you share how you plan  
8 to use the information you have gained to assist the Army in  
9 addressing sexual assault.

10 Thank you, again, to our nominees. I look forward to  
11 your testimonies.

12 Now, let me recognize the ranking member, Senator  
13 Inhofe.

14 Senator?

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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 here. I enjoyed  
5 the opportunity to personally meet them. We are very  
6 fortunate to have this group here with us this morning.

7 As this Committee has heard again and again from the  
8 military and the civilian officials, every threat we face  
9 continues to worsen our situation since the last National  
10 Defense Strategy came out in 2018. And that is the book  
11 that we continue to keep here and try to use this as our  
12 pattern, as we have in the past.

13 I certainly hope that the next National Defense  
14 Strategy, with knowledge of the success of this in the past,  
15 can give us the right direction for the future. If we want  
16 to have any hope of keeping pace, we have got to achieve  
17 real growth in Defense spending. I am very worried that  
18 inflation next year will not only cut our troops' pay but  
19 will also significantly delay the pace of our modernization  
20 efforts.

21 We have seen the shocking pace of Chinese military  
22 modernization from missiles to ships, and now nuclear  
23 expansion and hypersonic strike weapons. You know, we have  
24 been hearing about this for a long time; now, we have seen  
25 it. It is happening. It is a reality.

1           Some of the most difficult challenges are the less  
2   obvious ones, but just as important; in particular, the  
3   National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence told  
4   us, quote, China, and this is a quote, China possesses the  
5   might, talent, and ambition to surpass the United States as  
6   the world's leader in AI in the next decade if current  
7   trends do not change.

8           That is a shocker. That is something that we are not  
9   used to in this country; a recognition that we are not  
10   number one in everything. You know, when we talk to people,  
11   when we go back to our districts and talk to people on the  
12   ground, the real people that are paying for all of this fun  
13   that we are having up here, they are the ones that realize  
14   that, are starting to realize the problems that we are  
15   having now, they are really unprecedented.

16           So, I am very much concerned about it. I am concerned  
17   about what is going to happen with our troops and the things  
18   that they are looking at now in terms of their futures, and  
19   we need strong, capable civilian leadership in the  
20   Department.

21           So, I thank you all again for your willingness to  
22   serve.

23           Thank you, Chairman Reed.

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

25           Now, let me recognize Mr. Sherman for his statement.



1           Go ahead, sir.

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1 STATEMENT OF JOHN SHERMAN, NOMINEE TO BE CHIEF  
2 INFORMATION OFFICER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

3 Mr. Sherman: Good morning Chairman Reed, Ranking  
4 Member Inhofe, and Committee Members.

5 I am honored to be President Biden's nominee to be the  
6 Department of Defense Chief Information Officer and am  
7 grateful for the chance to speak with you today.

8 First and foremost, I would like to thank Liz, my wife  
9 of 29 years, who also serves in national security. Her  
10 support and love have been my rock. We are both so proud of  
11 our grown children, Brad and Savannah, and their spouses,  
12 Oksana and Kurt. I also want to recognize my parents, who  
13 are no longer with us, but are no doubt here in spirit.  
14 Along with a bit of their Texas accents, their lessons about  
15 hard work, respect, and citizenship have stuck with me.

16 That word, citizenship, has really meant service to me  
17 and my family. Following my time as an Army officer, I  
18 served in the intelligence community and DoD for nearly 25  
19 years, starting as an imagery analyst and later taking on a  
20 number of roles; ranging from Duty Officer in White House  
21 Situation Room on 9/11, to leading our impressive officers  
22 and senior executives in several agencies.

23 I have also had the opportunity to employ and manage  
24 new technologies on missions ranging from overhead  
25 reconnaissance to open-source intelligence. I saw firsthand

1 how we gain advantage through capabilities like cloud  
2 computing and large-scale data analytics, and my experience  
3 in these areas led to my selection as the CIO of the entire  
4 IC.

5 Working with talented colleagues from across the  
6 community, we built upon the flagship modernization effort  
7 known as the IC Information Technology Enterprise. We made  
8 tough recommendations to cancel things that weren't working,  
9 reinforced successes in areas like cloud, and sharpened our  
10 focus on cybersecurity and interoperability. Put simply, we  
11 ensured the IC's technology transformation would remain an  
12 exemplar.

13 I was then humbled when asked to serve at DoD, first as  
14 the Principal Deputy CIO, and for 8 months as the Acting  
15 CIO. As we drove to achieve Secretary Austin's priority  
16 to stay ahead of our China pacing threat, our team pivoted  
17 to an enterprise multi-cloud approach, which is foundational  
18 for key priorities such as Joint All Domain Command and  
19 Control (JADC2) and the Artificial Intelligence and Data  
20 Accelerator Initiative, or (ADA). Additionally, we oversaw  
21 the successful rollout of an enduring collaboration and  
22 productivity capability to millions of DoD users and began  
23 moving the Department towards stronger cybersecurity with an  
24 approach called Zero Trust. The team also made substantial  
25 progress on other critical portfolios, to include

1 electromagnetic spectrum, positioning, navigation, and  
2 timing, IT reform, special access program IT, data  
3 transformation, software development, and support to  
4 artificial intelligence. The progress on these fronts has  
5 been substantial as well.

6 Throughout my career, enabling mission has always been  
7 my foremost priority. At DoD, I believe the CI's success is  
8 ultimately measured on how our warfighters, especially in  
9 the Indo-Pacific, are able operate in a remote and  
10 disconnected environment, and whether a pilot can still  
11 strike targets when an adversary is trying to jam her GPS  
12 signal.

13 These examples and many others are based on the  
14 Department's ability to transform at scale, with the very  
15 best technologies and cybersecurity, through constant and  
16 agile change, and with the whole team. If confirmed, I  
17 would be honored to shepherd and lead this effort.

18 I get out of bed every morning knowing our adversaries  
19 are not standing still in the technology realm, and we must  
20 not either.

21 Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look  
22 forward to your questions.

23 [The prepared statement of Mr. Sherman follows:]

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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, sir.

2 Let me now recognize Mr. Vazirani, and I apologize for  
3 the multiple pronunciations of your name, sir.

4 Mr. Vazirani: Well, thank you Chairman Reed.

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1 STATEMENT OF ASHISH VAZIRANI, NOMINEE TO BE DEPUTY  
2 UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS

3 Mr. Vazirani: Good morning, Chairman Reed, Ranking  
4 Member Inhofe, and distinguished Committee Members. Thank  
5 you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

6 I am humbled and honored to be with you today as  
7 President Biden's nominee for Deputy Under Secretary of  
8 Defense for Personnel and Readiness and appreciate the  
9 confidence President Biden, Secretary Austin, and Under  
10 Secretary Cisneros have in me.

11 My father and his family fled Pakistan for India during  
12 partition. They knew danger and turmoil; they left their  
13 home with nothing but hope seeking opportunity. My father's  
14 journey brought him to the United States to complete his  
15 post-doctoral studies. It is here, in America, where he met  
16 my mother, the daughter of an Indian Foreign Service Officer  
17 stationed in Washington. After marrying, my parents  
18 returned to India, where they started their family.

19 Having had a taste of the opportunity America offered,  
20 in 1967 they moved our young family to the United States, to  
21 pursue their American dream. My parents understood  
22 achieving that dream would require hard work, service, and  
23 sacrifice. After my father passed, my single mother of five  
24 children, put herself through law school and eventually  
25 married a Marine who lost his sight fighting in Vietnam. My

1 stepdad's blindness didn't stop him; he continued serving as  
2 an advocate for veterans, founding the Blinded American  
3 Veterans Foundation and retired from the federal workforce  
4 after serving at the Corporation for National and Community  
5 service, where he helped establish the Vietnam Veterans  
6 Leadership Program.

7 Also a patriot and dedicated to service to our country,  
8 my mother served as professional staff member in the  
9 Maryland Legislature and United States Congress, serving as  
10 counsel for several House committees including Government  
11 Reform and Civil Service, all while caring for her children  
12 and a blinded Marine.

13 I am humbled to have grown up in a home where service  
14 to Nation and community was the family business. Growing  
15 up, I learned that the American dream is about more than  
16 what you achieve and build for yourself, but what you do for  
17 others. These are values my wife Deborah and I have tried  
18 to instill in our two amazing children, one of whom is  
19 currently serving as a Marine, stationed in Twentynine  
20 Palms.

21 My parents' example of service above self, to improve  
22 where needed, and innovate when required, inspired my  
23 decision to serve in the United States Navy and later, a  
24 career working with organizations, both public and private,  
25 to drive transformative change and care for our military

1 families. I am honored to have the opportunity to continue  
2 that service as Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for  
3 Personnel and Readiness.

4 I believe the reason our military is the greatest the  
5 world has seen is the people, military and civilian, who are  
6 our defense community. They dedicate their lives and those  
7 of their families, to a cause greater than themselves. They  
8 serve at the front lines, the garrisons, and in the  
9 Pentagon, making sure that we are ready to deter and, if  
10 necessary, fight and win wars. We must provide for the  
11 training, education, health, safety, and well-being of those  
12 who serve, in or out of uniform, to maintain readiness and  
13 because it is the right thing to do. That care extends to  
14 military families, transitioning servicemembers, retirees,  
15 caregivers, and survivors who have made countless sacrifices  
16 for our Nation.

17 If confirmed, I would strive to sustain a defense  
18 community that continues to safeguard the freedom and  
19 opportunity that my family has been fortunate to enjoy and  
20 privileged to protect. The contemporary challenges to  
21 readiness are significant: sexual assault, harassment,  
22 suicide, spouse unemployment, COVID, and financial and food  
23 insecurity. We face challenges in recruitment and  
24 retention, shaping a defense community that reflects America  
25 and is comprised of diverse, effective teams, prepared for



1 tomorrow's fight. I believe America's people offer us our  
2 greatest distinct advantage over our adversaries, and that  
3 we must maintain the high levels of personnel readiness to  
4 maintain that edge.

5 To meet these challenges and support the people who put  
6 country first requires innovation: a willingness to ask and  
7 answer tough questions, rapidly test and learn, and scale  
8 solutions. That is the role of the Deputy Under Secretary  
9 for Personnel and Readiness.

10 If confirmed, I will work closely with the Under  
11 Secretary for Personnel and Readiness, Deputy Secretary,  
12 Service Secretaries, and Secretary to care for the total  
13 force and our military families, to meet readiness  
14 requirements, and achieve the nation's national security  
15 objectives.

16 I commit, if confirmed, that I will bring my best each  
17 day to serve those who serve us. I also commit to  
18 collaborating with this Committee in a transparent, agile,  
19 and responsive manner, to ensure that the Department is  
20 meeting our sacred obligation to support warfighters and  
21 their families.

22 Senators, thank you for the opportunity to be with you  
23 here today. I look forward to your questions.

24 [The prepared statement of Mr. Vazirani follows:]

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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much.

2 Ms. Ricci, please?

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1           STATEMENT OF CARRIE RICCI, NOMINEE TO BE GENERAL  
2 COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

3           Ms. Ricci: Thank you, Chairman Reed, Ranking Member  
4 Inhofe, and distinguished Members of the Committee. It is  
5 an absolute honor to come before you today as President  
6 Biden's nominee for General Counsel of our great Army.

7           I am joined here today by my brother, Dr. John Ricci of  
8 New Jersey, and my daughter Maria Smith, a 10th grader with  
9 straight As, who happens to be missing her Government class  
10 today, and in her precocious way, was delighted to note that  
11 she would be seeing Government in action, so it would be  
12 okay.

13           My son, who is 21 years old, and a college student,  
14 could not be here. He was called on to work a shift at our  
15 local grocery store, much as he did during the height of the  
16 pandemic, where he worked 12 to 14 days straight and  
17 answered the call of duty.

18           This call of duty, this type of demonstration, it is  
19 endemic in our family, and I must thank my parents for that,  
20 Hector and Maria Ricci, who proudly hail from Puerto Rico  
21 and are watching today. It is they who instilled in me a  
22 great sense of duty and selflessness. They also instilled  
23 in me personal discipline, goodwill, and a belief in people,  
24 for which I am grateful.

25           I am also grateful to President Biden, Secretary

1 Austin, and Secretary Wormuth for the confidence they have  
2 shown in me by nominating me for this position. If  
3 confirmed, I would be incredibly excited to return home to  
4 the Army and resume my service to its soldiers and  
5 civilians.

6 I served as an Army officer for just short of 22 years,  
7 first as a personnel officer, and then as a Judge Advocate,  
8 retiring at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Every day, I  
9 had the immense privilege of watching soldiers put their  
10 team, mission, and country first, taking great risks and  
11 making personal sacrifices to achieve our shared goals.

12 I remain grateful to my family and those of all our  
13 service members and civilians who make such service  
14 possible.

15 Should I be confirmed, my experiences in the Army have  
16 prepared me well to assume the duties of General Counsel and  
17 do right by our do right by our soldiers, civilians, and  
18 family members. As a Judge Advocate, I worked on a broad  
19 spectrum of legal issues including military justice, equal  
20 opportunity, fiscal law, and operational and administrative  
21 law. I deployed to the Middle East twice, first for  
22 Operation Desert Storm in 1992 and then in support of  
23 Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom in 2004. I  
24 have served in operational and intelligence units and on  
25 service and combatant command staffs. I have also served in

1 the Office of the Judge Advocate General and the Office of  
2 the General Counsel.

3 I understand the importance of the collaborative  
4 relationship that must exist between these two offices. I  
5 have been fortunate to work with many of the lawyers who are  
6 still serving in these offices, including the current Judge  
7 Advocate General of the Army, an extraordinary leader with  
8 whom I served at Fort Hood.

9 Since retiring from the Army, I have worked as a  
10 federal civilian lawyer, currently leading a dynamic team of  
11 attorneys in the Office of the General Counsel at the  
12 Department of Agriculture, many of whom insisted on watching  
13 today, and I thank them for their support.

14 Last year, I was privileged to serve the Army as a  
15 civilian member of the Fort Hood Independent Review  
16 Committee, where our five-member team completed a  
17 comprehensive review of the Fort Hood command, climate and  
18 culture that has been the impetus for great change at Fort  
19 Hood and across the Army and even DoD.

20 If confirmed, I commit to serve our soldiers and  
21 civilians selflessly in ensuring the Office of the General  
22 Counsel provides the highest quality legal services to  
23 Secretary Wormuth and the Department, and to further the  
24 cooperative relationship enjoyed by the Department and this  
25 Committee.

1           This is a momentous time; a time of great change for  
2 the Army where they are embarking on a complete cultural  
3 transformation for the benefit of its soldiers. At Fort  
4 Hood, I witnessed the damage inflicted on soldiers and their  
5 units by the prevalence of sexual assault and sexual  
6 harassment.

7           If confirmed, I will ensure that current initiatives  
8 respect the rule of law and due process and assist Army  
9 leaders in bringing about real change for the brave men and  
10 women that serve our country. The current momentum must not  
11 fade: success is a must.

12           I am also committed to helping the Department tackle a  
13 range of challenges such as quality housing, on and near  
14 Army installations, beating the COVID pandemic, and ensuring  
15 we have the appropriate acquisition authorities to get our  
16 warfighters the equipment they need.

17           And for my Spanish-speaking friends and families who  
18 are watching: Gracias por su apoyo. Thank you for your  
19 support.

20           Senators, thank you for your consideration of my  
21 nomination. I look forward to answering your questions.

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

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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Ms. Ricci.

2 And now for all of the witnesses, I will ask a series  
3 of questions that are required for all civilian nominees.  
4 You may answer together.

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

7 [All three witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

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

11 [All three witnesses answered in the negative.]

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

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

20 [All three witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

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

1 denial in providing such records?

2 [All three witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

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

7 [All three witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

8 Chairman Reed: Will you cooperate in providing  
9 witnesses and briefers in response to congressional request?

10 [All three witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

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

13 [All three witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

14 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much.

15 Now, Mr. Sherman, DoD has been filling a critical role  
16 in developing 5G technologies and the dual-use applications  
17 that will ride on top of the next generation of wireless  
18 networks. 5G and the applications that 5G makes possible,  
19 will drive future economic prosperity and, critically,  
20 national security.

21 Do we need to sustain or even increase our level of  
22 investment and commitment to ensure that Chinese  
23 telecommunications companies do not dominate this critical  
24 infrastructure?

25 Mr. Sherman: Senator, 5G is critical to our



1 warfighting capability both, training here in the  
2 continental United States and then capabilities,  
3 potentially, overseas.

4 In terms of development within the Department of  
5 Defense, our continued focus on this going forward, between  
6 research and engineering, the CIO, the services, and other  
7 components to develop 5G and, indeed, lean forward to 6G  
8 capabilities are going to be critical in that space.  
9 Strategy will drive our budget on this, and, if confirmed,  
10 this would be a priority for me to work, to look at what is  
11 the proper investment to ensure if CIO, or when CIO takes us  
12 over from R&E, that the pilot projects that are implemented  
13 fully flourish and that we are postured to provide that  
14 warfighting capability.

15 Chairman Reed: Thank you.

16 Do you continue to still believe that DoD and EOS  
17 Telecom companies can successfully share the spectrum that  
18 is vital to both, is that possible?

19 Mr. Sherman: Yes, Senator. Spectrum sharing must be  
20 our watch-word going forward. The DoD has vacated a good  
21 bit of the spectrum over the years, but now with where  
22 things are, the spectrum needs to be shared, particularly in  
23 the 3100 to 3450MHz. Working with industry, the Executive  
24 Branch, and this Committee and otherwise, figuring out how  
25 we do that successfully to both, enable DoD capabilities, as

1 well as U.S. economic development would be critical.

2 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much.

3 Mr. Vazirani, you have a record as a naval veteran,  
4 yourself. Your son is a Marine serving. And as the former  
5 director to the National Military Family Association, you  
6 have an extraordinary personal connection to the issues you  
7 will be dealing with.

8 So, can I ask what your priorities would be with  
9 respect to family readiness when you, if confirmed, take  
10 over.

11 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, thank you.

12 Addressing family readiness is critical to force  
13 readiness and making sure that we take care of families is  
14 critical. There are several things that I looked at when I  
15 was an advocate for military families, and, if confirmed, I  
16 will look at a broader set of issues, as well.

17 But things that are of critical importance to military  
18 families today are military spouse unemployment, the degree  
19 to which we can help military spouses achieve fulfilling  
20 careers and contribute to the financial success of their  
21 family will also contribute to the readiness of that family  
22 and the ability of that servicemember to continue in their  
23 service. So, that becomes a retention issue. And to enable  
24 that, we need to look at innovative options for childcare.  
25 So, those are some of the things that would be specific for

1 military families, Senator.

2 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much.

3 Ms. Ricci, you have had an extraordinary career in the  
4 Army as a lawyer and now you are positioned to be the  
5 General Counsel of the Army. And, again, my comments could  
6 be directed to any one of the nominees today: extraordinary  
7 experience in the field you have been nominated to direct.

8 One aspect has been your participation at the Fort Hood  
9 Independent Review Committee and one of their conclusions  
10 was that, at Fort Hood, it appeared to be compliant on the  
11 surface, but was hollow and lacking leadership retention,  
12 day-to-day implementation, broad acceptance by enlisted  
13 soldiers, and the full inculcation into the culture and  
14 character of the Fort Hood community. Senator Inhofe and I  
15 traveled down there and I think that was our impression,  
16 also.

17 This is as much a leadership problem as it is a legal  
18 problem, but you will be right at the crossroads of both,  
19 leadership and the law. So, could you give us some insights  
20 from your participation on the committee?

21 Ms. Ricci: Yes, Chairman.

22 I saw, personally, at Fort Hood, the devastation that  
23 sexual assault can wreak on its victims and, as well as the  
24 way it erodes unit cohesion, and, if confirmed, it would be  
25 a priority of mine to assist in the implementation of the

1 recommendations of the DoD IRC, as well as the Fort Hood  
2 IRC.

3 It is my understanding that the recommendations have  
4 been accepted, but now it is time for implementation. And  
5 the details are still being worked out, and it would be my  
6 job as the Chief Legal Officer for the Army to assist in  
7 ensuring there is accurate and timely legal advice to allow  
8 for swift implementation.

9 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, again, to all the  
10 witnesses. You bring forward impressive, detailed  
11 backgrounds in the areas that you have been nominated to  
12 serve in and I wish you well. I think we can try to rapidly  
13 get you confirmed with cooperation of the Committee.

14 Senator Inhofe, please.

15 Senator Inhofe: Yeah, I regretfully have to outdo the  
16 chairman. You know, I have been critical of this President  
17 and a lot of the things that have been going on, but I have  
18 to say that I have never seen three nominees more qualified  
19 and in a better position to do a better job for America than  
20 we are looking at right now. And I don't know what came  
21 over him, but --

22 Chairman Reed: You may do that every time.

23 [Laughter.]

24 Senator Inhofe: But, anyway, I am so impressed with  
25 each of you for different reasons. Certainly, starting with

1 Mr. Sherman, you have the background and experience from  
2 when Dana Deasy was in this position and there were things  
3 that had to be done. And I know it became pretty  
4 controversial back when Legato received the position that he  
5 was in, contrary to virtually everyone, every federal agency  
6 that was out there and on record at the time, along with the  
7 general public.

8 And I have not seen so much disregard for one  
9 individual or one group taking over, in this case, something  
10 significant as the group handling the LBAN for GPS and the  
11 threats that that poses on our entire segment.

12 So, I did ask you if you saw the hearing that we had  
13 back at the beginning of this and I think you told me, Mr.  
14 Sherman, that you did, and so you know my feeling and the  
15 feeling of everyone who testified that day as to the  
16 problems that exist. So, I would only ask if you are, just  
17 keep in mind you have got the background. You know the  
18 issue. You actually worked with Dana Deasy and so I hope  
19 you will draw on that background to try to correct a problem  
20 that has got to be corrected.

21 Are there any comments that you want to make about that  
22 issue?

23 Mr. Sherman: Sir, assured positioning, navigation, and  
24 timing, particularly with global positioning system, is so  
25 critical to our warfighting ability both, here in the

1 homeland and overseas.

2 As you noted, sir, I am very familiar with the Legato  
3 issue and where that license is so close to the GPS  
4 spectrum, in my view, represents an unacceptable threat to  
5 bleed over into that spectrum. Despite our efforts to share  
6 other parts of the spectrum where Legato is, is not  
7 acceptable.

8 And, if confirmed, Senator, I would want to work with  
9 the Executive Branch, this Committee, and others to ensure  
10 that we rectify that issue to assure our PNT capabilities  
11 for our forces, sir.

12 Senator Inhofe: Well, Mr. Sherman, let me just tell  
13 you how much I appreciate the very strong position that you  
14 have taken.

15 Mr. Vazirani, you have a background, as the chairman  
16 pointed out that you really know, you have a hands-on  
17 background, and one of the problems I am having and have  
18 been having now that comes out of this administration is the  
19 problem of the COVID problems with the idea that, as I read  
20 this, and hopefully this is not going to happen, but there  
21 is a punishment, a punitive position that someone who is not  
22 complying, and we are talking about military people, as well  
23 as contractors, those individuals could find themselves to  
24 be fired.

25 Well, right now, certainly you realize, as do most

1 people, our biggest problem right now is retention and  
2 recruitment. We did inherent a very good and positive  
3 economy; consequently, it is hard to find people to work  
4 because everyone is working, and so that does create a  
5 problem.

6 But right now, if they were to -- I can't think of  
7 anything that would be worse than if we were to find  
8 ourselves in a situation where we were letting people go,  
9 where we are firing people. And it is something that is  
10 going to have to be corrected.

11 I would like any comment that you might make as to what  
12 effect this could have on the morale and our recruitment and  
13 retention problem that exists today.

14 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, I believe that COVID, and I  
15 said in my statement, that COVID is one of the readiness  
16 challenges that we face. One of the things that we have  
17 learned over the past 2 years is that COVID is deadly and it  
18 detracts from readiness, and that the vaccines are safe and  
19 effective.

20 So, Senator, I am fully supportive of the President's  
21 order and the Secretary's mandate to vaccinate the force to  
22 ensure our readiness. It is my understanding that there is  
23 an administrative process that allows for exemptions,  
24 whether it is medically necessary or due it religious  
25 belief. And then progressing administrative actions to

1 address a servicemember who may decline a vaccine.

2 So, Senator, if I am confirmed, I would certainly look  
3 towards making sure that those processes are administered  
4 with care and compassion so that we understand the specific  
5 needs of each servicemember.

6 Senator Inhofe: Yeah, but the problem that I see is  
7 that the damage is already done. Now, I am talking about  
8 two Marines walking across the street just happened to  
9 recognize me and tell me that they were going to resign and  
10 just the idea -- I was enlisted personnel back in my  
11 military days -- and we don't go into a lot of the details  
12 as to what the motives are and all of that, but all they  
13 read is you better do this or you are going to be fired.

14 Well, that is just not acceptable. So, frankly, I  
15 think the damage is already done and we are going to have to  
16 do our best to remedy it.

17 Now, I know my time is expired, but I do want to  
18 comment to Ms. Ricci that one of the problems I have  
19 addressing, and a very serious problem that is out there, is  
20 that we seem to be wanting to, all the efforts seem to be,  
21 what are we going to do now, as opposed to a prevention, in  
22 terms of sexual assault; in other words, preventing it  
23 before it takes place, not afterwards.

24 And so, I know my time is expired, but --

25 Chairman Reed: Senator, go ahead, please.



1           Senator Inhofe:  -- if you just have a short answer for  
2 that?

3           Ms. Ricci:  Yes, Senator.

4           I agree with you, prevention is critical and that this  
5 where the majority of our effort needs to be focused, and I  
6 believe that the IRC recommendations and the Fort Hood  
7 recommendations will lead us to that prevention strategy.

8           Senator Inhofe:  I agree with that.

9           Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10          Chairman Reed:  Thank you, Senator.

11          Now, Senator Shaheen, please?

12          Senator Shaheen:  Thank you.

13          And congratulations to each of you on your nominations  
14 and thank you for your long, public service to the country.

15          I would like to begin with you, Mr. Sherman, because  
16 this summer, a DoD IG report identified shortfalls in DoD's  
17 recruiting and retention of cybersecurity-related positions.

18          I had the benefit of being in New Hampshire this summer  
19 with General Van Ovost, who came up to look at the KC-46s  
20 that our National Guard has, and she talked passionately  
21 about the need for all kinds of IT positions within our  
22 military and how we were going to get there.

23          And as you think about your challenges in taking over  
24 this role, how do you see your role in recruiting and  
25 retention, because it seems to me without that workforce, we

1 can't do anything else we need to do.

2 Mr. Sherman: Senator, while cybersecurity is certainly  
3 about technology, I feel so strongly that the people factor  
4 is what makes it go. If confirmed, I would move out on a  
5 new strategy to look at our cyber and digital talent, so we  
6 can think differently about how we recruit, re-skill, and  
7 retain our individuals. This is a whole-of-nation effort  
8 and we must come at it much differently; thinking about  
9 diversity, about different sort of career paths, maybe not a  
10 30-year career path, but folks coming in and out of the  
11 organization, looking at the security protocols therein, and  
12 also building upon the progress the DoD has made in terms of  
13 how they already understand the work roles and the  
14 cyber-accepted service, but also thinking differently about  
15 how we implement it, Senator.

16 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you. I would urge you to  
17 look at the National Guard, as well, because we have a lot  
18 of talent in National Guard units around the country on this  
19 issue and we should take advantage of them wherever  
20 possible.

21 Mr. Vazirani, I am very concerned about the potential  
22 for Havana Syndrome attacks, also known as anomalous health  
23 incidents. Obviously, in your role, you are going to be in  
24 a position to consider how DoD responds to those issues.

25 I very much appreciate Secretary Austin's issuing a

1 guidance, but I think what is going to be very important is  
2 to have particular protocols that everyone understands and  
3 knows what to do if they are the victim of such an attack.

4 So, will you commit that this is something that you  
5 will take a look at and work on, if confirmed?

6 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, I do know that this is a  
7 serious issue and that it has become a priority for the  
8 administration, and, if confirmed, I would certainly commit  
9 to ensuring that the resources of the Department,  
10 particularly the health system, were available to address  
11 this.

12 Senator Shaheen: Good. Thank you.

13 Another issue that has surfaced, sadly, onto many of  
14 our military installations is the prevalence of PFAS. It  
15 has shown up in the blood of a lot of folks in New Hampshire  
16 who were stationed at the former Pease Air Force Base and  
17 who now live in the community. Obviously, these chemicals,  
18 the PFAS chemicals are linked to a variety of health  
19 concerns. And one of the things we need to do is to start  
20 thinking about how to track those.

21 Are you aware of any efforts by DoD to offer blood  
22 testing for military servicemembers and their families, who  
23 have been stationed at those contaminated bases and do you  
24 think we should be looking at some sort of a tracking effort  
25 to address this?

1           Mr. Vazirani: Senator, certainly, the health and well-  
2 being of servicemembers and their families is critical for  
3 the readiness of the force and while I am not aware of any  
4 specific actions that the Department is taking, if  
5 confirmed, I would certainly look at how can we understand  
6 the prevalence and impact of these toxic chemicals and what  
7 they could mean for families and for readiness. And so,  
8 Senator, I do commit that, if confirmed, that I would work  
9 with this Committee and with colleagues in the Department to  
10 ensure we understand the complexity of that particular  
11 issue.

12           Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you.

13           I think there are some provisions in the House-passed  
14 Defense Authorization bill that would look at testing, blood  
15 testing for members of our military.

16           Ms. Ricci, you talked eloquently about what happened at  
17 Fort Hood and the need for cultural change. Again, I  
18 appreciate Secretary Austin's announcing his support for  
19 moving sexual assault cases outside of the military chain of  
20 command. This Committee voted to support that.

21           If confirmed, how do you see your role in making sure  
22 that that gets done in a way that people in the military can  
23 buy into and that better addresses the issue of sexual  
24 assault?

25           Ms. Ricci: Senator, it is important to support the

1 Secretary's decision and, if confirmed, as the Chief Legal  
2 Officer of the Army, it would be my duty to assist the Army  
3 in understanding the nuances, the legal nuances involved and  
4 making sure that we have the appropriate implementation so  
5 that we do support the Secretary's decision in removing that  
6 decision from the chain of command.

7 Senator Shaheen: And do I have your commitment that  
8 you will come back and report to this committee on the  
9 progress of how those changes are going?

10 Ms. Ricci: Yes, Senator, you absolutely do.

11 Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

12 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

14 Senator Tuberville, please?

15 Senator Tuberville: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 Thanks for being here today. Mr. Sherman, back in  
17 July, this Committee marked up the fiscal year 2022 NDAA and  
18 increased Defense top line spending, which included \$116.1  
19 billion for DoD RDT&E. A significant portion of this money  
20 will go to contractors. Many of them will be small  
21 businesses. And for some, it will be their first DoD  
22 contract. Unfortunately, these contractors' cyberattacks  
23 against the homeland are growing, making their small  
24 businesses the target in the eyes of our adversaries. In  
25 Alabama, alone, we have 5,000 Defense contractors.

1           It is self-defeating to spend billions a year on  
2 cutting-edge technologies and critical research, but then  
3 let China and Russia sneak through the backdoor. We cannot  
4 expect our DoD contractors, especially our small businesses,  
5 to fend for themselves against cyberattacks from nations,  
6 states, and malign actors.

7           If confirmed, what will you do to assist all  
8 contractors with the collective, defensive capabilities  
9 needed to adequately safeguard, you know, our technology?

10          Mr. Sherman: Senator, cybersecurity is certainly the  
11 paramount activity of Chief Information Officer and as you  
12 note, small- and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of  
13 this economy. If confirmed, there are a number of things  
14 that I would want to do to include with the Cyber Maturity  
15 Model Certification, or CMMC, program, making that updated  
16 and not onerous to those small and medium companies in  
17 Alabama and everywhere else, sir; also, working with General  
18 Paul Nakasone at NSA and USCYBERCOM, doing things like  
19 providing, as we would call it, cybersecurity, as a service  
20 for that small- or medium-sized company, giving them  
21 templates and guides on how to do this, so they are not  
22 having to reinvent the wheel themselves on this. With  
23 always thinking not just about the very large corporations,  
24 but those small and medium companies that are so important,  
25 and also where the Chinese and Russians and others try to go

1 after, to get into our network, sir.

2 Senator Tuberville: Yeah, thank you.

3 Mr. Vazirani, if confirmed, you would have supervision  
4 over the Department of Defense education activity; 160  
5 schools in seven states, 11 foreign countries, and two  
6 territories. Two of these schools are in my home state  
7 Alabama, Fort Rucker and Maxwell Air Force Base.

8 I am a proud military brat. I was an educator for 40  
9 years. I have seen, firsthand, the importance of a stable  
10 environment for kids inside the classroom and at home.

11 Students who are in their third year, impacted by  
12 COVID-19 mask mandates, virtual learning, now school boards  
13 across the country are pushing critical rates. They are  
14 even trying to restrict parents' involvement in the  
15 classroom.

16 Would you agree that some of the best solutions to the  
17 challenges facing our schools come from the local level,  
18 where parents, students, teachers, and administrators can  
19 collaborate and work towards success together, and can you  
20 elaborate on that?

21 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, I appreciate the question and I  
22 think what you are pointing out is that the education of  
23 military children is critical and particularly when we look  
24 at the future force, 80 percent of those who serve today are  
25 military-connected, and so we have to think about the

1 appropriate education of those children and make sure that  
2 there are appropriate education options for the families so  
3 that their children can advance, particularly as they move  
4 from one location to another.

5 Senator, if confirmed, I would want to look at the  
6 education activities and make sure that the appropriate  
7 level of education is being provided. I think that parents  
8 do provide a great resource and are our partner in the  
9 education of their child. And so, if confirmed, I would  
10 want to work with the colleagues at the Defense Department  
11 education authority to make sure that the education and the  
12 curriculum is being involved in a way that will  
13 appropriately educate those children.

14 Senator Tuberville: Thank you.

15 And Ms. Ricci, it was good to hear you say something  
16 about the living quarters in a lot of our military bases. A  
17 lot of them are atrocious. I have been to some of them and  
18 it was good to hear you say that, you know, you support  
19 upgrading some of those facilities.

20 Could you elaborate on that. Have you had firsthand  
21 knowledge of that?

22 Ms. Ricci: Yes, Senator, I have.

23 At Fort Hood, I did learn about the abominable living  
24 conditions that some of our servicemembers have lived in and  
25 it was a small mention in the Fort Hood report that was part



1 of the overall command climate. And I would be supportive  
2 of the Army's continuing efforts to reform how privatized  
3 housing works, to ensure that contracts are in other words  
4 and that the partners are held accountable.

5 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. You know, the attitude  
6 of our military is very important and a lot of it, you know,  
7 starts at home, obviously, with kids and living quarters,  
8 and they don't make a lot of money. You know, a lot of them  
9 could go and do other things, and we have got to make sure  
10 that we can do anything possible to keep, you know, our best  
11 in the military because with all this technology now, a lot  
12 can leave. They can go to other places, have a better life  
13 with a lot more money, but a lot of them want to support  
14 this country, and we appreciate that.

15 So, thanks for being here today. Thank you for your  
16 testimony.

17 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Tuberville.

19 Senator Kaine, please?

20 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

21 And congratulations to the nominees. You are all well-  
22 qualified for your positions.

23 Mr. Sherman, I want to pick up, just commenting on  
24 something that Senator Tuberville was asking about, that I  
25 am also really focused on, and that is the ability of small,

1 innovative tech companies to participate in work across the  
2 DoD but including in cybersecurity. And so, this question  
3 of having a process to get CMMC compliance that can work for  
4 small technology companies is also something that I am  
5 really interested in and I appreciate Senator Tuberville  
6 asking about that, and your commitment, that you would work  
7 on that. I would look forward to working with you on it.

8 Here is one that is kind of related in dealing with  
9 technology companies' interaction with DoD. The DoD has a  
10 process for certification. It is called -- technology  
11 companies have a process within DoD that is called Impact  
12 Level to get certified to do work with the DoD. There is a  
13 similar process in the GSA called FedRamp to get approval  
14 through the GSA to be a government IT vendor. And I often  
15 wonder whether we can create reciprocity between some of  
16 these programs so that a company that gets, you know,  
17 certified through the GSA process could get certified  
18 through the DoD or vice-versa without requiring duplication  
19 of work.

20 We run into the same issue with security clearances,  
21 where different agencies use different practices on security  
22 clearances and it makes it very difficult.

23 Do you think there should be reciprocity between the  
24 GSA certification system and the DoD certification system?

25 Mr. Sherman: Senator, given how critical our private

1 sector is to our tech innovation, particularly from small  
2 and medium companies, as well as large ones, if confirmed, I  
3 would always try to seek symmetry and, I don't want to say  
4 simplification, but making it being cognizant of how it  
5 affects the companies, and if confirmed, would take a look  
6 at the GSA parity to FedRamp and also recognizing that we at  
7 Department of Defense will often layer above and extra  
8 certifications on top of that, given our security  
9 considerations, but, at the front end, making this as smooth  
10 and symmetrical as possible, sir.

11 Senator Kaine: That would be great. I take that as a  
12 commitment to work together with GSA to see what symmetries  
13 can be created. And you are right, if there are additional  
14 security requirements at the DoD side, but you could build  
15 on the base of what GSA has done with FedRamp, rather than  
16 having a completely separate certification process, that  
17 would be very much appreciated.

18 Mr. Vazirani, I want to ask you about our workforce  
19 needs. The commandant in the Marine Corps released planning  
20 guidance in 2019 and I am going to read you a quote from it,  
21 quote, our manpower system was designed in the Industrial  
22 Era to produce mass, not quality. We assume that quantity  
23 of personnel was the most important element of the system  
24 and that Marines are all essentially interchangeable.

25 My son is Marine, too. I know you have a boy in the

1 Marines.

2 As the complexity of the world is increased, the spread  
3 between physical jobs and thinking jobs is increased  
4 dramatically. War still has a physical component and all  
5 Marines need to be screened and ready to fight; however, we  
6 have not adapted to the needs of the current battlefield.  
7 The only way to attract and retain Marines capable of  
8 winning on the new battlefield is to compete with the tools  
9 and incentives available to them in the marketplace.

10 What are some of the areas of the military's  
11 recruitment, training, promotion, and retention system that  
12 could benefit from incentives found, quote, in the  
13 marketplace?

14 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, I appreciate that question.

15 I think that point about making sure that we have the  
16 right talent, and it is not just a question of quantity; it  
17 is a question of quality, as well. I think as we think  
18 about the emerging warfare domains and the way that war will  
19 be waged into the future, we have to think about that as, in  
20 order to compete on that battlefield, to have the right  
21 talent.

22 And so, if confirmed, one of the things that I would  
23 want to do is to work with the services and the team within  
24 Personnel and Readiness to see what mechanisms are available  
25 to ensure that we get a diverse and qualified total

1 workforce. And I think that is a question of, and how do  
2 you achieve that through the military service, as well as  
3 the civilian component of the military. And so, as we go  
4 through this process of recruiting people, we have to think  
5 about, are we reaching the right people who have those  
6 skills, and then, two, what are the mechanisms we have  
7 available to retain them?

8 Because as we compete, we are also competing with  
9 corporations and institutions, and so we have to look at  
10 what are the tools available to us to retain the talent.

11 Senator Kaine: One mechanism that I will just put on  
12 the radar screen that I will ask you about, should you be  
13 confirmed, is one that we included in the NDAA in 2020.  
14 There was a provision, or Section 860, to this that would  
15 establish the Defense Civilian Training Corps and this corps  
16 was sort of like an ROTC corps that we could use to attract  
17 people into particular fields: engineering, acquisition,  
18 and others, where we are going to need a strong workforce  
19 going forward. I would like to talk further about the  
20 success of that model, it is still very new, and what the  
21 DoD plans to do to really exploit the value of a program  
22 like that.

23 But thanks to all the witnesses and congratulations to  
24 you.

25 Mr. Chair, I yield back.

1 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Kaine.

2 Senator Hawley, please?

3 Senator Hawley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 And thanks to all the witnesses for being here.

5 Mr. Sherman, let me start with you. The use of  
6 Chinese-made hardware like printed circuit boards poses a  
7 major cybersecurity concern for the United States. I spoke  
8 about this with Microsoft's president, Brad Smith, when he  
9 was here earlier this year. He agreed with this assessment.

10 Let me ask if you agree that it is time for DoD to stop  
11 using Chinese-printed circuit boards and the information  
12 systems that our warfighters depend on to defend their  
13 country?

14 Mr. Sherman: Senator, I see China as a paramount  
15 threat to our systems, to everything that we are doing at  
16 DoD, and if confirmed, that would absolutely be something  
17 that I would look at. We do not want the Chinese in or near  
18 our systems, sir.

19 Senator Hawley: Let me ask you China, with regard to  
20 Taiwan. If China invades Taiwan, I will likely try to do so  
21 by surprise, of course, and as quickly as possible, as the  
22 fait accompli scenario. One of the ways in which it will  
23 likely try to achieve its objectives is to overwhelm our  
24 cyber defense systems and try to degrade or neutralize as  
25 many of our critical defense systems as possible.

1           So, in your assessment, is DoD currently prepared to  
2 withstand and fight through a barrage of cyberattacks in the  
3 event of a Chinese attempted fait accompli?

4           Mr. Sherman: Senator, I believe DoD is well-postured,  
5 based on what I know right now, that is, with any sort of  
6 defensive mechanisms, we can always improve it. And, if  
7 confirmed, cybersecurity, working with General Nakasone at  
8 CYBERCOM, informed by NSA threat intelligence, to keep the  
9 Chinese back on their heels would be a top priority.

10          Senator Hawley: Very good.

11          Can I just come back to the printed circuit boards for  
12 just a second. You said that China was a concern. I  
13 appreciate that. But would you agree that it is time for  
14 DoD to stop using Chinese-printed circuit boards?

15          Mr. Sherman: Senator, if confirmed, I would have to  
16 look at that, but in principle, any sort of Chinese hardware  
17 or software should not be on or near our systems would be my  
18 belief.

19          Senator Hawley: Okay. I look forward to hearing from  
20 you further on that.

21          On the Taiwan question, again, talk to us about how the  
22 requirements for defending against a surge of cyberattacks  
23 like we were just talking about, how do those differ from  
24 the requirements from defending or for defending against  
25 Chinese cyberattacks on American systems during peacetime;

1 in other words, what do we need to be prepared for in,  
2 effectively, a kinetic scenario that we otherwise wouldn't  
3 be?

4 Mr. Sherman: I think the principle of Zero Trust,  
5 Senator will be for both scenarios. Assuming they are  
6 already on our networks right now, and not just defending at  
7 the perimeter in a wall-and-moat scenario or even a defense  
8 in-depth but segmenting our networks and everything we are  
9 doing in a way that we have not done before, making it about  
10 the data and also tagging people and tagging data in a way  
11 that we have not done before. Zero Trust will be the key  
12 both, for defending here in the homeland, as well as out at  
13 the edge, where they could attack us.

14 Senator Hawley: Let me ask you, if you are confirmed,  
15 what you will do to ensure that we are able to not only  
16 defend against Chinese cyberattacks in peacetime, but also  
17 to be able to withstand and fight through them in a  
18 potential future conflict.

19 Mr. Sherman: Senator, if confirmed, my role as CIO  
20 would be to ensure we have the most robust defensive  
21 capabilities possible and providing the infrastructure for  
22 General Nakasone and CYBERCOM to use for offensive  
23 capabilities.

24 Senator Hawley: And are there any specific steps that  
25 you can think of now that you would take, that you think



1 need to be taken in that regard?

2 Mr. Sherman: The most immediate step, if confirmed,  
3 would be what we call enterprise Identity, Credential, and  
4 Access Management, or ICAM; somewhat of a techy term, but  
5 something that has to be there to be able to tag the people  
6 and tag the data on that Zero Trust scenario, sir.

7 Senator Hawley: Good. Let me ask you a little bit  
8 about the consolidation of our industrial base. This is  
9 something that I have raised with other nominees before the  
10 committee.

11 DoD has long struggled with this, this increase in  
12 consolidation. We are seeing problems now with emerging  
13 technologies, with just a few large companies in this  
14 country can own a lot of technology or can buy it up.

15 Do you agree that concentrating market power in just a  
16 handful of companies, and I am thinking specifically of  
17 Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Amazon, makes it harder for  
18 competition to occur and to spur innovation, and that is  
19 especially true as it relates to information technologies.

20 Mr. Sherman: Senator, I see our technology Defense  
21 Industrial Base as a national advantage for us. In terms of  
22 their consolidation, all I can say, if confirmed, as CIO, I  
23 will be a very tough customer to all of them, without  
24 favoritism or bias and making sure that our warfighters get  
25 the very best technology for their warfighting needs.

1           Senator Hawley: You are anticipating my next question,  
2 which is how can we ensure a robust and competitive  
3 marketplace for these emerging technologies that isn't  
4 dominated by a few firms and, ultimately, is getting us the  
5 best innovation that is possible and that we need in order  
6 to succeed.

7           Mr. Sherman: Senator, if confirmed, I would see that  
8 done by rigorous requirements, but also casting a wide net,  
9 not to exclude small and medium businesses with geographic  
10 diversity, different capabilities, and working with  
11 acquisition sustainment, and research and engineering, and  
12 others to make sure we hear multiple voices for our  
13 requirements.

14          Senator Hawley: Very good. If the Chairman will let  
15 me slide one more question in here very quickly, Mr.  
16 Vazirani, I want to ask you about the needs in the Pacific  
17 theater.

18          Secretary Austin told me earlier this year, and to  
19 quote him now, the combat-credible, forward-deterrent  
20 posture is instrumental to the U.S. military's ability to  
21 deter, and if necessary, deny a fait accompli scenario. We  
22 are talking about Taiwan there. Forward-deployed units are  
23 only part of the solution, of course. These organizations  
24 have to be filled with servicemembers who understand the  
25 Pacific theater of operations.

1           And if nominated, your office will oversee the  
2 recruitment and retention of all DoD personnel. Here is my  
3 question: How can DoD Berman and equip PACOM units with  
4 specially trained individuals who are ready to compete and  
5 within in the Pacific theater, given the unique needs and  
6 requirements there?

7           Mr. Vazirani: Senator, I think, there, again, it is a  
8 question of how do we get to the right talent; the people  
9 who can fight those wars who have the skills, the knowledge,  
10 the language skills, the cultural skills to know how we  
11 might engage an enemy in that region.

12           So, if confirmed, that is something I would work with  
13 the people within the Personnel and Readiness with the Under  
14 Secretary, and with the Service Secretaries to make sure  
15 that we understand what the requirements are for each of  
16 those forces who may engage and ensure that we have the  
17 right standards, and so that the standards and requirements  
18 meet that and that we can meet our recruiting goals.

19           Senator Hawley: Thank you.

20           Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Hawley.

21           Senator Blumenthal, please?

22           Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

23           I thank each of you for your service and for your  
24 willingness to serve in these new capacities.

25           Mr. Sherman, I am not sure what your role will be, if

1 confirmed, in the procedures and standards used in  
2 classifying documents, but I have raised repeatedly in our  
3 classified sessions, the fact that a lot of what we are  
4 hearing, the American people deserve to hear and there is no  
5 real reason that the material should be classified.

6 In a lot of the instances where I raise this issue, the  
7 military or intelligence officials there, without disclosing  
8 any classified information that may have taken place there,  
9 tend to agree, and in fact, the American people deserve to  
10 though more. It would be useful for the Department of  
11 Defense that they should know more and, in fact, for our  
12 democracy.

13 So, will you undertake a review of our current  
14 classification standards and procedures with a view to  
15 opening more of it to the public?

16 Mr. Sherman: Senator, I certainly see the absolute  
17 value in our way of government for transparency, but also  
18 keeping our secrets safe. If confirmed, I would work with  
19 the stakeholders in the Department of Defense to include  
20 Intelligence and Security, I&S, and other parts of the  
21 Department to look at this topic.

22 Senator Blumenthal: Will you commit to give us a plan  
23 for that review, a specific plan as to who will be involved  
24 and what the timetable is?

25 Mr. Sherman: Senator, I would commit to work with the

1 stakeholders who have that appropriate policy under them,  
2 but, yes, I would, if confirmed, take this as a priority.

3 Senator Blumenthal: Well, with all due respect, will  
4 you present the Committee on Armed Services of the United  
5 States Senate with a plan, a specific plan for whom you will  
6 consult and what your timetable will be?

7 Mr. Sherman: I will commit to that, Senator.

8 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you.

9 Who do you think should be involved? Who are the  
10 stakeholders that you would involve?

11 Mr. Sherman: Senator, based on what I know about the  
12 job, it would be Intelligence & Security and other folks who  
13 look at the counterintelligence equities. I know CIO has a  
14 role in this, but other parts of the Department do, as well.  
15 As well as protecting secrets and safeguarding that area,  
16 they would absolutely need to be involved, sir.

17 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you.

18 Mr. Vazirani, I am sure you are aware of the increasing  
19 rate of suicide, an alarming increasing rate of suicide  
20 among our veterans and servicemembers. Since September 11,  
21 2001, apparently, that number is more than quadrupled number  
22 who died in the wars previously. I may have some of the  
23 details wrong.

24 There is a study that estimates that 7,057  
25 servicemembers have been killed in post-9/11 war operations,

1 while 30,177 active-duty servicemembers and veterans have  
2 died by suicide. The average suicide rate for post-9/11  
3 veterans is between 18 to 34 was 32.3, per 100,000 between  
4 2005 and 2017, but it rose to 45.9, per 100,000 in 2018.  
5 That is about 2.5 times the suicide rate in the general  
6 population.

7 Are you familiar with the study that provided these  
8 numbers from Brown University's Costs of War Project?

9 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, first of all, any suicide, any  
10 number of suicides in the military or veteran community are  
11 alarming and we should be concerned about that.

12 Senator, I am not familiar with that specific study. I  
13 am familiar with the studies that the Department has done  
14 regarding suicide.

15 If confirmed, if this an area that would be a  
16 particular concern for me and a priority to look at what are  
17 we doing. As the Secretary said, the first thing we need to  
18 do is to make sure that we reduce stigma and we encourage  
19 help-seeking so that servicemembers, their families, and  
20 they understand that we can overcome that stigma, so that as  
21 they proceed through their military life cycle, and even  
22 into the veteran community, they know how to ask for help.

23 The other side of that, Senator, that I focus on is  
24 ensuring that leaders know how to recognize the signs of  
25 suicide and when to offer help and make sure that there is a

1 trusted relationship where a servicemember can ask for help.

2 Senator Blumenthal: I appreciate that answer.

3 My time has expired.

4 This topic is a big, complex and an important one, and  
5 I look forward to following up with you.

6 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.

8 Senator Tillis, please?

9 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10 And congratulations to all three of you for your  
11 nominations.

12 Mr. Sherman, you get a pass on this question, because I  
13 think there are families and friends watching. I would like  
14 to pronounce your last names right.

15 Could you please pronounce your name? Is it Vazirani?

16 Mr. Vazirani: Vazirani.

17 Senator Tillis: Vazirani.

18 And Ms. Ricci?

19 Ms. Ricci: Ricci.

20 Senator Tillis: Okay. Thank you.

21 I asked my staff. She said it had been pronounced a  
22 couple of different ways, so I just wanted to make sure I  
23 got it right.

24 Ms. Ricci, I am very focused on military housing. I  
25 made several visits to Fort Bragg and Camp Lejeune. I have

1 done town halls, and we still have a problem there. We made  
2 some progress with the Bill of Rights, but I think that  
3 there is a lot more work to do.

4 So, can you give me an idea of whether or not this will  
5 be a priority for you and some vision as to how we can get  
6 to an improved state of military housing. It is a real  
7 problem. I think it has a number of effects on readiness,  
8 health, a number of other issues.

9 Do you share that concern? Can you give me an idea of  
10 some of the things that you may make a priority?

11 Ms. Ricci: Yes, Senator.

12 I absolutely share your concern. Soldiers should have  
13 safe housing, safe and healthy housing. And during my time  
14 at Fort Hood, I did, indeed, listen to some of the concerns  
15 of the servicemembers living there and some of the  
16 conditions that they faced. And I understand that the Army  
17 is going through a revised, so to speak, way of looking at  
18 their partnerships with privatized housing and ensuring that  
19 contractors are held accountable.

20 And, if confirmed, that would be a priority of mine.  
21 That would be one of the priorities, is to make sure that  
22 our procurement processes are being enforced appropriately  
23 and that our partners are being held accountable.

24 Senator Tillis: I also think that we have to have a  
25 focus on what has occurred as a result of some of this



1 unacceptable housing. I went into a house at Fort Bragg  
2 that had a dehumidifier that in the hallway that was  
3 collecting so much water that the tank, they couldn't use  
4 the tank. They literally had to run a hose to the bathtub  
5 in the hallway bathroom just to be able to keep it running  
6 nonstop, 24/7.

7 So, another area that I think we have to look at is,  
8 how are we proactively helping the families that have  
9 documented medical conditions?

10 I met with a number of military spouses who had  
11 doctors' advice to get out of these homes because the  
12 conditions in the homes were clearly causing health problems  
13 for them and their children. So, that is another area that  
14 I look forward to working with you, after you are confirmed.

15 I guess one other question I have for you has to do  
16 with military justice. What do you perceive would be an  
17 appropriate role for the Army General Counsel, if Congress  
18 enacts Secretary Austin's proposal to establish the office  
19 of special victims' prosecutions in the secretariat of the  
20 military department?

21 Ms. Ricci: Senator, if confirmed, the Army General  
22 Counsel, as the Chief Legal Officer, would have the  
23 obligation to ensure swift implementation to provide  
24 accurate and timely legal advice, and to assist in working  
25 out the legal nuances attendant to that change.

1           Senator Tillis: Mr. Sherman, I have got more in common  
2 with you than I do with most of the people in the Senate  
3 with my 29 years in information technology. I also want to  
4 echo what Senator Blumenthal said on suicide prevention;  
5 removing the stigma, that is very important. I also think  
6 we have to act in the way that we talk.

7           We all talk about removing the stigma and then we will  
8 go behind closed doors and whisper about a problem that we  
9 may have with a family member or friends. It really begins  
10 with our behavior, too, to help remove the stigma.

11           But Mr. Sherman, I feel like the Department of Defense  
12 is replete with opportunities to consolidate, to collapse  
13 some silos, and to really go through an enterprise  
14 transformation for the use of information technology,  
15 duplicative systems across service lines. I think that  
16 there is an opportunity to build cross-functional platforms  
17 and then only have, on an exception basis, the silos that we  
18 have today.

19           Do you agree with that?

20           Mr. Sherman: I do, Senator.

21           Senator Tillis: And do you think that the culture of  
22 the DoD can be changed to actually accept that?

23           It is the same sort of problem I saw in large, diverse  
24 corporations. But what would you do to actually change the  
25 culture so that we could make meaningful progress and take a

1 lot of costs out of our IT operations in the DoD?

2 Mr. Sherman: Senator, I would build upon, if  
3 confirmed, successes that have been underway; for example,  
4 with the 26 defense agencies and field activities, what is  
5 called the Fourth Estate Network Optimization, to reduce all  
6 of those inefficiencies there, scale that to the Department  
7 level, build on what the military departments are doing; for  
8 example, the Department of Navy's project Cattle Drive, they  
9 call it, to get rid of duplicative systems and drive greater  
10 efficiencies.

11 I would, if confirmed, build on those successes, sir,  
12 and a lot of this would be built on data, to make sure we  
13 know what is out there and to make that implemented, sir.

14 Senator Tillis: Well, this is something that is  
15 personally very important to me. It is very interesting to  
16 me. It keeps my skills up to date.

17 So, I would like to get your commitment that I received  
18 from your counterpart in Veterans Affairs, to get together,  
19 take a look at your program office, the sort of structure  
20 that is going to be necessary to actually execute that. And  
21 it is also very important to me because I think there is a  
22 lot of integration opportunities, particularly with respect  
23 to the Cerner platform for the electronic health record, so  
24 that we can actually get to a point to where we may be able  
25 to predict a transitioning servicemember being at risk

1 before they even know they are. I do believe that that is  
2 within our reach if we integrate and capture the right kind  
3 of data through the like cycle of a soldier.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

5 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Tillis.

6 Senator King, please?

7 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 Mr. Sherman, there has been a lot of discussion about  
9 cyber on a lot of levels. I don't think there is any doubt  
10 that if there is a conflict that we are engaged in, cyber  
11 will be the first part of it. The first effort of our  
12 adversaries will be to try to blind us in terms of our  
13 ability to communicate. They are also using cyber to  
14 compromise our networks to steal intellectual property.

15 My question is, you use the word "ensure"; I think that  
16 may be an optimistic word. But how do we ensure?

17 Do you anticipate pen testing, red teaming, bug  
18 bounties, hackers for hire?

19 It seems to me the best way to be sure or to get toward  
20 assurance is testing the network by friendly hackers or  
21 friendly, those who are enabled to attack the networks and  
22 tell us where our vulnerabilities are. Is that in your  
23 agenda?

24 Mr. Sherman: Yes, sir. Absolutely.

25 Not just trust but verify and reverify. Working with,

1 for example, the Defense Digital Service, which does a lot  
2 of that bug bounty-type activity at DoD. Also working with  
3 the Director of Operational Testing and Evaluation, DOT&E,  
4 so we can do that up front testing, as we buy technology,  
5 such as commercial-clad capabilities to really see where  
6 vulnerabilities are. And as we have done, for example, on  
7 Office 365 being employed across the enterprise, finding  
8 vulnerabilities that even the vendor didn't know about.

9 Senator King: And I would hope that you would work  
10 with NSA and CYBERCOM, they are the best in the world, to  
11 test your own networks. You used "trust, but verify"; that  
12 is one of my favorite mottos, but another is, "Does it work  
13 and how do you know?" And so, CYBERCOM, it seems to me, and  
14 NSA, with Paul Nakasone, would be a tremendous resource.

15 Secondly, on cyber, we are engaged in a very  
16 large-scale modernization of our nuclear triad. As far as I  
17 am concerned, we ought to scrap the word "triad" and talk  
18 about nuclear quad, because command and control is as  
19 important as any leg of the triad; if we don't have command  
20 and control, we can't communicate with the triad, it isn't  
21 going to work.

22 So, I hope that modernization, when we are talking  
23 about modernization of the submarine fleet or the missiles  
24 or the bombers, we are also talking about a very intense  
25 modernization of command and control in the nuclear area.

1           Mr. Sherman: Sir, NC3, and I like where you are  
2 heading with this, it is not just a triad; it is the fourth  
3 leg of a triad, to ensure that the triad will be effective.  
4 Having resilient, modern, strengthened NC3 on that, and that  
5 is an area, too, and I should have included this, with  
6 General Nakasone, both from CYBERCOM and NSA, to ensure that  
7 NC3 network is there when we need it.

8           Senator King: And it has to be redundant, and  
9 redundant, and redundant.

10          Mr. Sherman: Yes, sir.

11          Senator King: You talked about workforce, so I won't  
12 dwell on that. But as you know, that is a huge problem  
13 nationwide, and not only in the defense field, but in every  
14 field, in terms of network security, cybersecurity, network  
15 administration. So, workforce is something that I think has  
16 to be attended to.

17          Mr. Vazirani, two issues in your area. One that  
18 concerns me, and that is the geographic diversity of our  
19 Armed Forces. I was surprised to find in 1975, the division  
20 between the Northeast, the Midwest, and the South, and the  
21 Southwest, among our military personnel was about 50/50. I  
22 think it was 47/47.

23          Today, it is 67/30; in other words, the Midwest and  
24 Northeast have fallen to 30 percent of our active-duty  
25 military. The South and Southwest are now almost two-

1 thirds. I think that is unhealthy for the country to have  
2 our professional military service be geographically defined.

3 Do you appreciate that concern and what do we do about  
4 it?

5 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, I certainly share that concern.  
6 I think that in order for us to have the most ready force  
7 that force also has to look like America and come from the  
8 breadth of America. I think, Senator, if I am confirmed,  
9 one of the things we would want to look at is, how can we  
10 improve the value proposition to reach young people; people  
11 who are eligible and qualified to serve in those areas and  
12 ensure that we are accessing the talent.

13 Senator King: It has to be a conscious strategy. The  
14 current strategy, obviously, isn't working. There has to be  
15 a conscious saying, we are going to recruit more in  
16 Cleveland or in Boston than we are today. We are going to  
17 put more advertising, and whatever it is, and I hope you  
18 will pursue that.

19 Second, I just have a few seconds left, so I just want  
20 to touch on these. I want to associate myself with all the  
21 others who have talked about suicide. In the Vietnam War,  
22 we lost 58,000 people. In the decade from 2008 to 2017, we  
23 lost 60,000 people to suicide. The figures Senator  
24 Blumenthal mentioned are just shocking. We have lost four  
25 times as many military people and veterans to suicide since

1 9/11, than to operations. That is a stalker of our military  
2 personnel. I hope you will really put some focus on that.  
3 If it were a military event killing 30,000 people over that  
4 period of time, we would have all kinds of resources on it,  
5 so I hope you will pursue that.

6 Finally, Ms. Ricci, I looked into this whole housing  
7 issue. I think a lot of it is contracts, contract  
8 administration, and following up and enforcing the contracts  
9 that we have and renegotiating and improving those contracts  
10 with the private vendors. If you have an obligation under  
11 contract but nobody ever enforces it or pays any attention  
12 to it, then you are going to backslide, and I think that is  
13 exactly what happened.

14 So, I hope in your position you will be very contract  
15 lawyerly and follow those obligations to be sure that they  
16 are enforced. That is one way to quickly bring those  
17 contractors back up to the standard that they agreed to.

18 Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

19 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator King.

20 Now, let me recognize, via Webex, Senator Duckworth,  
21 please.

22 Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 And I want to associate myself also with the comments  
24 from my colleagues who came before me on both sides of the  
25 aisle on suicides, among our military men and women.



1           And just to remind everyone the Veterans Crisis hotline  
2 is: 1-800-273-TALK, t-a-l-k, 1-800-273-TALK. You can call  
3 that if you are on the brink of homelessness or any kind of  
4 crisis, including needing just to talk to someone.

5           Now, I want to start by congratulating all three of you  
6 who are here today on your nominations. I do want to begin  
7 with a problem that has existed far too long that has become  
8 more urgent during this pandemic, and that is military  
9 hunger. Far too many of our military families experience  
10 food insecurity.

11           That is why I introduced the Military Hunger Prevention  
12 Act, to create a basics, needs allowance to help struggling  
13 military families put food on the table. My bill currently  
14 has 25 bipartisan co-sponsors in the Senate; an indicator of  
15 the broad support for solving this shameful problem.

16           Mr. Vazirani, please, I apologize for mispronouncing  
17 your name, if confirmed, how will you address food  
18 insecurity among our servicemembers?

19           Mr. Vazirani: Senator, thank you for raising that  
20 concern. Food insecurity, obviously, it affects the  
21 readiness of the family today. It detracts from the  
22 readiness of the servicemember when they are in the field if  
23 they are thinking that their family is hungry. And it  
24 detracts from our future readiness because the children of  
25 many of those who serve today are going to serve in the

1 future.

2 Senator, if confirmed, I want to work with this  
3 Committee and with people within the Department to certainly  
4 meet up to the Secretary's priority of people first. I  
5 think we have to look at a range of options on how we solve  
6 for this and part of that is ensuring that those families  
7 have financial security.

8 And so, when I was an advocate, I looked at a range of  
9 options for the basic needs allowance, which I think is one  
10 of those options and a qualification for other programs that  
11 would allow for families to have the resources to ensure the  
12 well-being of their family.

13 Senator Duckworth: Thank you. I look forward to  
14 working with you, once you are confirmed, on this.

15 In January, you wrote, and I quote, military families  
16 are counting on Washington to ensure that services  
17 adequately fund childcare fee-assistance programs and  
18 partner with the community outside the gates to increase  
19 accessibility when on-installation waitlists are too long,  
20 end quote.

21 You also noted in your advanced policy questions that  
22 ensuring affordable, quality care is accessible to our  
23 military families will be one of my priorities, your  
24 priorities.

25 I agree that this is an issue of huge importance to our

1 military families, as well as to our readiness. That is why  
2 I introduced the Military Child Care Expansion Act that  
3 would authorize a number of programs to improve access to a  
4 range of childcare options for military families.

5 Mr. Vazirani, can you expand on the importance of  
6 affordable and accessible childcare for our military  
7 families.

8 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, enabling military spouse  
9 employment and for military spouses to have fulfilling  
10 careers is critical to their families, but also to the  
11 readiness of the force, which will allow the servicemember  
12 to continue to serve in the way they are.

13 Senator, to enable that requires childcare and  
14 accessible childcare that the family can get to and  
15 affordable childcare. So, if confirmed, Senator, I would  
16 want to look at a range of options; particularly, around how  
17 do we innovate in providing childcare to military families,  
18 whether it is on the installation or off the installation,  
19 as well as the opportunity to military spouses to earn their  
20 credentials and either provide childcare in their homes and  
21 be reimbursed through a fee-assistance program, or to become  
22 providers with portability within the military childcare  
23 system.

24 Senator Duckworth: Wonderful.

25 Well, the fiscal year 2022 NDAA has report language

1 directing the DoD to seek out creative solutions to solve  
2 the childcare availability crisis, and I hope that you will  
3 keep me updated on your progress.

4 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, certainly.

5 Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

6 Finally, according to numerous studies, paid family  
7 leave offers clear advantages to both, employers and  
8 families, yet, depending on their branch of service and  
9 family situation, many servicemembers currently only receive  
10 2 or 3 weeks of parental leave.

11 To recruit and retain the best and brightest, we must  
12 modernize the DoD's parental leave policy for members of the  
13 military. That is why I introduced the Servicemember  
14 Parental Leave Equity Act, to make sure that all primary and  
15 secondary caregivers in the military can access 12 weeks of  
16 paid parental leave.

17 Mr. Vazirani, if confirmed, will you commit to  
18 prioritizing initiatives such as Parental Leave Expansion  
19 that would help strengthen military readiness and better  
20 support military families?

21 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, if confirmed, I certainly  
22 commit to looking at any solution that would help military  
23 families and military family readiness.

24 Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

25 Thank you for your testimony today, and I look forward

1 to your confirmation.

2 I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

3 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Duckworth.

4 Now, let me recognize Senator Kelly, please.

5 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 And thank you for being here today, folks.

7 Mr. Vazirani, the uptick in military suicides is  
8 alarming, I think, to all of us. And the Department's own  
9 figures show that 580 servicemembers died by suicide in  
10 2020. This means that the number of suicides increased by  
11 15 percent from the prior year.

12 Every single suicide, even one, is too many. And we  
13 need to do more to support our men and women in uniform.

14 It was this concern that led me to introduce the  
15 Brandon Act, named to one of Arizona's fallen. We did this,  
16 along with Senator Cramer and the support of other members  
17 of this committee. The bill is designed to ensure that a  
18 servicemember in crisis is never denied timely access to  
19 live-saving care. I also joined with Senator Ernst in  
20 introducing the Save Our Servicemembers Act to further  
21 improve the Defense Department's internal coordination on  
22 suicide prevention.

23 It is clear that we need to do better. If confirmed,  
24 will you commit to work with us on these proposals?

25 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, I absolutely confirm to work

1 with you on those proposals and I would look for options to  
2 reduce suicides and eliminate suicides to the degree that we  
3 can.

4 Senator Kelly: And what other strategies do you have  
5 for addressing, like, what are the strategies?

6 So, I would like to listen to, maybe, some of your  
7 ideas on how we address this rising rate of suicides in the  
8 military.

9 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, I haven't formed a complete  
10 strategy on that. I certainly have some thoughts on this,  
11 primarily from the fact that I have a family that  
12 experienced two suicides. And so, I think that as the  
13 Secretary said, we have to reduce stigma. We have to make  
14 it okay for people to ask for help.

15 And in order to ask for help, we have to have a command  
16 structure, whether it is a squad level, the division level,  
17 the platoon level, the company level, where there is a  
18 connection between the servicemember and their leader so  
19 that they know how to ask for help. So, that is one of the  
20 things that we have to do.

21 So, in order to address this issue, which is so  
22 personal, we have to think about the system, as well. So,  
23 we have to develop a system that enables help-seeking. And  
24 we also have to acknowledge that part of that is to ensure  
25 that there are the same resources at home for the military

1 family, because that stress source may be at home, as well.

2 And so, we can't just look at it as just a military  
3 issue; it is a military-family issue, as well.

4 Senator Kelly: Well, the piece of that about, you  
5 know, helping members ask for help and a process to do that,  
6 is what the Brandon Act was all about, so thank you for your  
7 response.

8 In my remaining time, I want to switch to Mr. Sherman  
9 here and talk a little bit about cybersecurity and AI. With  
10 the SolarWinds and Colonial Pipeline ransomware attacks,  
11 Americans have had a front-row seat on the havoc that  
12 cyberattacks can wreak on our country.

13 We have also had a wake-up call to the vulnerabilities  
14 inherent in our infrastructure. Now, the Defense Department  
15 is not immune to these risks; in fact, the Defense  
16 Department identifies cybersecurity among its top priorities  
17 in its Digital Modernization Strategy. This work is  
18 increasingly important as more and more of the equipment and  
19 technology that we use to defend our nation comes to rely on  
20 the network and its security.

21 If confirmed, what are your priorities to securing our  
22 Defense networks against cyberattacks?

23 Mr. Sherman: Senator, I absolutely agree that  
24 cybersecurity is of paramount concern and, if confirmed, to  
25 strengthen our cybersecurity, I would oversee the

1 implementation of what is called Zero Trust; a strategy that  
2 assumes that the enemy is already on the network, not  
3 protecting at just the perimeter or Defense in-depth, but  
4 assuming they are already on our network and through a  
5 strategy of what is called microsegmentation. Not only on  
6 our enterprise IT server, but also on things like industrial  
7 control systems. You referenced the Colonial Pipeline.  
8 Things like HVAC, elevators, you name it; other things that  
9 make the enterprise run. So, if confirmed, Zero Trust would  
10 be the approach that I would oversee, sir.

11 Senator Kelly: And that approach is not used today?

12 Mr. Sherman: Elements of Zero Trust are being  
13 implemented; building blocks for it. For example, the  
14 Defense Information System Agency is implementing it on the  
15 secret side. We need to scale it out much larger and also  
16 build on industry best practices.

17 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Sherman.

18 And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Kelly.

20 Let me now recognize Senator Kaine, who has additional  
21 questions.

22 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

23 And Mr. Vazirani, this is just an observation that is  
24 directed at you because of your forthcoming role on  
25 personnel matters. We had a hearing about Afghanistan the



1 other day and it was an important hearing and the  
2 administration witnesses talked about, in a somber way, the  
3 American troops lost in Afghanistan, 2,324 military  
4 personnel, as well as the 4,598 who died in Iraq, and we  
5 were talking about the toll that our nation suffered in the  
6 war on terror.

7 One thing that I noticed in this testimony, and we have  
8 heard it before, is that the death of U.S. contractors is  
9 almost never mentioned, and it truly is a unique war, this  
10 war on terror, in American history, where the U.S.  
11 contractor deaths were higher than troop deaths. Total  
12 troop deaths in the war on terror were 7,052, but U.S.  
13 contractors, their deaths were 8,189.

14 And I haven't yet kind of wrapped my mind around what  
15 that says about the notion of modern warfare, that there  
16 would be more casualties of contractors, many of whom were  
17 veterans, they had previously served in the military, than  
18 there were of active-duty troops. And I think it is  
19 something that we need to think about and contemplate.

20 But one thing that I would urge on the Pentagon going  
21 forward, as we talk about U.S. lives lost in the war on  
22 terror, that we don't omit the U.S. contractors whose lives  
23 were lost. They may not have gotten some of the recognition  
24 that others did, and yet they lost their lives on a similar  
25 mission, usually under contract with the Pentagon. And we

1 would be wise not to forget them, but to highlight their  
2 sacrifices, as well. And so, in your forthcoming role in  
3 personnel, I just wanted to urge you to have the Pentagon  
4 think about that. Thank you.

5 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Kaine.

6 Senator King, if you have no questions, thank you all  
7 for you, not only service, which has been extraordinary, but  
8 your commitment to serve again. Your responses were  
9 compelling.

10 I can't outdo the ranking member in his praise, so I  
11 will stop right there, and we look forward to bringing your  
12 confirmation before us as quickly as possible and getting  
13 you to work. Thank you all very much.

14 With that, the hearing is adjourned.

15 [Whereupon, at 10:58 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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