

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

TO CONDUCT A CONFIRMATION HEARING ON THE
EXPECTED NOMINATION OF: LLOYD J. AUSTIN III TO BE
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Tuesday, January 19, 2021

Washington, D.C.

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7 U.S. Senate

8 Committee on Armed Services

9 Washington, D.C.
10

11 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:01 p.m.,
12 in Room SD-106, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. James
13 M. Inhofe, chairman of the committee, presiding.

14 Committee Members Present: Senators Inhofe
15 [presiding], Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst,
16 Tillis, Sullivan, Cramer, Scott, Blackburn, Hawley, Reed,
17 Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King,
18 Heinrich, Warren, Peters, Manchin, and Duckworth.
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1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES M. INHOFE, U.S.
2 SENATOR FROM OKLAHOMA

3 Chairman Inhofe: Since this is my last committee
4 meeting to be important, we will start right on time. Got
5 that, Jack? All right.

6 The committee meets today to consider expected
7 nomination of Mr. Lloyd J. Austin III to be Secretary of
8 Defense of the United States of America.

9 And thank all of you guys for being here. It has been
10 a hardship on many of you, and it was on me, too, and we
11 are able to get this done.

12 So, Mr. Austin, we welcome you, and a warm welcome to
13 Charlene, your wife of more than 41 years. My wife and I
14 were 61 years. Think you will make it?

15 [Laughter.]

16 Chairman Inhofe: All right. We are very happy -- Mr.
17 Austin, you will be introduced now by Senator Sullivan, a
18 member of our committee.

19 Senator Sullivan?

20 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

21 The last time we were together as Senators our Capitol
22 was under siege. America's authoritarian rivals abroad
23 have been gloating about our disunity. Democracy brings
24 chaos, they tell their people. Better to have a strong
25 hand that keeps order.

1 We live in an imperfect democracy, no doubt, and the
2 American I am proud and honored to introduce, Mr. Lloyd
3 Austin, understands our imperfections more than many. But
4 on closer inspection, the world's dictators have little to
5 celebrate. Congress went back to work on January 6th to
6 count Electoral College votes. Tomorrow, there will be a
7 transfer of power at the top of our Government, as there
8 has been since the founding of our republic.

9 At some point, Chinese and Russian citizens will ask,
10 "Why can we not do that? Why do we not have strong,
11 resilient institutions that ensure the regular election of
12 new leaders and, thus, self-government in the people?"
13 When these questions are asked, authoritarians like Xi
14 Jinping and Putin will not be gloating anymore because they
15 do not have answers.

16 What does this all have to do with Lloyd Austin? A
17 lot. Mr. Austin has been nominated to lead one of
18 America's most trusted institutions, the Department of
19 Defense. Many of us have worked hard to rebuild our
20 military, and we can all agree that there has been too much
21 turmoil at the top. As its civilian leader, I am confident
22 that Mr. Austin will bring steadiness, leadership, and
23 respect to this indispensable institution.

24 I got to know Mr. Austin in 2005 and 2006. Serving
25 together in an Army heavy combatant command, conducting

1 combat operations throughout the Middle East, we had what
2 might be described today as an uneven power relationship.
3 He was a two-star general. I was a major. He had spent
4 decades on active duty. I was a Reservist. He was a
5 soldier. I was a Marine.

6 I was just one of hundreds of field-grade infantry
7 officers recalled to active duty deployed in the region
8 during a challenging time for our Nation. But when I asked
9 for his help, Mr. Austin gave it. When I had a problem, he
10 listened. And when I asked for guidance on an important
11 mission, he provided it.

12 A critical hallmark of exceptional leadership,
13 especially for organizations like the Pentagon, is not just
14 how one treats superiors, but how one treats subordinates.
15 What I saw was respect, integrity, and someone who gets
16 things done in a difficult environment. It is clear to me
17 that the core principles of Mr. Austin's life has been
18 duty, honor, and country.

19 That may sound quaint to some, but I think having
20 individuals of impeccable character at the top of our
21 Government is more important than ever. Other than
22 integrity, there is no singular requirement for the
23 difficult job of Secretary of Defense. But as the former
24 director of the Joint Staff and CENTCOM commander, Mr.
25 Austin certainly has insights on critical issues, such as

1 interagency budget battles, working with our allies, and
2 congressional oversight.

3 Mr. Austin is fully committed to the constitutional
4 principle of civilian control of our military, something
5 that those who serve in uniform typically understand and
6 revere more than those who do not. In that regard, I
7 thought some of the testimony from our recent hearing on
8 this important topic was a bit simplistic, with discussions
9 about so-called military logic versus political logic. So
10 let me play devil's advocate.

11 The very nature of this confirmation hearing is
12 evidence that civilian control of the military is not at
13 risk in America. I believe the related, but opposite
14 problem should be of more concern today -- no military
15 experience in the top ranks of our Government.

16 With the exception of Mr. Austin, no nominee on the
17 incoming Biden national security team has ever served in
18 uniform. With regard to the entire Biden Cabinet, only one
19 other nominee has any military experience at all. This is
20 not wise.

21 If confirmed, I am sure I will not agree with all of
22 Mr. Austin's decisions. But when the inevitable budget
23 battles occur, it will be critical for our Nation's
24 security and military members to have a Secretary of
25 Defense who understands firsthand the very real morale and

1 readiness problems that result from drastic cuts to our
2 military.

3 Let me conclude with this. We are living through
4 difficult times -- a pandemic, racial tensions, riots,
5 turmoil at the top of the Pentagon, and rising dangers from
6 China, Russia, and Iran. Mr. Austin's confirmation will
7 not solve all these problems, but it will help. He
8 represents the best of America, a man of integrity,
9 humility, and character, with a wealth of relevant
10 experience.

11 Our allies will take comfort in his confirmation, and
12 our adversaries will take pause. And as America's first
13 black Secretary of Defense, he will be an inspiration to
14 millions both in and out of uniform.

15 I urge my colleagues to support his confirmation and
16 the waiver it requires.

17 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Sullivan. And I
19 do agree with your comments wholeheartedly, and I believe
20 that we are going to be doing the right thing here.

21 Now we have another introduction by Secretary Panetta,
22 a former Secretary of Defense and former -- very close
23 friend of mine, served together in the House together, and
24 it has been too long, Secretary Panetta. And you are
25 recognized for your part of this introduction.

1 Mr. Panetta: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

2 Senator Inhofe, I always enjoyed our friendship, going
3 back to the House of Representatives.

4 Ranking Member Reed and distinguished members of this
5 committee, it is an honor for me to again have the
6 opportunity to appear before this distinguished committee,
7 this time alongside Senator Dan Sullivan, to introduce
8 President-Elect Biden's nominee to be the 28th Secretary of
9 Defense, Lloyd Austin.

10 We do meet at a time of great peril for our Nation,
11 but it is also a time of great promise. We have endured a
12 harrowing year, dealing with a deadly pandemic and, most
13 recently, the violent attack on our Capitol, this Congress,
14 and our democracy itself. Our adversaries are watching
15 very closely. They are trying to determine whether America
16 will remain the strongest and most resilient democracy the
17 world has ever known.

18 It is also a time of great promise. Tomorrow at this
19 time, our country will have a new President, a man who many
20 of you know personally from his decades of service as a
21 United States Senator. A man who I have known for over 40
22 years and had the privilege to work with during my years in
23 the Congress, in the White House, and I was honored to
24 serve him when he was Vice President as CIA Director and
25 Secretary of Defense.

1 Joe Biden is absolutely committed to ensuring that we
2 remain the strongest military power on the face of the
3 Earth. He believes that we must have the best-trained,
4 best-equipped, and most capable fighting force in the
5 world, and he believes that the Department of Defense must
6 be led by someone who not only knows the issues of war and
7 peace, but also knows the heart and soul of the women and
8 men who bravely wear the uniform, put their lives on the
9 line, and fight for our freedom. That is why he selected
10 Lloyd Austin to serve as Secretary of Defense.

11 Lloyd's accomplishments at the Department of Defense
12 are without peer. He graduated from West Point. He led
13 troops at almost every level, commanded in combat, served
14 as America's military commander during the drawdown in
15 Iraq. He served as Vice Chief of Staff of the Army and as
16 commanding general of the U.S. Central Command. And all of
17 you know that that is one of the key combat commands at the
18 Department of Defense.

19 I met Lloyd when I came to DOD as Secretary in July of
20 2011. We had just 6 months to implement the drawdown in
21 Iraq, and Lloyd was the man on the ground charged with
22 getting it done. It was a huge logistical task.

23 He consulted carefully with the President, with the
24 Vice President, the National Security Adviser, his
25 colleagues at the State Department, and those in the

1 intelligence community. And he carried out with diligence
2 and professionalism the plan that was set forth by me and
3 other civilian leaders at the Pentagon. He had to
4 negotiate with the Iraqis, who were not easy to negotiate
5 with at that time, and ensured that our troops and all of
6 their equipment could redeploy safely while protecting
7 America's core national security interests.

8 I mention this episode because I know that many of you
9 are wondering whether a former general officer can uphold
10 the principle of civilian control of the military. I have
11 spoken to Lloyd, and there is no doubt in my mind that he
12 will uphold the principle of civilian control. And
13 frankly, the best military officers that I had the honor to
14 serve with are those who understand the importance of
15 civilian control, and Lloyd was one of those.

16 He will respect the civilian chain of command,
17 enshrined not only in tradition, but in law. He will
18 ensure there is transparency and accountability at the
19 Pentagon. He will make himself and Department leaders
20 available to this committee and to the Congress for
21 oversight. And he will provide regular briefings to the
22 American people.

23 He will support the appointment of civilian leaders
24 across the Office of the Secretary and the Department. He
25 knows that while we cannot defend our Nation without our

1 Armed Forces, we cannot defend our democratic form of
2 government without strong civilian stewardship of our
3 national security.

4 Lloyd Austin is a man of uncommon character and
5 decency and courage. He is a trailblazer, feared by our
6 enemies and admired by those that he led. He was the first
7 African-American general officer to lead the Army Corps in
8 combat. He was the first African American to command an
9 entire theater of war. And if confirmed, he will be the
10 first African American to lead the Department of Defense.

11 In sum, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I
12 believe that Lloyd Austin is the right person at the right
13 time, a man that we need at this moment to lead the
14 Department of Defense. He is clear-eyed about the threats,
15 and we know there are a number of threats we are dealing
16 with abroad -- China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, cyber
17 attackers, and terrorists.

18 He understands the value of alliances and keeping them
19 strong and supporting them, and he is prepared to shoulder
20 the awesome burden of sending our best men and women in
21 uniform, if necessary, into harm's way, the most difficult
22 task we, who have been Secretary of Defense, had to assume.

23 As Americans watched the tragic images from the
24 Capitol Rotunda on January 6th, I was reminded of one
25 painting in that space that has always represented for me

1 the ideal of service to country. That is the oil painting
2 of George Washington resigning his commission as general in
3 the Army so that he could assume the duties of being the
4 Nation's first President.

5 It is a statement about our democratic form of
6 government that has stood the test of time in that hallowed
7 citadel of liberty. The tradition of military leaders from
8 Washington, Eisenhower, Marshall, to the large number of
9 veterans who are serving in Congress today, including my
10 own son, of taking off our uniforms, returning to civilian
11 life to lead and to serve again. That tradition is as old
12 as our republic itself and essential for the quality of
13 leadership we need in order to protect our Constitution and
14 our national security.

15 I am absolutely confident that Lloyd Austin will
16 follow in that tradition. I am honored to introduce him to
17 the committee and urge his swift confirmation.

18 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Secretary Panetta. It is
19 great to be with you again after all these years, and you
20 have not lost a thing.

21 Okay. Mr. Austin, we have our first seven questions,
22 and you know what they are. So you are ready to answer
23 them, but answer them audibly, if you would?

24 Have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations
25 governing conflicts of interest?

1 Mr. Austin: I have.

2 Chairman Inhofe: Will you ensure that your staff
3 complies with deadlines established for requested
4 communications, including questions for the record in
5 hearings?

6 Mr. Austin: I will.

7 Chairman Inhofe: Will you cooperate in providing
8 witnesses and briefers in response to congressional
9 requests?

10 Mr. Austin: I will.

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

13 Mr. Austin: They will.

14 Chairman Inhofe: Do you agree, if confirmed, to
15 appear and testify upon request before this committee?

16 Mr. Austin: I do.

17 Chairman Inhofe: And do you agree to provide
18 documents, including copies of electronic forms of
19 communication, in a timely manner when requested by a duly
20 constituted committee or to consult with the committee
21 regarding the basis for any good faith delay or denial in
22 providing such documents?

23 Mr. Austin: I do.

24 Chairman Inhofe: And have you assumed any duties or
25 undertaken any actions which would appear to presume the

1 outcome of the confirmation process?

2 Mr. Austin: I have not.

3 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you very much.

4 As Secretary Panetta clearly stated, there is not a
5 time in the past that we have had more threats than we are
6 facing today. And throughout my tenure as chairman, this
7 committee has focused on the ensuring that the DOD has
8 authorities and resources it needs to implement this, the
9 National Defense Strategy.

10 This document is a document that means a lot to all of
11 us here. It has been our blueprint that we have used since
12 2018. It was put together by six knowledgeable Democrats,
13 six knowledgeable Republicans, and it has served as our
14 blueprint. And I would assume that you would consider and
15 continue to do that. As the Secretary of Defense, second
16 in the chain of command, you would be responsible and
17 accountable to the President of the United States and to
18 the American people for implementing this strategy.

19 I look forward to learning how you will drive military
20 readiness for the strategic competition with China and
21 Russia, which we have talked about at length here; how you
22 will also handle some of the provocations from rogue
23 nations like Iran and North Korea. Even worse is that our
24 military's technology advantage has eroded. We were used
25 to the old days when we had the best of everything. That

1 that is not true anymore. We fell down a little bit.

2 I know that between the years of 2010 and 2015, we
3 were dropping our defense in terms of dollars down by about
4 25 percent, while China was increasing theirs, Mr. Austin,
5 by 83 percent. And that is not acceptable. The Nation and
6 the Department of Defense is going to tackle this problem
7 head on if we hope to preserve and defend our way of life
8 from those who would do harm to us.

9 If confirmed, you would have the honor of leading a
10 team of Americans who represent everything that is noble
11 and best for our Nation -- our soldiers, our sailors, our
12 airmen, the Marines, and space guardians, our military
13 families.

14 By the way, on the military families, we always hear
15 from those who are a little less enthusiastic about a
16 strong national defense that we spend more than Russia and
17 China put together, and there is a reason for that. The
18 reason for that is we care about the families. We care
19 about housing. We care about -- the largest single expense
20 that we have in the military is for our families, our
21 military families.

22 Now, in a Communist country, you do not have that.
23 They just give you a gun and said, "Go out and shoot
24 people." So that is what we are concerned about, and we
25 will continue to do that.

1 Our many defense civil servants also sacrifice day in
2 and day out for our national security and rarely get the
3 credit that they deserve. The Department will require
4 strong civilian leadership. For you to serve as the
5 Secretary of Defense, Congress must provide an exception to
6 the law that prohibits individuals from being appointed if
7 they are within 7 years of their military service.

8 Last week, this committee held a hearing on civilian
9 control of the armed services, which I think it was
10 instructive. I have never been all that concerned about
11 the 7 years, but others have. I hope that you will share
12 with the committee what actions you will take to ensure
13 your tenure reflects and protects the principle of civilian
14 control of the military if you are confirmed.

15 We look forward to hearing your views on these and
16 other important issues.

17 Senator Reed?

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. JACK REED, U.S. SENATOR FROM RHODE
2 ISLAND

3 Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr.
4 Chairman. And I join you in welcoming Lloyd Austin to
5 today's hearing.

6 General, I want to thank you for your four decades of
7 military service to our country, and I appreciate your
8 willingness to return to public service, this time in a
9 civilian capacity.

10 In addition, I want to welcome your wife, Charlene. I
11 also want to recognize and thank former Secretary of
12 Defense Leon Panetta, who spoke on your behalf, in addition
13 to Senator Sullivan, for their introductions.

14 Today's hearing is also very different from previous
15 Secretary of Defense nomination hearings. Due to recent
16 security threats, the Acting Secretary of Defense has
17 authorized the deployment of 25,000 National Guard troops
18 to Washington, D.C. I never thought I would see such a
19 large display of U.S. military force in the streets of our
20 country.

21 I thank the service members and the other Federal
22 agencies for ensuring that the U.S. Capitol and the
23 inauguration is safe and secure. In addition, the world
24 continues to be engulfed in a global pandemic that has
25 caused hundreds of thousands of deaths in the United States

1 and sickened millions more. This has not only affected the
2 way we conduct our hearings, but it has become the
3 paramount issue facing the new administration, including
4 the Department of Defense.

5 General Austin, you have a long and distinguished
6 career. You have served at the highest echelons of the
7 Army and capped your service as the commander of U.S.
8 Central Command.

9 If confirmed as the next Secretary of Defense, you
10 will face a daunting array of current and emerging security
11 threats. U.S. strategic priorities have shifted in recent
12 years, as reflected in the 2018 National Defense Strategy,
13 to focus increasingly on the near-peer competition with
14 China and Russia. At the same time, the Trump
15 administration, through its disruptive behavior, has eroded
16 faith in U.S. global leadership with adverse strategic
17 consequences.

18 Indeed, our National Defense Strategy must be a
19 component of an overall national security strategy that
20 embraces all aspects of soft power as well as military
21 power. As a former commander of U.S. Central Command, you
22 have valuable experience to addressing security threats in
23 Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere in the
24 CENTCOM area of operations. The incoming Biden
25 administration faces an immediate challenge with respect to

1 Iran's growing nuclear, ballistic missile, and proxy
2 capabilities. The Department of Defense will play a key
3 role in deterring these threats while supporting diplomatic
4 efforts.

5 In Iraq and Syria, while the physical ISIS caliphate
6 has been defeated, the underlying factors that gave rise to
7 ISIS and al-Qaeda remain largely unaddressed. Defending
8 against transnational violent extremist groups will require
9 continued vigilance.

10 In Afghanistan, our allies and partners need to be
11 reassured that going forward, they will be consulted up
12 front on any changes in U.S. force posture. The incoming
13 administration will need to assess the conditions on the
14 ground, including whether the Taliban is, in fact, living
15 up to their commitments and what level of support are
16 required to protect U.S. national security interests and
17 invigorate a diplomatic solution.

18 In addition to these broad strategic challenges, as
19 Secretary of Defense, you must also grapple with issues
20 specific to the management of the Department. The Fiscal
21 Year 2022 budget will be the first that is unconstrained by
22 the Budget Control Act, and some view this as an
23 opportunity to redirect the overall defense budget.

24 This year will mark an inflection point in how the
25 Department prioritizes resources it needs to accomplish its

1 missions. The Department must focus its efforts on
2 critical technologies like artificial intelligence, quantum
3 computing, biotechnology, and cybersecurity while also
4 emphasizing rapid delivery of advanced new weapon systems
5 on timelines that keep pace with technological change.

6 The Department of Defense must partner with Congress
7 to find ways to retire legacy systems without incurring too
8 much risk operationally or economically. The Department
9 also has management challenges that require investment in
10 great people to manage the complexities of the Pentagon and
11 its processes rather than an endless search for budget cuts
12 and workforce reductions.

13 Ensuring robust funding for full-spectrum readiness,
14 including additional home station training, flying hours,
15 steaming days, depot maintenance, and installation
16 sustainment, has been a high priority for this committee,
17 and I expect it will be yours, too. The Department must
18 also hold private housing companies and their defense chain
19 of command accountable to ensure families live in the homes
20 they deserve. Our men and women in uniform and the
21 civilian workforce that supports them remain this
22 committee's top concern, and they must be yours as well.

23 Recruiting and retaining a sufficiently sized,
24 trained, and equipped military of the necessary quality of
25 character and talent to meet national defense requirements

1 is always a paramount goal of the Secretary of Defense and
2 this committee. Successful recruiting ensuring the health
3 of the force has been and will continue to be a challenge
4 while we finish the national fight against COVID.

5 General Austin, as I have recounted in great detail,
6 if confirmed, you will manage a Department coping with many
7 extraordinarily difficult issues that will require strong
8 civilian leadership to address these challenges and to
9 reverse the erosion of civil-military relations over the
10 past several years. However, in order to serve as the
11 Secretary of Defense, Congress must provide an exception to
12 the statutory requirement that prohibits individuals from
13 being appointed if they are within 7 years of their
14 military service.

15 Last week, this committee heard from expert witnesses
16 on the state of civilian control in the Armed Forces. Some
17 members expressed concern that providing an exception for
18 you to serve as the Secretary of Defense, particularly so
19 soon after Secretary Mattis, could harm civil-military
20 relations. It is a valid concern.

21 But as our witnesses testified, it is possible to
22 mitigate the effects if you demonstrate your commitment to
23 empowering civilians in the Department. Further, we must
24 also hear how you view the role of Secretary of Defense and
25 how that position is different from your days of honorable

1 service as a military officer.

2 This distinction is critical, as the Secretary of
3 Defense is an inherently political position requiring a
4 skill set for managing a vast bureaucracy while balancing
5 personalities within the Department and across our Federal
6 agencies. Relatedly, an effective Secretary must be
7 transparent with Congress. Tensions often exist between
8 the executive and legislative branches, regardless of
9 political party. However, the Department must keep
10 Congress fully informed on critical national security
11 developments so that we can conduct congressional
12 oversight.

13 General Austin, with these broad categories in mind, I
14 hope you will candidly share what actions you will take to
15 ensure your tenure reflects and protects the principle of
16 civilian control of the military.

17 Finally, strengthening civil-military relations is not
18 the sole responsibility of the Secretary of Defense.
19 Congress has a role, too. This includes expeditiously
20 confirming qualified civilian nominees to serve in the
21 Pentagon. Furthermore, I believe Congress should revisit
22 the headquarters reductions implemented over the past
23 several years. While well intentioned, these budget cuts
24 have sapped the Department of experience, expertise, and
25 institutional knowledge, all of which degrades the

1 Department's ability to oversee the critical policy issues
2 that are integral for robust civilian oversight.

3 Again, I thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I look forward
4 to hearing from our nominee.

5 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed. Excellent,
6 excellent statement.

7 With some Senators attending remotely, I want to let
8 everyone know how we are going to run this thing. Since it
9 is impossible to know exactly when our colleagues who will
10 be joining via computer, we will not follow our standard
11 early bird timing rule. Instead, we will handle the order
12 of questions by seniority, alternating to each side,
13 Democrat and Republican, until we have gone through
14 everyone. Then we will see how much time we have left and
15 what the wish is.

16 We will do the standard -- instead of doing the
17 standard 5 minutes, Senator Reed and I have agreed that 7-
18 minute rounds might be more appropriate. And I ask my
19 colleagues on the computers to please keep an eye on the
20 clock, which you should see on your screens, and we will
21 try to adhere to those 7-minute rounds.

22 Finally, to allow for everyone to be heard, whether in
23 the room or on a computer, I ask all colleagues to please
24 mute your microphone when you are not speaking.

25 Mr. Austin, we will begin with your opening statement

1 and be assured that the entirety of your written statement
2 will be made a part of the record.

3 General Austin?

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1 STATEMENT OF LLOYD J. AUSTIN III TO BE SECRETARY OF
2 DEFENSE

3 Mr. Austin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member
4 Reed, members of this committee.

5 I am grateful for your time this afternoon, especially
6 during these momentous days. It was apparent to me and to
7 all Americans 2 weeks ago how seriously you take your
8 duties to the Constitution, and I thank you for that
9 commitment.

10 I know that you share my gratitude for the commitment
11 of the men and women of the Department of Defense as well,
12 who share your devotion to that founding document, our
13 Constitution. Many of them are serving overseas. Some of
14 them are serving just outside this room. And all of them
15 are keeping us safe. We owe much to their selflessness and
16 to that of their families.

17 I want to thank Senator Sullivan and Secretary Panetta
18 for their kind words of introduction. I am truly grateful.

19 And of course, I want to thank my wonderful wife,
20 Charlene, who, like today, has stood by my side for more
21 than 40 years, guiding me, supporting me, and making me a
22 better man.

23 I am also very grateful to President-Elect Biden for
24 asking me to serve my country again. I value the strength
25 of my relationship with him, and I am humbled by the trust

1 and confidence that he has placed in me. I hope this
2 hearing will earn me your trust.

3 Let me say at the outset that I understand and respect
4 the reservations that some of you have expressed about
5 having another recently retired general at the head of the
6 Department of Defense. The safety and security of our
7 democracy demands competent civilian control of our Armed
8 Forces, the subordination of military power to the civil.

9 I spent my entire life committed to that principle.
10 In war and in peace, I implemented the policies of
11 civilians elected and appointed over me, leaders like
12 Secretary Panetta. And I know that being a member of the
13 President's Cabinet, a political appointee, requires a
14 different perspective and unique duties from a career in
15 uniform.

16 I intend to surround myself with and empower
17 experienced, capable civilian leaders who will enable
18 healthy civil-military relations grounded in meaningful
19 oversight. Indeed, I plan to include the Under Secretary
20 of Defense for Policy in top decision-making meetings,
21 ensuring strategic and operational decisions are informed
22 by policy.

23 I will rebalance collaboration and coordination
24 between the Joint Staff and the OSD staff to ensure
25 civilian input is integrated at every level of the process,

1 and I will make clear my expectation that the Pentagon work
2 hand-in-glove with the State Department supporting the work
3 of our diplomats.

4 Now I know that a large measure of civilian control of
5 our military lies right here with this body. And if you
6 confirm me, I assure you that the Pentagon under my
7 leadership will respect your oversight responsibilities,
8 and we will be transparent with you. And I will provide
9 you my best counsel, and I will seek yours.

10 And just like you, I will take seriously the many
11 challenges facing our country, the most immediate of which,
12 in my view, is the pandemic. And if confirmed, I will
13 quickly review the Department's contributions to
14 coronavirus relief efforts, ensuring that we are doing
15 everything that we can to help distribute vaccines across
16 the country and to vaccinate our troops and preserve
17 readiness.

18 We will also do everything we can for our military
19 families. They, too, are educating kids at home and losing
20 their jobs and trying to stock the pantry. I know this
21 committee shares my view that we owe them our best efforts
22 to lighten that load.

23 We also owe our people a working environment free of
24 discrimination, hate, and harassment. And if confirmed, I
25 will fight hard to stamp out sexual assault and to rid our

1 ranks of racists and extremists and to create a climate
2 where everyone fit and willing has the opportunity to serve
3 this country with dignity. The job of the Department of
4 Defense is to keep America safe from our enemies, but we
5 cannot do that if some of those enemies lie within our own
6 ranks.

7 For those enemies and adversaries outside the ranks
8 and around the world, we need resources to match strategy,
9 and strategy matched to policy, and policy matched to the
10 will of the American people. Globally, I understand that
11 Asia must be the focus of our effort, and I see China in
12 particular as a pacing challenge for the Department. I
13 know I will need your help in tackling these problems and
14 to give our men and women in uniform the tools that they
15 need to fight and win.

16 Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, while I did
17 not seek this job, I consider it an honor. And if
18 confirmed, I will carry out the mission of the Department
19 of Defense always with the goal to deter war and ensure our
20 Nation's security, and I will uphold the principle of
21 civilian control of the military as intended. And I would
22 not be here asking for your support if I felt that I was
23 unable or unwilling to question people with whom I once
24 served in operations that I once led or too afraid to speak
25 my mind to you or to the President.

1 I was a general and a soldier, and I am proud of that.
2 But today, I appear before you as a citizen. The son of a
3 postal worker and a homemaker from Thomasville, Georgia,
4 and I am proud of that, too. And if you confirm me, I am
5 prepared to serve now as a civilian, fully acknowledging
6 the importance of this distinction.

7 And I thank you again for consideration of my
8 nomination and for your steadfast support of our men and
9 women in uniform, our civilians, and their families, and I
10 look forward to answering your questions.

11 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

12 [The prepared statement of Mr. Austin follows:]

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1 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, General Austin. Great
2 statement.

3 You heard my comments, General Austin, about the
4 document, the National Defense Strategy. You are familiar
5 with this. I am sure you have read it many times.

6 What do you think about its relevance today? Do you
7 see changes that should be made in this, or what is your
8 feeling today contemporarily about this statement?

9 Mr. Austin: I think much of the document is
10 absolutely on track for today's challenges, Mr. Chairman.
11 As is the case with all strategies, if confirmed, one of
12 the things that I would look to do is to work to update the
13 strategy and work within the confines of the guidance and
14 the policy issued by the current -- the next
15 administration.

16 Chairman Inhofe: Yes, well, that is right. And the
17 guidance also from this document I think is still relevant
18 to date.

19 In this document, the previous two Secretaries of the
20 Defense -- Secretary Mattis, Secretary Esper -- both agreed
21 that that document, it prescribed that we probably need a 3
22 to 5 percent real growth in defense budget effectively in
23 the coming years. Do you agree generally with that
24 statement?

25 Mr. Austin: Well, Mr. Chairman, as I said in the

1 opening statement, I believe that our resources need to
2 match our strategy, and our strategy needs to match our
3 policy.

4 Chairman Inhofe: Yes, I would assume that would be
5 yes. And others are going to be asking about the civilian
6 and military relations, I know that, but let me cover a
7 couple of things that I think are important.

8 On the nuclear triad, a lot of people who are at
9 different ideas on what we should do and the priorities we
10 have in our defense system, that they try to whittle away
11 at the nuclear triad. And we have always felt, and the
12 Secretaries of Defense, that nuclear deterrence, do you
13 agree with them that nuclear -- their assessment that
14 nuclear deterrence is the DOD's highest-priority mission?

15 Mr. Austin: I do, Mr. Chairman.

16 Chairman Inhofe: And do you agree that the triad --
17 the land, air, and sea-based nuclear delivery platforms are
18 still necessary, even though we do hear a lot of arguments
19 that two of the three would be adequate? What do you
20 think?

21 Mr. Austin: Mr. Chairman, I believe that the triad
22 has served us well in the past, and I certainly believe
23 that it will continue to do so going forward. And I
24 personally support the triad.

25 Chairman Inhofe: Good. We have kind of a forgotten

1 continent for a long period of time in Africa. I can
2 remember when Africa was in three different commands. It
3 was in the PACOM, the Central Command, and the EUCOM. And
4 we came along with AFRICOM, and I think things have really
5 improved since that time. And I think it is a critical
6 theater for implementing this National Defense Strategy
7 that we have.

8 We see China, all of our people talk about the South
9 China Sea, about their building of the islands and all
10 these things that are going on, but they forget that China
11 has, for the first time, left their city limits to support
12 a major objective on their behalf, and that is in Djibouti.
13 And they go not just in Djibouti, but all throughout China
14 as far south as the southern part of Tanzania, and so it is
15 very active in that area.

16 I would ask you, right now, we have some 6,000 DOD
17 personnel on the continent. I know there has been an
18 effort, there was an effort in this last administration to
19 be reducing in some areas what our presence, what our
20 resources, how they should be put out. My feeling was that
21 we had inadequate resources to start with only 6,000 in the
22 entire continent.

23 Do you have any thoughts that you have given to that
24 in terms of the resources that we need to use in that part
25 of the world?

1 Mr. Austin: Mr. Chairman, Africa, like some other
2 places in the world, has been one of those places where we
3 have been able to gain good effect by -- with a small
4 amount of investment by helping to -- helping our partners
5 to increase their ability to defend their sovereign
6 territory and to protect themselves.

7 Chairman Inhofe: That is excellent. We have to keep
8 in mind that many of our closest allies are there right
9 now, and if we should deteriorate our presence in any way,
10 we would -- I have a feeling they would do the same thing.
11 So I appreciate that very much.

12 One last thing I want to touch on because it is a
13 current issue. Ever since the International Court of
14 Justice ruled way back in 1975, I believe it was, that we
15 have -- in Western Sahara, we have supported a referendum
16 for self-determination.

17 Now the United States has done that ever since the
18 1970s. The U.N. has done that since the 1970s. The
19 African Union has done that, and most all of the 52 nations
20 of Africa have all stated that the Western Sahara should
21 have a referendum for self-determination. What do you
22 think?

23 Mr. Austin: Well, that is an issue that I certainly
24 would want to take a closer look at, Mr. Chairman, before I
25 gave you a detailed answer. But that is one of the things

1 that I will look at, if confirmed, right away going into
2 the position.

3 Chairman Inhofe: Yes, and I would like to have you
4 keep in mind that they have been consistent for so many
5 years. And so I would anticipate that your feelings would
6 be the same.

7 Senator Reed?

8 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and
9 thank you, General Austin.

10 One issue that is obvious is the discussion of the
11 erosion of civilian control, participation, influence on
12 the Department of Defense. That was highlighted by the
13 National Defense Security document, which the chairman has
14 displayed. But the suggestion there was it was not
15 something that was happening in an instant, that it was
16 taking place over years. And part of that, I believe, is
17 the lack of competent civilian authorities in place.

18 There are many individuals, as I suggest in my
19 statement that are acting. There are others who are civil
20 servants who have been pushed up into jobs that normally
21 require confirmation, and there has been a lack of
22 sometimes candidates for confirmation.

23 So I would ask you, if you are confirmed, will you do
24 your utmost to ensure that every position, civilian
25 position in the Department is filled, that we get nominees

1 promptly? I know you have to work through the White House.
2 And that other individuals will be put in positions where
3 they are both skilled and qualified?

4 Mr. Austin: Absolutely, Senator Reed. I will do
5 everything I can to move as quickly as I can to move to
6 fill those positions with experienced and competent,
7 qualified civilians. And I will need the help of this body
8 to make sure that we are moving quickly.

9 Senator Reed: Yes, I concur. This has to be a
10 collaborative effort. I think in addition, too, with the
11 civilian members, and as you suggest in your remarks, you
12 have to ensure that there is a very appropriate working
13 relationship with uniformed personnel, particularly on the
14 Joint Staff. And from your comments, I assume that will be
15 one of your priorities, to make sure that and, indeed, that
16 the civilians have a critical role in that process. Is
17 that correct?

18 Mr. Austin: It is absolutely correct, Senator Reed.
19 I think it is imperative that the OSD staff maintain
20 primacy in terms of crafting strategy and policy, and I
21 think, you know, we will need the right civilians in key
22 positions to help us do that.

23 And we have already begun to move down that road. You
24 have seen Colin Kahl nominated to be the Under Secretary
25 for Policy, a very talented young man that will do well.

1 You have seen Kath Hicks nominated to be the Deputy
2 Secretary of Defense. So we are off to a good start, and
3 we will continue to maintain momentum in filling those
4 positions and making sure that we rebalance the workload
5 between the Joint Staff and the Secretariat.

6 Senator Reed: Thank you.

7 On another subject, the need for strength in alliances
8 seems to be obvious, but something that you are going to
9 have to take on immediately. I am thinking of the Pacific
10 Defense Initiative, which the chairman was the principal
11 author, and it is based on solidifying our relationships,
12 both diplomatic and operationally, with our near partners
13 in the Pacific -- the Australians, the Japanese, and the
14 South Koreans -- and then building further with other
15 Pacific nations.

16 And I would presume and hope that you would see that
17 as an important task also, building up our relationships
18 and alliances, which, in many respects, has been neglected.
19 Is that something that you see as important?

20 Mr. Austin: I think it is critical, Senator Reed, and
21 I also very much look forward to going out and refurbishing
22 those alliances and making sure that we build additional
23 capacity where possible. And you can look when we are --
24 when we do begin to travel again that that region will be
25 one of my first stops.

1 Senator Reed: Right. And the old saying, there is
2 strength in numbers, and I think there is some truth to
3 that. So as we build up our not just in a superficial way,
4 but training together, conducting exercises together,
5 integrating our intelligence, integrating our operations at
6 sea, on land, and in the air, that, I think, it could be
7 the best deterrent we could think of with respect to the
8 aspirations of China. And I think you might concur.

9 Mr. Austin: I agree.

10 Senator Reed: One of the tasks you are going to have
11 is as you are trying to deal with all these places around
12 the world, you also have to transform the Department of
13 Defense. As the chairman indicated, our technological
14 advantage, which was, we thought, uncontested in the '50s,
15 '60s, '70s, '80s, et cetera, is contested. In fact, there
16 are suggestions that we might not be ahead in many places.

17 And so you are going to have to think very seriously
18 about how do we elevate science? How do we, more
19 importantly, take our scientific developments, our
20 prototypes, and get it to the field, to soldiers, sailors,
21 airmen, Marines in the field? And if you have any comments
22 on that, I would appreciate it.

23 Mr. Austin: I certainly agree with you, Senator Reed
24 that our acquisition system needs to be more agile and more
25 responsive to the needs that you just mentioned. We need

1 to get the capability down to the people who need it, the
2 people who are going to use it, as quickly as possible.

3 I would also say that we need to develop the
4 operational concepts that support those new capabilities to
5 make sure that we continue to present a credible deterrent.
6 But I absolutely agree that there is much to be done in
7 terms of working with the acquisition process to make sure
8 that it becomes more agile.

9 Senator Reed: Well, thank you.

10 Now just as a final point, I think I have to respond
11 to the challenge that the chairman gave you to reach your
12 61st wedding anniversary. Having been married for the
13 first time at the age of 55, despite my best efforts, I can
14 guarantee the chairman, I will not reach 61 years.

15 Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

16 Chairman Inhofe: I do not believe that.

17 Senator Wicker?

18 Senator Wicker: Senator Reed, you just do it one day
19 at a time.

20 Senator Reed: Thank you. That is good advice,
21 Senator Wicker.

22 Senator Wicker: Mr. Austin, thank you for being with
23 us today. Thank you for the conversation that we had
24 several weeks ago over the phone, and thank you for your
25 willingness to serve in the military and now to serve in a

1 civilian capacity.

2 You are a West Point graduate. I pointed out to
3 Senator Reed that I am wearing an Army tie today in your
4 honor, but I suppose also in honor of Senator Reed and all
5 the distinguished Army folks. I am an Air Force veteran
6 myself, but I am also a former chair of the Seapower
7 Subcommittee, and so today, I want to talk to you at the
8 beginning about seapower.

9 The 30-year ship building plan was finally released
10 just last month by the leadership in the Navy, and it calls
11 for 405 manned ships by the year 2051. That is compared to
12 a 355 ship requirement that we previously had and that we
13 actually placed into the statute.

14 Have you read the 30-year ship building plan, Mr.
15 Austin?

16 Mr. Austin: I have not read the ship -- the 30-year
17 plan yet, Senator Wicker.

18 Senator Wicker: Are you familiar with the fact that
19 the 30-year ship building plan calls for increasing our
20 requirement? Actually, it increases our requirement from
21 355 ships to 405 manned ships by the year 2051.

22 Mr. Austin: I am familiar with that -- with that
23 fact.

24 Senator Wicker: Do you support that finding?

25 Mr. Austin: I certainly -- I would just say, Senator,

1 our Navy is the most capable naval force on the face of the
2 planet. It will remain so if I am confirmed and become
3 Secretary of Defense.

4 I think that it is important that we maintain the
5 capabilities that we will need to be relevant not only
6 today, but relevant tomorrow. So I look forward to getting
7 on the ground, if confirmed, and working with the
8 leadership of the Navy to better understand the
9 requirements and how we are going to support those
10 requirements.

11 And also I look forward to working with this body to
12 make sure that we have the right resources to support that
13 requirement.

14 Senator Wicker: Well, that does bring me to a point
15 that I need to make, and that is that within the
16 administration, it is not only the White House and it is
17 not only DOD, but also OMB is a mighty big gorilla sitting
18 in the room there, and they force a lot of constraints upon
19 us.

20 Let me just say to you that I hope you will soon
21 become familiar with the ship building plan and be able to
22 give us a more definite answer about the need for an
23 increased Navy to do the things that we have to do. It
24 calls for adding 82 new ships between 2022 and 2026 at a
25 cost of \$147 billion.

1 Previously, that number was only 44 ships. So the new
2 requirement, the new plan is 82 new ships in that short 4-
3 year period, rather than 44 ships, and an extra \$45 billion
4 over that timeframe. So rest assured that we need to have
5 more conversations there.

6 The distinguished chairman mentioned China, the fact
7 that their ambitions not only are in the Pacific, but also
8 extend to Africa, and he named a few locations there. The
9 DOD report to Congress on China recently said it is likely
10 China will aim to develop a military by mid century that is
11 equal to or, in some cases, superior to the U.S. military.

12 Do you agree with that assessment, Mr. Austin?

13 Mr. Austin: I would agree. I would agree that that
14 is their goal. My job, if confirmed as Secretary of
15 Defense, is to make sure that we develop the capabilities,
16 the plans, and the operational concepts to ensure that we
17 maintain a competitive edge. And so, while that may be
18 their goal, I would, again, if I am confirmed, would intend
19 to make sure that that never happens.

20 Senator Wicker: Well, it is my contention that the
21 new ship building plan calling for 405 manned ships by the
22 year 2051 and additional 82 new ships in the next 5 years
23 is part and parcel to answering that challenge. What do
24 you say to that, Mr. Austin?

25 Mr. Austin: I would certainly say that we need to

1 have the right kinds of capability to be able to counter
2 the emerging threat. And again, I look forward to having
3 that conversation with the Department of the Navy.

4 If that is the analysis that has been provided by the
5 Navy, I have every reason to believe that it is accurate.
6 But I really would like to have that conversation in more
7 depth.

8 Senator Wicker: Let me quote another Army man, the
9 distinguished Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,
10 General Milley, who said just last month, "Look, I am an
11 Army guy, and I love the Army, but the fundamental defense
12 of the United States and the ability to project power
13 forward will always be for America naval and airspace
14 power."

15 I would just commend to you that statement and suggest
16 that the additional seapower is going to be necessary. I
17 would also want you to comment, and I will just ask you,
18 because we are time constrained, to comment about the idea
19 of basing two additional destroyers at Rota, Spain, to be
20 there to combat Russian aggression. But, Mr. Chairman,
21 because I only have 2 seconds, I will take that for the
22 record.

23 Thank you, Mr. Austin.

24 Mr. Austin: Thank you, Senator.

25 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Wicker.

1 Senator Shaheen?

2 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 General Austin, thank you for being willing to be
4 considered for this important post at this critical time in
5 our Nation's history.

6 As you are probably aware, last week this committee
7 received testimony from outside experts on the issue of the
8 waiver that will be required for you to serve and the whole
9 issue of civil-military relations. And I know you
10 addressed that briefly in your opening comments, and
11 Senator Reed followed up with some specific questions. But
12 one of the interesting things to me in that hearing last
13 week was one of the people testifying talked about the
14 concern that during Secretary Mattis' tenure that there was
15 an over-deference to military views that were critical to
16 shaping America's military policy or defense policy.

17 Can you talk about how you would respond to those
18 concerns and what you think should be done to ensure that
19 the balance continues, with the prominence being on
20 civilian control of the military?

21 Mr. Austin: Yes, thank you, Senator.

22 I believe that you need to have the right people in
23 the right positions that can be in -- that are in the
24 decision-making process. And so I look to have a very
25 experienced Under Secretary for Policy. I look to have a

1 very experienced Deputy Secretary of Defense. My Chief of
2 Staff will not -- if I am confirmed will not be a military
3 person, but yet a person that really understands strategy
4 and policy and also has deep ties to the Hill, as well as
5 to the White House.

6 And so I think the people in the room and contributing
7 to the decision-making, it makes all the difference in the
8 world. So to answer your question, I will make sure that
9 we staff the positions with the right people who have the
10 right experiences and who are not afraid to provide their
11 input. And I will empower them to make sure that they have
12 the flexibility to get the job done, to coordinate with the
13 Joint Staff and coordinate with the other agencies to
14 ensure that we have a policy -- have significant policy
15 input on every decision.

16 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you. I appreciate that,
17 especially the importance of the empowerment of those
18 individuals.

19 When we talked shortly after your nomination was put
20 forward, we talked about two of New Hampshire's military
21 installations that we are very proud of, the Portsmouth
22 Naval Shipyard, which is shared between New Hampshire and
23 Maine, and also our 157th Air Refueling Wing at Pease
24 National Guard, which was the first Air National Guard base
25 to receive the new KC-46 refueling tanker.

1 And there are two long-term concerns that I have about
2 those installations. One is the shipyard optimization
3 plan, as we look at the need to invest in our public
4 shipyards in the future. That optimization plan is going
5 to be critical to ensuring that the capacity is there not
6 just at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, but our other public
7 shipyards to support our naval fleet. And I hope that you
8 will remain committed to that plan and to moving forward
9 with that plan as we look at the upcoming years.

10 Mr. Austin: I will, Senator.

11 Senator Shaheen: And the other is the KC-46 and the
12 continuing issues with getting that tanker online. As you
13 know, the most recent one is the remote vision system,
14 which still is not fixed in a way that allows those tankers
15 to fly and do the refueling mission that is so critical.

16 Again, I would hope that you will stay on that issue
17 with Boeing and make sure we get those planes right so that
18 they can do the refueling that we are paying for them to
19 do.

20 Mr. Austin: I will absolutely stay on this -- on this
21 issue. I think it is critical. It is a critical component
22 of our overall force, and so I think it is important that
23 we continue to press and get this capability to where it
24 needs to be.

25 Senator Shaheen: Great. And I hope you will come up

1 to New Hampshire and visit both of those installations at
2 some point in your tenure, if confirmed.

3 I would like to ask you about Afghanistan next because
4 as we look at where we are in Afghanistan, the treaty or
5 the agreement -- I do not know what we want to call it
6 because, clearly, the Taliban is not complying with what
7 had been announced as concessions that were made as part of
8 that agreement. Also, the failure of that agreement to
9 take into consideration the role of women and minorities in
10 Afghanistan that have been so important as they have
11 written a new constitution.

12 And as we look at ending conflict there, one of the
13 things we know from the data is that when women are at the
14 table in negotiations, that there is a 35 percent better
15 chance that those peace agreements will last 15 years or
16 longer. So this is not just for the optics, it looks great
17 to have women at the table. It is about how do we ensure
18 that those negotiations are long lasting?

19 And I wonder if you can talk about what you would like
20 to see at this point in Afghanistan as we think about how
21 do we withdraw there in a way that leaves a country that
22 enshrines some of the changes that have been made to
23 support a new constitution and all of the effort that has
24 been put in there by the United States and so many other
25 countries in the world.

1 Mr. Austin: Well, Senator, I certainly would like to
2 see this conflict end with a negotiated settlement, and I
3 think we are going to make every effort that we can to
4 ensure that that happens. I would also like to say up
5 front I am truly grateful for the sacrifices of the
6 thousands of men and women that have gone through
7 Afghanistan and given so much, sacrificed so much. To your
8 point, their work has made a difference.

9 But I think this conflict needs to come to an end, and
10 we need to see an agreement reached, and in accordance with
11 what the President-Elect wants to see, I think we want to
12 see an Afghanistan in the future that does not present a
13 threat to America. So a focus on some kind of terrorism
14 issues, I think, in the future I think would be helpful.

15 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

17 And via Webex, Senator Fischer.

18 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and
19 welcome, General Austin.

20 This committee has consistently heard testimony,
21 including from every STRATCOM commander who has appeared
22 before this committee since I have been a member,
23 recommending against making unilateral reductions to our
24 nuclear forces. Do you agree that making unilateral
25 reductions is unwise?

1 Mr. Austin: Senator, I am having a tough time hearing
2 you.

3 Chairman Inhofe: Yes, the volume seems not to be high
4 enough. If anyone knows how to adjust that, this is a good
5 time to do it.

6 Senator Fischer: Let me see if I do.

7 Chairman Inhofe: That sounds better.

8 Senator Fischer: Do you hear me okay?

9 Chairman Inhofe: Yes.

10 Senator Fischer: Okay. I was asking, sir, about
11 making unilateral reductions to our nuclear forces. Do you
12 agree that making these reductions unilaterally is unwise?

13 Mr. Austin: I think that we should -- I look forward
14 to getting onboard, if confirmed, and having an ability to
15 kind of look under the hood and see exactly what we are
16 doing with our nuclear forces. So once I have had a chance
17 to do that, Senator, I would love to come back and discuss
18 it with you.

19 Senator Fischer: In your answer to some questions
20 that were sent over to you, you said that -- you said, "I
21 believe it is in the national security interests of the
22 United States and its allies and partners to pursue formal,
23 verifiable arms control agreements that reduce the nuclear
24 threats from Russia and China." Is that correct?

25 Mr. Austin: That is correct, Senator.

1 Senator Fischer: So reductions should be made through
2 negotiated, verifiable agreements, not unilaterally. Is
3 that right?

4 Mr. Austin: That is correct.

5 Senator Fischer: Okay. Thank you, sir.

6 Another fact that has been consistently emphasized by
7 civilian officials and military leaders in both the Obama
8 and Trump administrations is that nuclear modernization
9 cannot be delayed any further. Speaking in 2016, President
10 Obama's Secretary of Defense Ash Carter put it in the
11 following way, "The fact is most of our nuclear weapon
12 delivery systems have already been extended decades beyond
13 their original expected service lives, so it is not a
14 choice between replacing these platforms or keeping them.
15 It is really a choice between replacing them or losing
16 them. That would mean losing confidence in our ability to
17 deter, which we cannot afford in today's volatile security
18 environment."

19 More recently, Admiral Richard, the current STRATCOM
20 commander, in his posture statement last year testified
21 that, "Many of the modernization and sustainment efforts
22 necessary to ensure the deterrent's viability have zero
23 schedule margin and are late-to-need." He went on to
24 state, "We cannot afford more delays and uncertainty in
25 delivering capabilities and must maintain a focus on

1 revitalizing our nuclear forces and the associated
2 infrastructure."

3 General, is this also your understanding of the
4 modernization schedule?

5 Mr. Austin: Well, I again -- I misunderstood your
6 first part, the first part of the question there, when you
7 were -- when you started out. What I wanted to tell you
8 was I really look forward to getting into the details of
9 the nuclear modernization program, if confirmed. And you
10 know, I really would like to be able to look at the details
11 of exactly what we are choosing to invest in and the
12 timelines associated with that, and I would love to come
13 back to you and discuss that with you.

14 Senator Fischer: I would have your assurance, though,
15 that you would, of course, be visiting with the current
16 STRATCOM combatant commander, as well as previous ones,
17 about the need to make sure that we have these platforms
18 that we need and also --

19 Mr. Austin: That will be a --

20 Senator Fischer: Go ahead.

21 Mr. Austin: That will be a top priority, Senator.

22 Senator Fischer: I guess I am kind of surprised by
23 your answer, General. When the chairman asked you about
24 the triad, specifically about maintaining an effective
25 nuclear triad of land, air, and sea-based platforms, I

1 thought your answer was, yes, we have to maintain that
2 effective nuclear triad. Is that correct?

3 Mr. Austin: That is correct, Senator.

4 Senator Fischer: And I realize that you do have to
5 review where we currently are in modernization, but I would
6 think having an understanding that every administration and
7 every STRATCOM commander and also our Secretaries of
8 Defense have been adamant that we cannot fall behind on
9 this, your answer that you would have to get back on me is
10 somewhat surprising. I understand it is a complicated
11 topic, but it is a 60-year-old foundational concept that we
12 have here.

13 Mr. Austin: Yes, Senator. And I think -- I think
14 that we are in agreement that this is a priority, this
15 needs to remain a priority. What I was just conveying was
16 the specific timelines of which pieces are being resourced
17 at what rate, those things I would really like to get into
18 details and have a further discussion with you on.

19 But there is no question that I consider this to be a
20 priority, and it will remain a priority. And I look
21 forward to getting with the STRATCOM commander and having
22 that discussion in detail.

23 Senator Fischer: Well, thank you. I hope also, if
24 you are confirmed, you will be a strong advocate for the
25 National Nuclear Security Administration being able to

1 receive sufficient funding so that they can meet the
2 Department of Defense's needs.

3 Mr. Austin: I will be.

4 Senator Fischer: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Fischer.

6 Now via Webex, Senator Gillibrand.

7 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 Mr. Austin, President-Elect Biden made overturning
9 President Trump's ban on open transgender military service
10 a day one priority. Can you confirm your commitment and
11 tell the committee how you plan to reinstate open service?

12 Mr. Austin: I support the President's plan or plan to
13 overturn the ban. I truly believe, Senator, that as I said
14 in my opening statement, that if you are fit and you are
15 qualified to serve and you can maintain the standards, you
16 should be allowed to serve. And you can expect that I will
17 support that throughout.

18 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Austin.

19 When we met together, we talked at length about the
20 scourge of military sexual assault in the military. We
21 talked about how this has been an issue for decades, and in
22 fact, we talked about all the efforts that the Department
23 of Defense has made over at least the last decade that I
24 have been on the Armed Services Committee to try to
25 eradicate it.

1 Every Secretary of Defense from the last 25 years has
2 said there is a zero tolerance for sexual assault in the
3 military. But every time they say there is zero tolerance,
4 we look at the facts, we look at the evidence, we look at
5 how many sexual assaults are committed, how many go to
6 trial, how many end in conviction, and we do not seem to
7 improve at all. In fact, last year, the Department of
8 Defense announced a record number of sexual assaults
9 reported by or against service members and the lowest
10 conviction rate for their assailants on record.

11 In your opinion, does this reflect good order and
12 discipline within the military? Does this reflect enhanced
13 military readiness?

14 Mr. Austin: Senator, I take the issue of sexual
15 assault seriously and personally. And to your point,
16 Senator, I think we have put a lot of effort into this, and
17 I am grateful for all of the effort that you have
18 personally put into this and this committee has put into
19 this, but we have not gotten better. And we have to get
20 better, and we will get better.

21 We have to go after the culture. We have to go after
22 the climate. This is a leadership issue. It is a
23 readiness issue. And it starts on the top, and we have got
24 to work from the bottom as well, simultaneously.

25 Senator Gillibrand: So, therefore, is your answer,

1 yes, that it does not reflect good order and discipline and
2 does not reflect the readiness that you would like your
3 service to have?

4 Mr. Austin: That is correct, Senator.

5 Senator Gillibrand: Furthermore, the most recent
6 Pentagon survey on the topic found that 64 percent of
7 sexual assault survivors who reported their crime received
8 some form of retaliation for reporting that crime, often
9 from the exact chain of command that is supposed to protect
10 them. This number is statistically unchanged from 2016.

11 Does this suggest to you adequate progress on what the
12 top brass has promised to do year after year? Do you
13 believe that this is sufficient progress?

14 Mr. Austin: I absolutely do not believe that it is
15 progress, Senator.

16 Senator Gillibrand: Well, given the total lack of
17 progress or accountability within the military justice
18 system, do you believe that a new approach must be taken?
19 Because as we discussed the recent events at Fort Hood, a
20 new approach is clearly warranted. What is your view on
21 that?

22 Mr. Austin: I certainly believe that we need to do
23 better, a lot of things better in terms of investigation
24 and prosecutions, and I think we have to look at this
25 holistically. And I know that you know that the President-

1 Elect has committed to standing up a 90-day commission to
2 really look at this soup to nuts. And I look forward to
3 the read-out of that commission, but I will not wait for 90
4 days to get after this.

5 As I indicated, this starts with me, and you can count
6 on me getting after this on day one.

7 Senator Gillibrand: Well, to be honest, President-
8 Elect Biden said much more than that. He promised much
9 more than a commission. He said, in fact, when asked
10 directly by Protect Our Defenders' Nancy Parrish if he
11 would support "moving the military justice system into the
12 21st century by allowing military prosecutors to make
13 prosecution decisions for nonmilitary crimes -- serious
14 felonies like rape, murder, and child abuse." And that
15 President-Elect Biden in response said, "Yes, yes, yes."

16 So do you share President-Elect Biden's commitment to
17 move prosecutorial decisions outside the chain of command
18 and giving that decision to trained military prosecutors?

19 Mr. Austin: I would like -- if confirmed, I would
20 like to work with the chain of command and very rapidly
21 assess what things that there are that need to be -- that
22 need to be fixed or addressed. I would like to make those
23 recommendations and provide those assessments to the
24 President-Elect.

25 Senator Gillibrand: But you do agree that we cannot

1 keep doing the same thing that we have been doing for the
2 past decade?

3 Mr. Austin: I absolutely agree with that, Senator. I
4 absolutely agree with that.

5 Senator Gillibrand: Do I have your commitment to be
6 relentless on this issue until we can end the scourge of
7 sexual violence in the military?

8 Mr. Austin: You have my commitment.

9 Senator Gillibrand: Okay. I would now like to move
10 to civil-military relations.

11 Mr. Austin, scholars rightly argue that the Secretary
12 of Defense plays a critical role in maintaining balanced
13 civilian-military relations by explaining the military's
14 activities to the public. Secretary Mattis, another
15 recently retired general who required a waiver to serve,
16 did not embrace this role. According to Bob Woodward's
17 book Fear, Mattis grew so tired of being asked to appear on
18 Sunday shows that he threatened to send Sean Spicer to
19 Afghanistan.

20 Mr. Austin, can you commit to following in the
21 footsteps of your predecessors and regularly appearing on
22 TV to explain to Americans where the administration has
23 asked service members to risk their lives and why?

24 Mr. Austin: I fully understand and appreciate the
25 role that the Secretary of Defense has in communicating

1 with the American public, Senator. And you have my
2 commitment that I will establish a good relationship with
3 the media and provide them the access and the information
4 required to do their job of reporting out to the American
5 people.

6 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Austin.

7 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Gillibrand.

9 Senator Cotton?

10 Senator Cotton: Congratulations, General Austin, on
11 your nomination, and thank you for your appearance today,
12 especially for your four decades of military service.

13 Unfortunately, I must announce that I oppose the
14 waiver of the 7-year cooling-off period. My decision
15 reflects not at all on you personally or your record, which
16 I respect. Rather, I believe Congress should no longer
17 grant such waivers at all.

18 I supported the waiver for General Mattis with
19 reservations 4 years ago, which I quickly came to view as a
20 mistake and I have since regretted. For that matter, upon
21 further reading of the historical record, I now believe the
22 waiver for General Marshall in 1950 was also a mistake.
23 Under no foreseeable circumstances can I imagine supporting
24 such a waiver again.

25 Again, General Austin, my reasons for this decision

1 are distinct and separate from your nomination. And put
2 simply, my reasons are the same reasons we have a cooling-
3 off period for recently retired generals in the first
4 place. Some of those reasons are simply effect, not
5 something that you can address or about which you can
6 reassurance. Others, you can give reassurance, and I will
7 give you that opportunity in a moment.

8 Among those concerns I have that I do not think can be
9 addressed are the following. First, the perception that
10 these waivers are now routine, not extraordinary. Senator
11 Reed said in 2017 that he would not support another waiver,
12 and they should happen "once in a generation." No matter
13 what we say, though, if we approve two waivers in just 4
14 years, our actions will speak louder than our words.

15 Second, the perception among flag officers that a
16 four-star billet is not a career capstone. Some generals
17 and admirals may begin to think if they play their cards
18 right, they, too, can become a Secretary in just a few
19 years. I do not think that is good for the force or for
20 the country.

21 Three, the perception among the American people that
22 the military expertise of our general officers is the same
23 as national security expertise more broadly and that the
24 latter resides chiefly in the military, which I also
25 believe is unhealthy for our democracy.

1 And four, the perception of potential Army favoritism.
2 As a 41-year officer in the Army, many observers may
3 disbelieve that you can hang up the Army green, rightly or
4 wrongly. If you make the right decision for the Army over
5 the other services, then those services' advocates may say
6 it is because of favoritism. Make the correct decision for
7 another service against the Army, and the Army's advocates
8 will say you are protecting your flank against such charges
9 of favoritism. Neither one of those may be true in the
10 case, but I believe it is unavoidable.

11 Those concerns alone are weighty and enough for me to
12 oppose this waiver, as I should have done 4 years ago. But
13 there are still more reasons behind the cooling-off period.
14 As I said, though, you can give reassurances about some of
15 these concerns, and I want to give you the opportunity to
16 do that.

17 First, Secretary of Defense is not a partisan job, but
18 it is very much a political job. Bob Gates is a good
19 example. He served in a Republican and Democratic
20 administration with great political skill. We, of course,
21 expect our generals, like you and General Mattis, to be
22 apolitical, but our troops deserve a Secretary with the
23 political skills and willingness to fight for them, whether
24 within the Pentagon against its bureaucracy, within the
25 Cabinet in fights over policy and budgetary resources, or

1 against parochial Members of Congress.

2 So, General Austin, what can you say to address this
3 concern? If, for instance, John Kerry wants to sacrifice
4 our force posture on China's periphery in return for
5 ephemeral promises from China to reduce emissions in 2070?
6 Or Jennifer Granholm wants to rob the nuclear security
7 budget to fund pie-in-the-sky green energy programs? Or
8 simply if the Office of Management and Budget wants to cut
9 the military's budget, how would you manage such inherently
10 political disputes?

11 Mr. Austin: Well, certainly in terms of providing
12 resources for the military, my goal is to -- my job is to
13 defend this country, if I am confirmed as the Secretary of
14 Defense. And so I believe that we need to have the
15 adequate resources to be able to do that.

16 In order to help me work the issues and make my points
17 throughout the interagency, number one, I will develop
18 great relationships with my partners in State and OMB and
19 other places. Number two, I will hire the right people to
20 be on my staff to make sure that they are working with me
21 and crafting the right language to be able to be successful
22 in this dialogue.

23 Senator Cotton: Thank you, General. If confirmed, I
24 do urge you to be a forceful political advocate for the
25 Department and its interests, both inside the Cabinet and

1 with the Congress as well.

2 A second concern I would like you to address is that
3 the Secretary also holds a public office. Bob Gates
4 routinely held on-camera press briefings about major
5 decisions, new policies, public controversies, and so
6 forth. Those have been almost nonexistent for the last 4
7 years.

8 General Austin, if confirmed, will you commit to hold
9 regular, on-camera press briefings?

10 Mr. Austin: Yes.

11 Senator Cotton: Will you also commit to appear on
12 television programs to explain the key issues of the day,
13 as Senator Gillibrand raised?

14 Mr. Austin: Yes.

15 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

16 A third and final concern I want you to address is
17 that a recently retired general is apt to bring with him
18 much of his former military staff, perhaps re-creating his
19 last command as a kind of supreme combatant command, also
20 likely to rely too much on the Joint Staff.

21 General Austin, could you please discuss, if
22 confirmed, how many of your former military staff from your
23 various senior commands you plan to hire and how you will
24 balance the Joint Staff with civilian appointees, the
25 services, and the combatant commands?

1 Mr. Austin: The key billets for my staff, all of
2 those positions are being -- we are looking at filling all
3 those positions, if I am confirmed, with experienced senior
4 civilians that, again, I will empower to be able to get
5 their job done.

6 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

7 Again, General Austin, my concerns about these waivers
8 do not bear at all on your nomination or your record of
9 service to our Nation, for which I have the highest regard.
10 I thank you again for answering the call of duty to your
11 country.

12 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Cotton.

13 Senator Blumenthal?

14 Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

15 General Austin, Mr. Austin, thank you for being here
16 today. Thank you for your extraordinary career of service,
17 which I deeply respect and admire.

18 My opposition to the waiver is not personal. It is a
19 matter of principle, and I want to move on to the merits of
20 the policy issues that will confront you, if confirmed. In
21 my view, you have expressed clearly and cogently your
22 commitment to strengthening civilian control over the
23 military, which you would implement if confirmed.

24 First, I have been deeply alarmed, as have been many
25 of my colleagues, by the rise of white supremacists and

1 extremist ideology in the military. You and I have
2 discussed it. The latest signs are, in fact, that two
3 National Guard members have been removed from their duties
4 regarding the inaugural because of their potential links to
5 extremist sentiments or organizations.

6 Last week, I led 13 of my colleagues in a letter to
7 the Department of Defense Inspector General asking for an
8 immediate and intensive investigation of the prevalence of
9 white supremacy and extremist ideology. I am asking for
10 your commitment that you will cooperate with and support
11 that investigation. Shortly after our letter, the
12 Department of Defense indicated it was going to do an
13 evaluation of this issue, but I want an intensive
14 investigation and action to counter it. And I look
15 forward, hopefully, to working with you in countering and
16 combating this very important threat.

17 Mr. Austin: I certainly look forward to working with
18 you on this, Senator. I think this is critical. I would
19 share a story with you from my past where when I was a
20 lieutenant colonel working in probably the finest, one of
21 the finest organizations in the Army -- the 82nd Airborne
22 Division -- we woke up one day and discovered that we had
23 extremist elements in our ranks, and they did bad things
24 that we certainly held them accountable for.

25 But we discovered that the signs for that activity

1 were there all along. We just did not know what to look
2 for or what to pay attention to, but we learned from that.
3 And I think this is one of those things that is important
4 to our military to make sure that we keep a handle on, to
5 make sure our leaders are doing the right things. They are
6 taking care of their troops. They understand, they know
7 their troops.

8 And we can never take our hands off the wheel on this.
9 This has no place in the military of the United States of
10 America.

11 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you very much. I really
12 appreciate that answer.

13 You mentioned in your testimony the importance of the
14 Chinese threat, the need to focus on it. But the most
15 recent attack on our country was by Russia, which, for
16 months, literally intruded, interfered, and attacked our
17 Nation in cyberspace. In part because, as General Nakasone
18 testified to us, our adversaries do not fear us -- that is
19 exactly what he said -- in the cyber domain.

20 I would like to ask you to commit to conducting a top-
21 down review of our cyber operations, including DOD's
22 posture and structure, and to making our adversaries pay a
23 price when they attack us, as the Russians did, through
24 SolarWinds.

25 Mr. Austin: You have my commitment that I will

1 conduct that review. I think that there is a review
2 ongoing now to really ascertain what transpired. I will
3 join that, if confirmed, in stride. And I really look
4 forward to understanding with clarity what really happened.

5 And I truly believe that, well, the FBI and the NSA
6 have given Russia credit for this. They have attributed
7 this activity to Russia. And if that is the case, I think
8 Russia should be held accountable. That is my personal
9 belief.

10 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you.

11 Environmental action and climate change are more
12 important than ever. I know the President-Elect is going
13 to focus on it. As you and I have discussed in our
14 meeting, the Department of Defense has an immense role to
15 play. I welcome your comments on PFAS and the increasing
16 resilience of our military installations.

17 I would like to work with you on a total program or
18 plan for the Department of Defense beyond the magnitude of
19 what is done now, and I know you have indicated your
20 interest in it. So I am not going to ask questions about
21 it, but I do think that the use and procurement of clean
22 energy, the energy efficiency steps that DOD can take will
23 not only save dollars, it will save energy and
24 environmental values and provide leadership for the whole
25 world.

1 I want to focus on military sexual assault, which my
2 colleague Senator Gillibrand did so well before, and say
3 that I am working on legislation that would create
4 liability for perpetrators and for the Department of
5 Defense for sexual misconduct in among service members so
6 that the survivors would have a right of action. They
7 would be empowered to take action.

8 Will you support that kind of legislation, sir?

9 Mr. Austin: Well, I certainly look forward to
10 reviewing what is in the legislation, Senator, and would
11 love to have that discussion with you once I have had the
12 ability to do that. And I just want to take a moment to
13 thank both you and Senator Gillibrand for the tremendous
14 work, especially Senator Gillibrand, for the work that you
15 have both done to counter sexual assault in our ranks. And
16 if confirmed, I look forward to working with both of you on
17 this issue.

18 Senator Blumenthal: I appreciate that point. Let me
19 just say I welcome and appreciate your focus in your
20 written remarks in answers to specific questions on the
21 need to focus on our suppliers, our supply chain, our
22 workforce, our defense industrial base, which are very
23 important to Connecticut, where we are the submarine
24 capital of the world at Electric Boat and where a trained
25 workforce is especially important, but the supply chain

1 equally so.

2 And I would like you to review, because I am out of
3 time, legislation that I proposed that would give the Mayor
4 of the District of Columbia the same powers that Governors
5 have over the National Guard. Because a lot of the very
6 unfortunate lack of planning and coordination between
7 Federal and local agencies that has been on display over
8 recent months, in my view, is attributable to the lack of
9 that power on the part of, in effect, locally empowered
10 officials here.

11 Thank you.

12 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.

13 Senator Ernst?

14 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

15 And thank you so much, General, for being here today.
16 We certainly appreciate your commitment and your service to
17 our great nation, and thank you for stepping forward with
18 this nomination.

19 I just want to briefly touch upon the issue of sexual
20 harassment, sexual assault, as Senator Gillibrand and
21 Senator Blumenthal just did. We had a conversation about
22 this last week. Thank you very much for that. But part of
23 that Fort Hood report that came forward stated that the
24 military readiness requirement superseded the need to
25 protect our service members.

1 What are your feelings as to that statement, and then
2 how do we move forward and correct that?

3 Mr. Austin: Senator, I earnestly -- I honestly do not
4 believe that these two issues are mutually exclusive. We
5 absolutely have to take care of the men and women that are
6 in our ranks. A failure to do so -- I mean, we are about
7 people in the military. We have the greatest, the best
8 equipment in the world, and I get that. But this is about
9 people.

10 If we do not take care of our people, it is really,
11 really tough to do the job at hand, and that is to defend
12 this country. And so I do not see these two issues as
13 being at odds with each other. I think we have to do both,
14 and we have to do them both well.

15 Senator Ernst: I truly appreciate that. I fully
16 agree. Our military readiness does not have to suffer
17 because of sexual harassment. We can take care of that
18 issue and also still be the best fighting force in the
19 world. So I appreciate your stance there.

20 I today had such a great honor. I retired from the
21 Iowa Army National Guard in 2015, and we have a number of
22 those tremendous men and women serving right outside our
23 doors today. And it was my honor to go out in front of the
24 Capitol and re-enlist about 15 of our Iowa Army National
25 Guardsmen, a great honor for me.

1 But the importance of our National Guard has really
2 been on display the last year or so, as we have seen
3 numerous trips deployed in support of fighting forest fires
4 in California, or deployments and mobilizations supporting
5 COVID-19 activities, whether it is food distribution to
6 food banks, making sure that vaccines were distributed to
7 our communities. We have seen tens of thousands of our
8 soldiers and airmen mobilized. They were there. They
9 responded. And they did it quite quickly.

10 And I will emphasize that point again, that the
11 National Guard, they mobilized, and they were there
12 quickly, even beyond the capacity of their active
13 counterparts. So whether it was working for FEMA, helping
14 those local health clinics, you know, distributing food, as
15 I said, our National Guard members stepped up. And again,
16 today we witness them out on our Capitol Mall keeping our
17 Nation safe so that we here in Congress can do our duties.

18 So no matter what happens, whether it is response to
19 riots or violence or other types of activities, they are
20 mobilizing for us. And so what we have learned over the
21 last year is that they do come to us quickly in response to
22 these domestic missions.

23 Now what further changes or reforms could be made to
24 make sure that our National Guard are treated equally
25 because of their important role for our United States, but

1 treated equally with their active duty counterparts when it
2 comes to training, when it comes to equipment, when it
3 comes to readiness? What can we do to make sure that they
4 are on par with their active duty counterparts?

5 Mr. Austin: Well, there are, as you know, being a --
6 having been a Guard member for quite some time, there are
7 some challenges in terms of the amount of days that you
8 have to actually conduct that training. But quite frankly,
9 over the last two decades, we have seen our great Guard
10 members work shoulder to shoulder in places like Iraq and
11 Afghanistan, and we have seen a difference in the quality
12 of equipment early on. I think we have closed that gap
13 now.

14 I think we are doing better. There is more that we
15 can do. But we are going to have to continue to work
16 through these challenges. There are no easy fixes, but
17 this is one thing that I will work with the services on to
18 make sure that we are giving our Guard the very best,
19 finest of equipment. We are giving them good-quality
20 training opportunities, and we are recognizing them for the
21 great work that they are doing.

22 Senator Ernst: No, I thank you for that answer. They
23 mean a lot to us in defense of our country and certainly
24 short-notice mobilizations, especially as we see right here
25 in Washington, D.C., today.

1 So last issue because I know that we are running short
2 on time, you and I did speak briefly about defense spending
3 and the audit of our Pentagon and DOD. So we know that our
4 defense budget has grown significantly to address many
5 threats -- Russia and China, as well as persistent threat
6 coming from Iran, as well as a number of much smaller
7 terrorist groups around the world. So the potential for
8 defense spending that is wasteful has also grown and
9 expanded, and it is used on lower-priority or even obsolete
10 programs.

11 So, if confirmed, how will you lead the budget reviews
12 to reform the Pentagon, and do you see it as a possibility
13 to make sure that the Department of Defense does obtain a
14 clean audit?

15 Mr. Austin: That will continue to be our goal. As
16 you and I talked, we have made some progress, as I
17 understand it. I have been away from the process for a
18 while, but there is more to be done. And you have my
19 commitment that we will lean into this and continue to push
20 to make sure that we can get that clean audit in the not-
21 too-distant future.

22 Senator Ernst: Thank you very much, General. My time
23 has expired. Again, thank you for stepping forward and
24 looking to serve our Nation again in this capacity.

25 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

1 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Ernst.

2 Now via Webex, Senator Hirono.

3 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 General Austin, it was good to have the chance to talk
5 with you a little while ago. I ask all nominees before any
6 of the committees that I sit on the following two questions
7 as part of my responsibility to make sure that nominees are
8 fit for the appointment to which they are nominated. So I
9 will ask you the following questions.

10 Since you became a legal adult, have you ever made
11 unwanted requests for sexual favors or committed any verbal
12 or physical harassment or assault of a sexual nature?

13 Mr. Austin: No.

14 Senator Hirono: Have you ever faced discipline or
15 entered into a settlement relating to this kind of conduct?

16 Mr. Austin: No.

17 Senator Hirono: I want to acknowledge my agreement
18 with the questions asked -- some of the questions asked by
19 my colleague Senator Blumenthal and your commitment that
20 you will be -- you will counter any white supremacists or
21 extremists within the ranks of the military. I think that
22 is really important. Also the questions he asked relating
23 to how important it is to make sure that we are safe from
24 cyber attacks because these cyber systems are what the
25 military communications very much depend on.

1 By the questions that were asked by several of my
2 colleagues, including Senators Blumenthal and Gillibrand, a
3 number of us are very concerned about the continuing
4 scourge of sexual assault and harassment and retaliation in
5 our military. And it is very clear that the reforms that
6 the Department of Defense has instituted are not nearly
7 good enough, and much more action is needed.

8 And I want to express to you last week a very tragic
9 thing happened. Selena Roth, a 25-year-old Army veteran
10 and military wife, was found dead in military housing at
11 Schofield Barracks in Hawaii. A soldier is in custody, and
12 a homicide investigation is ongoing. And my heart goes out
13 to Selena's family. Violent acts against women within our
14 military community continue to occur at an alarming rate,
15 and I am committed to ensuring -- to making sure that these
16 perpetrators are held accountable.

17 And you noted in your statement that you will fight
18 sexual assault and harassment in the military, including, I
19 hope, that you will look at the Uniform Code of Military
20 Justice, which I support, which Senator Gillibrand has been
21 a leader on, and changing the UCMJ to remove the decision
22 relating to prosecution of these kind of attacks outside of
23 the chain of command. I hope you will review that very
24 carefully because all of your predecessors have not
25 supported that kind of a change.

1 I also want to mention that I have introduced the I am
2 Vanessa Guillen Act. This act provides for the creation of
3 a standalone punitive article for sexual harassment. If
4 confirmed, would you support the creation of a standalone
5 punitive article of sexual harassment to be included in the
6 Uniform Code of Military Justice?

7 Mr. Austin: Senator, any time we change the Uniform
8 Code of Military Justice, I would want to approach that
9 with great deliberation. But I would commit to you that I
10 would certainly want to take this on and look at it with
11 the right experts to make sure that we achieve the right
12 effects with doing something like that.

13 But I would certainly want to make sure I get the
14 right experts on hand to really drill into this.

15 Senator Hirono: Well, sexual harassment can be
16 subsumed under other charges, but it is not a standalone
17 charge. I think it is very important, considering that
18 sexual harassment occurs at an alarming rate in the
19 military. So this is not -- and I would hope that this is
20 not something that requires a great deal of thinking
21 because, as I said, we can already charge someone under
22 other articles for sexual harassment.

23 So when a service member is sexually assaulted, they
24 are given the option of either making a restricted or
25 unrestricted report, and the I am Vanessa Guillen Act would

1 allow victims of sexual harassment to also make restricted
2 reports, allowing them to remain anonymous within their
3 chain of command while still receiving the support services
4 that they should have.

5 Would you support the creation of making that so, for
6 victims of sexual harassment to be able to make a
7 restricted report?

8 Mr. Austin: I do not think I heard the end of the
9 question there, Senator. Would you remind repeating the
10 last piece of that?

11 Senator Hirono: Yes. Would you allow victims of
12 sexual harassment to have the same options that victims of
13 sexual assault have in making a restricted report?

14 Mr. Austin: Yes.

15 Senator Hirono: Thank you.

16 I want to turn to the importance of training areas for
17 the Indo-Pacific area of responsibility. Admiral Davidson,
18 who is the commander of INDOPACOM, talked recently about
19 the importance of joint, integrated training in this AOR.
20 Admiral Davidson specifically mentioned the vital
21 importance of both the Pacific Military Range Facility, or
22 PMRF, on Kauai and the Army training areas, including
23 Pohakuloa Training Range on the Big Island.

24 With Navy, Air Force, and Army leases all up for
25 renewal in 2029, which is really right around the corner,

1 it is incumbent on DOD to engage with State authorities and
2 the local stakeholders like the Native Hawaii community
3 early, often, and openly. Having a clear and transparent
4 process is very critical to the renewal of these leases,
5 which, needless to say, is critical for the military's
6 presence in Hawaii.

7 What are your thoughts on the value of realistic joint
8 training with our coalition partners in the region and
9 elsewhere?

10 Mr. Austin: Well, certainly the value of conducting
11 joint training with our coalition partners, I mean, it is
12 invaluable. It is we always work better as a team. I
13 think it ought to be effective as a team. You have to
14 train to do that day in and day out. And so --

15 Senator Hirono: So training is -- I am sorry. I am
16 running out of time. I just want to make sure that I have
17 your commitment that you will have an open dialogue with
18 the community with regard to these really important
19 training facilities in the State of Hawaii?

20 Mr. Austin: Yes.

21 Senator Hirono: Thank you.

22 I do have some other questions --

23 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Hirono.

24 Senator Hirono: -- but I believe I am out of time. I
25 will submit them for the record.

1 Thank you.

2 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Hirono.

3 Senator Rounds?

4 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 General, first of all, I just want to thank you and
6 your wife and your family for serving our Nation in uniform
7 because you did it with honor, and you did it for 41 years.
8 And I just want to say thank you for that, sir.

9 General, you and I have had the opportunity to speak
10 now on several different occasions, and I have appreciated
11 your answers to my questions with regard to the waiver. I
12 truly do believe that the waiver was there for a reason,
13 but I also think that the President-Elect does have -- I
14 think the tie goes to the President. And in this
15 particular case, I believe that he has nominated you
16 because he believes that you are the right person at the
17 right time.

18 I have no misgivings whatsoever about your
19 capabilities and your competencies. And I think in this
20 particular case, it is my intent to support the waiver so
21 that you can have your -- the presentation of you before
22 the Senate for confirmation.

23 I think part of the reason that I feel this way is
24 because of the conversations that you and I had, and I want
25 to go through them a little bit because, first of all, with

1 regard to the difference between being the Secretary of
2 Defense and being a member of the Joint Chiefs, there is a
3 true difference between the two, the role of the two. Can
4 you share a little bit your understanding of the
5 differences in the role and yet, at the same time, the real
6 need for both to be expressed and your plans with regard to
7 bringing in, as you indicated in your opening remarks,
8 additional qualified civilians into those top areas?

9 Mr. Austin: So I think the Chairman of the Joint
10 Chiefs is required to give his best military advice to the
11 President and to the Secretary routinely, and it is
12 military advice. The Secretary has a much broader scope.
13 He has a lot more to take into consideration. He is
14 focused on strategy and policy, and he understands he is
15 working within the guidelines provided by his boss, the
16 President of the United States.

17 So there is an enormous difference, and I think one of
18 the key enablers here, as I have said before, is to make
19 sure that we have the right experts, the right
20 professionals onboard working with me day in and day out to
21 craft that strategy and develop that policy. But the
22 Secretary has a much broader scope, and he is not focused
23 on giving the same type of advice that the Chairman would
24 provide.

25 I have seen this done right a number of times. All

1 the Secretaries, of course, get it right. But the two that
2 come to mind more than anyone else for me, when I was a
3 three-star serving as the director of the Joint Staff,
4 Secretary Bob Gates was the Secretary of Defense, an
5 absolute master at making sure that he outlined roles and
6 responsibilities and swim lanes, designated swim lanes for
7 the Joint Staff and the OSD staff.

8 Later, you know, I served in the Pentagon as a four-
9 staff as a Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, and I had a
10 chance to work with Secretary Panetta, who, once again, was
11 a master at making sure that those roles remained separate
12 and that he provided the right kind of advice to the
13 President of the United States. And while he worked arm-
14 in-arm with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, they did not
15 provide the same kind of perspective.

16 And so I fully believe that I understand the
17 difference, and I look forward to working with the
18 Chairman. But I have no desire to be the Chairman of the
19 Joint Chiefs, and so, if confirmed, we will make sure that
20 those roles and responsibilities are clearly outlined.

21 Senator Rounds: Thank you.

22 We also had a chance to talk a little bit about cyber
23 and about the work that we have done in the last couple of
24 years with regard to cyber and the defense of our cyber
25 operations. It used to be you had air, land, and sea to

1 worry about. Now we clearly have space, and we have
2 cyberspace. A lot of our adversaries have decided to take
3 the shortcut, and they are trying to impact all of the
4 other domains using cyber.

5 In the last couple of years, particularly with regard
6 to the 2018 DOD Cyber Strategy, we have decided to move
7 forward, and we have a "defend forward" policy. You have
8 indicated your support, or at least you have seen it, you
9 have observed it, and so forth. Can you give me very
10 briefly your thoughts about our cyber and the need to
11 continue to make strides and to allow for offensive cyber
12 operations to continue?

13 Mr. Austin: I think that is important. I think
14 having an offensive capability that we are able to use I
15 think is really important, and so I applaud the efforts
16 that have been made in the past. And once again, I have
17 been away from it for a bit, but I really look forward to
18 kind of getting back, getting under the hood, understanding
19 how the -- how the -- how the processes work now to ensure
20 coordination across the board, across the agencies.

21 And in this endeavor, speed matters. And so anything
22 that we can do to facilitate the work of the operators I
23 think is goodness, but we have got to make sure we are
24 doing it in the right way.

25 Senator Rounds: We will continue to remind you about

1 the need for speed on that, if at all necessary, and I do
2 not think it will be.

3 Finally, General, Secretary Mattis implemented a Close
4 Combat Lethality Task Force in 2018. This is an
5 organization dedicated to providing resources to the forces
6 who have accounted historically for nearly 90 percent of
7 the casualties, yet constitute only 4 percent of the force
8 and receive only 1 percent of the institutional
9 investments.

10 I am concerned with how this task force has appeared
11 to have lost its direct report, this relationship with the
12 Secretary. It appears to have gotten caught in the
13 bureaucracy over the last year, and I would like to see it
14 back on track. I have worked on language to strengthen the
15 task force with Senator Duckworth and other members, and
16 this is more than a bipartisan effort. This is a
17 nonpartisan issue.

18 Can you discuss the importance very briefly of a task
19 force that represents our infantry, Marines, special
20 operators, and other specialties who closely and directly
21 impact the enemy and enemy operations, and how that would
22 be channeled through your office?

23 Mr. Austin: Yes. I fully understand and appreciate
24 the importance of making sure that we resource and support
25 our men and women that are at the tip of the spear. You

1 know, the squads and platoons are out there actually
2 fighting the enemy. Everybody else is supporting the
3 fight.

4 And we have to make sure that they have what they need
5 in order to be successful. This is an evolving effort. It
6 will never remain static. And so while I do not know the
7 reasons for things having -- why they have been
8 repositioned and reporting chains have been redesigned, I
9 would certainly take a look at that as I go in, if I am
10 confirmed.

11 Senator Rounds: Thank you, sir.

12 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Rounds.

14 Senator Heinrich?

15 Senator Heinrich: Thank you, Chairman.

16 Mr. Austin, first off, just congratulations on your
17 nomination, and thank you so much for your willingness to
18 continue to serve this great country.

19 One of the things I want to ask you about is, if
20 confirmed as Secretary, you are going to play a really
21 critical role in directing defense modernization priorities
22 that have an impact on our forces for many, many years to
23 come. That modernization, with critical investments in
24 technologies like directed energy or hypersonics or
25 artificial intelligence, is what will ensure that our men

1 and women in uniform will, hopefully, never experience a
2 fair fight.

3 But modernization requires really difficult choices
4 with regard to competing priorities. So I wanted to ask
5 you, how will you balance investments in personnel and
6 legacy systems with the critical need to develop
7 capabilities that are going to give us a qualitative edge
8 over near-peer adversaries like Russia and China?

9 Mr. Austin: Well, as you know, personnel costs are --
10 I mean, they are expensive, and we have to be mindful about
11 that as we go forward. And we have to be willing to make
12 sure that we are making the right calls, although they may
13 be tough calls from time to time.

14 And in terms of legacy systems, I think I will have to
15 get in and work with the services to ascertain what they
16 believe is relevant and really have a tough discussion with
17 them on whether or not it makes sense to continue to invest
18 in certain types of things. But I agree with you. I think
19 we absolutely have to invest in the capabilities that will
20 make us relevant not in the last fight, but in the future
21 fight.

22 We have to be able to understand. We have to be
23 better faster, we have to be able to decide faster, and we
24 have to be able to act faster. And that -- I mean, we will
25 have to employ the use of space-based platforms, all the

1 things that you talked about, the use of AI, and the
2 development of those kinds of capabilities will not come
3 cheap. But this is not a choice, in my view. These are
4 things that we must invest in going forward if we are going
5 to maintain a competitive edge.

6 Senator Heinrich: Thank you for your thoughts on
7 that.

8 Mr. Austin, last week in the final days of the current
9 administration, the Air Force announced that it had
10 selected Huntsville, Alabama, to host the new Space Command
11 headquarters. And I believe this process, frankly, was
12 severely flawed, and it was not in line with what I have
13 seen historically with regard to a more deliberative
14 approach that the Air Force has typically taken with regard
15 to basing decisions of this magnitude.

16 I know you are not familiar with this decision and its
17 details, but I would simply ask that, if confirmed, that
18 you would take a close look at that process to make sure
19 that it met the historical standards for decisions of that
20 type.

21 Mr. Austin: I will do that, and I will make sure that
22 we look at all of our processes going forward so that
23 future decisions are made within the confines of the
24 policies that have been laid out.

25 Senator Heinrich: Thank you. I appreciate that very

1 much.

2 As you know, DOD has set an initial requirement to
3 produce 30 plutonium pits per year at Los Alamos Labs by
4 2026. I would love your views on how important that
5 milestone is to maintaining our nuclear deterrent.

6 Mr. Austin: Could you repeat your question, Senator?

7 Senator Heinrich: The Department of Defense has set
8 an initial requirement to produce 30 plutonium pits per
9 year at Los Alamos National Labs by 2026, and I would love
10 your thoughts on the importance of achieving that milestone
11 on that timeline.

12 Mr. Austin: Yes. As we have said earlier in our
13 discussions here this afternoon, Senator, maintaining a
14 credible, a reliable, safe, and sustainable nuclear
15 capability is of utmost importance, of the highest
16 importance. And so this is a component of that, and
17 certainly, if we have laid out those goals and objectives
18 for ourselves, I am very much interesting in making sure
19 that they are the appropriate goals, but -- and I have no
20 reason to doubt that they are, but making sure that we
21 remain on time and on target with achieving those goals.

22 Senator Heinrich: I look forward to working with you
23 on that front.

24 One of the last things I want to get to here in my
25 final couple minutes is PFAS clean-up and remediation.

1 Many communities across the country continue to suffer from
2 enormous impacts on their water supplies from PFAS
3 chemicals, in particular in drinking water, in ground water
4 that is used for both drinking and, in some cases,
5 agricultural use. One of the most hard hit of these
6 communities is around Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico,
7 a community that has been incredibly supportive of that
8 facility for decades.

9 The Air Force and the Department of Defense more
10 broadly have, frankly, slow-walked the clean-up and the
11 remediation efforts for a number of years now, despite
12 really clear evidence that defense activities are the
13 source of that contamination. And if confirmed, I would
14 ask that you make full PFAS remediation a priority within
15 the Department and ensure that the Department of Defense
16 takes concrete steps to finally do right by these
17 communities that have done right by the Department for
18 literally decades.

19 Mr. Austin: The safety and the health of our military
20 members, our family members, our DOD civilians, and our
21 communities is very, very important to us in DOD. I think
22 you know that Secretary Esper stood up a PFAS task force a
23 while back and that their work is ongoing. And if I am
24 confirmed, I will go in and ask that they pick up the pace
25 on the work, and we will want to push to make sure that we

1 have good solutions for mitigation of our contribution to
2 this contamination.

3 PFAS has been used throughout the economy, so I think
4 we are going to have to work across -- you know, across the
5 board with our partners to ensure that we are working
6 together, we are doing the right things to mitigate the
7 effects here. So I look forward to working with my
8 colleague there in the EPA to make sure that the military
9 is doing its part, and we stay focused on the right things
10 here.

11 Senator Heinrich: Thank you, sir.

12 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Heinrich.

13 Senator Tillis? And Senator Rounds presiding.

14 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 General Austin, can you hear me okay?

16 Mr. Austin: I can.

17 Senator Tillis: Congratulations to you and to your
18 wife and your family, and thank you for your decades of
19 service.

20 I would like to start by -- well, also I want to thank
21 you for spending some quality time down at Fort Bragg at
22 the tip of the spear with the 82nd Airborne.

23 I want to associate myself with comments made by
24 Senators Gillibrand, Ernst, and Blumenthal on military
25 sexual assault. I do not expect you to respond to it. I

1 heard your responses earlier. But to me, we will never
2 know what great leaders chose never to go into the military
3 if we continue to have a reputation for a culture that is
4 not making progress on military sexual assault.

5 I have heard you make commitments to my colleagues,
6 and I look forward to exploring this issue as a ranking
7 member on the Personnel Subcommittee. But we have got a
8 lot of work to do. I have been here for 6 years, and we
9 are not making near enough progress.

10 I would like to start, though, by asking you to give
11 me an idea of the general, a general overview of the threat
12 that you believe that Iran represents to national security
13 and security in the Middle East. I would also be curious
14 in your answer what you think about the recent agreements
15 with Middle East countries and Israel, whether or not that
16 is a positive step in the right direction?

17 Mr. Austin: Iran continues to be a destabilizing
18 element in the region. You look at its behavior, it
19 clearly -- a lot of activity that is destabilizing. It
20 does not work well with its neighbors. It, again, does
21 present a threat to our partners in the region and those
22 forces that we have stationed in the region.

23 If Iran were ever to get a nuclear capability, most
24 every problem that we deal with in the region would be
25 tougher to deal with because of that. So, to answer your

1 question, I think Iran's activity continues to be or its
2 behavior is -- continues to be destabilizing.

3 Senator Tillis: And on the recent agreements, do you
4 have any opinion as to whether or not they are a positive
5 step to try and check Iran's ambitions in the Middle East?

6 Mr. Austin: I do. I think that any time that we --
7 you know, that countries agree to normalize relations, I
8 think that is a good thing. And I think certainly this has
9 put a bit more pressure on Iran, and I hope it will have
10 good effects.

11 Senator Tillis: Thanks, General Austin.

12 General Austin, you wrote in your advance policy
13 responses, this is a quote from them, "The continued
14 erosion of U.S. military advantage vis-a-vis China and
15 Russia in key strategic areas remains the most significant
16 risk the Department must address. If left unchecked, this
17 continued erosion could fundamentally change our ability to
18 achieve U.S. national security objectives and limit the
19 DOD's ability to underpin other U.S. instruments of power."

20 Can you talk a little bit about the key strategic
21 areas? We have long since thought that they had a
22 quantitative advantage, but that we maintained a
23 qualitative advantage. It seems like the margins are
24 shrinking. So can you give me a brief expansion on the
25 responses to the advance policy questions?

1 Mr. Austin: Thanks, Senator.

2 They continue to invest in modernization. They have
3 gone to school on us in terms of how we deploy and how we
4 employ our forces. And so if we would choose to do the
5 same types of things that we have done in the past, I think
6 that we will clearly be challenged. So we will have to
7 have capabilities that allow us to hold -- to present a
8 credible threat -- credible deterrent, excuse me, to China
9 in the future.

10 We will have to make some strides in the use of
11 quantum computing, the use of AI, the use of -- the advent
12 of connected battlefields, space-based platforms. Those
13 kinds of things I think can give us the types of
14 capabilities that we will need to be able to hold a large
15 element, large pieces of Chinese inventory, military
16 inventory at risk.

17 And so I believe that we still have the qualitative
18 edge, have a competitive edge over China. I think that gap
19 has closed significantly, and our goal will be to ensure
20 that we expand that gap going forward.

21 Senator Tillis: Thank you.

22 Because I have limited time, I am going to submit a
23 question to the record on I think the economic warfare that
24 we are dealing with on China, the race to 5G and some of
25 the interagency activities that I do not think the DOD is

1 prominently up there. We have got the USTR, Commerce
2 Department, but I feel like that we are losing some ground.

3 I have a unique perspective on that, looking at all
4 the intellectual property theft, as the chair of the
5 Intellectual Property Subcommittee on Judiciary. But I
6 have got a lot of context I want to add to that. So I want
7 to ask a question there.

8 So in my remaining time, if I were in person, I would
9 have my 600-page request for proposal for the next-
10 generation handgun with me. It is my favorite prop when we
11 have a confirmation like this. And it just confounds me to
12 think it took 10 years to procure the next-generation
13 handgun, and it is going to take 10 years to deploy it. To
14 me, it suggests a fundamental problem with the way we go
15 about acquisitions and procurements in the Department of
16 Defense.

17 So I would just seek your commitment, if confirmed, if
18 you are going to have the kind of resources around you that
19 are going to drill down across the business of the DOD and
20 figure out if we are now at a point to where we can go from
21 an investigational new drug to an approved vaccine in 11
22 months, it would seem to me that we could get to a point
23 where we can specify certain procurements in the DOD in
24 terms of months or years, not decades.

25 Do I have your commitment to make sure that you make

1 this a priority that you have someone there that has the
2 experience and insight to figure out how we get more
3 productivity and I think more sanity in our procurement
4 processes?

5 Mr. Austin: You have my commitment, Senator.

6 Senator Tillis: Well, thank you, General Austin.

7 And thank you, Mr. Chair.

8 Senator Rounds [Presiding]: On behalf of the
9 chairman, Senator Kaine.

10 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 And General Austin, congratulations on the nomination.

12 Ten years after the Civil War finished, at the end of
13 his second term as President, U.S. Grant gave a speech in
14 Des Moines, Iowa, September 1875. Here is what he said.
15 He was talking about the prospect of ever having another
16 civil war.

17 "If we are to have another contest in the near future
18 of our national existence, I predict that the dividing line
19 will not be Masons and Dixons, but between patriotism and
20 intelligence on the one side and superstition, ambition,
21 and ignorance on the other."

22 Those words are very chilling words as we contemplate
23 what we saw in this Capitol on the 6th of January. We saw
24 ambition. We saw superstition, if you could say
25 superstition might be QAnon fantasy or election was stolen

1 or widespread voter fraud. Ignorance. I do not know that
2 I would use that word. The speech that U.S. Grant gave was
3 to a group of Civil War veterans, and it was to promote the
4 idea of more broad public education, the idea that
5 education would drive out susceptibility to superstition.

6 It might be comforting for us to think that what we
7 saw on January 6th or generally was ignorance, but if you
8 look at the spectrum of people who were involved, you find
9 a number of very highly educated people. Sadly, and I know
10 this has been raised already, you find a lot of people who
11 have connection to our military, who should be -- as part
12 of the enormous training investment we make in them, be
13 able to spot the difference between truth and fantasy,
14 between reality and conspiracy theory.

15 Military Times did an analysis in 2019, a survey of
16 active duty military, and they found that 36 percent of
17 active duty service members have seen evidence of white
18 supremacist and racist ideologies in the military. That
19 does not mean 36 percent of military share those, but more
20 than one-third of our military have seen their colleagues
21 exhibiting either white supremacist or racist ideologies.

22 General Austin, if you are confirmed, you will make
23 history as the first African-American Secretary of Defense,
24 but you have also lived a life in this country and seen
25 these challenges. I know some colleagues have asked you

1 about investigations, but what I would like to ask you
2 about is training. We invest so much to train a member of
3 our military -- officer, enlisted -- what might you suggest
4 to us, as we think about the training going forward, that
5 would lead us to have a military that was immune from
6 superstition and not so gullible as to fall for these false
7 ideologies?

8 Mr. Austin: Thanks, Senator.

9 I think that we have to train our leaders to make sure
10 that they are in touch with the people that they are
11 leading, that they understand who they are, what they are
12 doing, what they are reading, that they are looking at
13 their environment that they are living in and looking for
14 signs of things that could indicate that something is going
15 in the wrong direction. I think leadership needs -- if
16 leadership is not in touch with the people they are
17 leading, these kinds of things can happen.

18 And I do not think that this is a thing that you can
19 put a band-aid on and fix and leave alone. I think that
20 training needs to go on routinely because things change.
21 The types of things that you are looking for change.

22 I think our leaders need to be able to talk to their
23 subordinates and instill in them the right types of values,
24 the values that our military embraces, the values that our
25 country embraces. And you know, failure to be able to

1 adhere to those values means that you should not be a part
2 of our formation, and our leaders need to be able to sort
3 those things out.

4 But having had personal experience with this, being in
5 a unit that had a problem with this long ago when I was a
6 lieutenant colonel, I can tell you that most of us were
7 embarrassed that we did not know what to look for, and we
8 did not really understand that by being engaged more with
9 your people on these types of issues can pay big dividends.
10 I know that that unit has probably learned that forever,
11 but I do not think that you can ever take your hand off the
12 steering wheel here.

13 Senator Kaine: Well, because in a way, the enemy
14 within -- disunity -- is probably the most destructive
15 force in terms of our ability to defend ourselves. So if
16 we are divided against one another, how can we defend the
17 Nation? I view this as an enormously important task that
18 you will carry, should you be confirmed.

19 I want to echo what comments that have been made by
20 colleagues about military sexual assault. Again, a divider
21 within the body that makes us less able to externally face
22 and defeat the threats we face.

23 I have read much of the Citizen Review Panel that was
24 put together to look at the tragic murder of Vanessa
25 Guillen at Fort Hood, and that is a very, very powerful

1 document. And I would encourage all members of the
2 committee to do it.

3 I spoke to one of the members of that panel, and he
4 relayed that he was doing one of the interviews -- and they
5 did dozens and dozens of interviews -- and was talking to a
6 mid-level officer on the base who was trying to say that
7 they felt like they were doing all they could to deal with
8 military sexual assault. And the interviewer said, "Would
9 you let your daughter serve in the military?" He said, "No
10 way." He just Rorschach answered the question and said,
11 "No way."

12 And whatever the attempt to put a good spin on how we
13 are doing, if you would worry about your own daughter
14 serving in the military, we got a long ways to go.

15 Quality of life issues are enormously important. You
16 have been asked about a lot of the strategic challenges.
17 We face this tough one on military housing. And I just
18 want to remind my colleagues, we started -- we faced that
19 military housing issue about 2 years after we did
20 significant reforms to reduce the size of headquarters
21 staff. And what we found is we were kind of asleep at the
22 switch in monitoring military housing.

23 An awful lot of the staffs that oversaw military
24 housing had been dramatically shrunk because of what we did
25 on the headquarters staff thing. That does not mean that

1 there is not fat that could be squeezed out of any
2 organization. It just means that we have to really be
3 careful, thinking if we shrink the civilian side or the
4 headquarters side, we are going to be saving some money,
5 which we did. But we ended up compounding a problem.

6 And I hope you will be attuned to the need to balance
7 challenges like that so that we can provide the quality of
8 life that our men and women and their families deserve and
9 that will keep them re-enlisting if we want them to. If
10 you could just say a word about that, and I am done.

11 Mr. Austin: Yes, I will. I will be certainly very
12 attuned to that, Senator.

13 I think, in some cases, we have broken trust with our
14 family members because of the housing issue and other
15 issues. I think this is critically important. I look
16 forward to being able to work with the services to really
17 not only get after this, the immediate problems, but put
18 the fixes in our contracting efforts so that we are much
19 better at this down the road.

20 Senator Kaine: Thank you, General.

21 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

22 Senator Rounds: On behalf of the chairman, Senator
23 Sullivan.

24 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 General, General Billy Mitchell, the father of the

1 U.S. Air Force, in a hearing like this in front of the
2 Armed Services many years ago, in the, actually, I think it
3 was the 1930s, called Alaska "the most strategic place in
4 the world." I like to say Alaska constitutes three pillars
5 of America's military might.

6 We are the cornerstone on missile defense. Almost all
7 the missiles and radar systems protecting the entire
8 country are in Alaska. We are the hub of air combat power
9 for the Arctic and Asia-Pacific. We will have over 100
10 fifth-gen fighters there. We are building up our tanker
11 capability, an issue that I think is going to be important.
12 And we are a platform for expeditionary forces like the
13 4-25, the First Stryker Brigade.

14 If confirmed, can I get your commitment soon in your
15 tenure to come to Alaska with me and see this critically
16 important national defense State and troops for America in
17 my State?

18 Mr. Austin: Senator, I absolutely agree with you that
19 Alaska is a national treasure, and it has -- it holds some
20 of our most important military assets and resources. As
21 you know, we are challenged with travel now, and as the
22 opportunities present themselves, post trips to the Indo-
23 Pacific where I need to get to right away, if I am
24 confirmed, I certainly would accept your invitation at some
25 point in the future.

1 Senator Sullivan: Well, General, a lot of us think
2 that Alaska is kind of in the Indo-Pacific. So on your way
3 out, we can get there early. So I look forward to doing
4 that.

5 Related to that is the issue of national security in
6 the Arctic, and that is certainly a new theater of great
7 power competition. Russia, China being very aggressive in
8 the Arctic with massive buildups of military forces,
9 infrastructure. To be honest, for the last several years,
10 I think the Pentagon was asleep at the switch with regard
11 to our national security challenges in the Arctic.

12 This committee, in a bipartisan way, has been very
13 focused on ensuring that the Pentagon recognizes these
14 challenges with infrastructure, icebreakers that we need,
15 capabilities. The Department of Defense released its
16 Arctic Strategy in June 2019, required by this committee.
17 The Air Force followed suit with its own strategy in July
18 of 2020. The Department of the Navy just this week
19 published its Arctic Strategic Blueprint, and the Army will
20 soon be doing this as well.

21 Can I get your commitment to work with this committee,
22 where this has been a high priority, to ensure that these
23 service Arctic strategies are appropriately resourced and
24 that we can protect our strategic interests in the Arctic?

25 Mr. Austin: You have my commitment, Senator.

1 Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

2 General, the other issue I just wanted to touch on
3 here, in this hearing that we had last week on civilian
4 control of the military, in op-eds, you have seen it with
5 some of my colleagues, there has been this growing
6 conventional wisdom that somehow because Secretary Mattis
7 had been a previous CENTCOM commander, that his tenure is a
8 warning really for what some are considering a failed
9 tenure as Secretary of Defense.

10 I actually disagree with this quite vehemently.
11 Secretary Mattis replaced a Secretary of Defense, Secretary
12 Carter, with no military experience. Matter of fact, he
13 was what many people are calling for, a political
14 Secretary. I supported both, but let me just give you a
15 little juxtaposition.

16 Secretary Carter oversaw a 25 percent cut in military
17 funding. Readiness plummeted. Secretary Mattis rebuilt
18 this up and rebuilt readiness with this Congress.

19 Secretary Carter would not support arming the
20 Ukrainians with Javelin missile systems, despite the entire
21 committee here pressing him to do so. Secretary Mattis did
22 that almost immediately in his tenure.

23 Secretary Carter watched ISIS grow to be a very lethal
24 threat. Secretary Mattis brought DOD strategy to crush
25 ISIS.

1 Secretary Carter, for a whole host of reasons, was
2 very reluctant to press for any freedom of navigation
3 operations in the South China Sea. Secretary Mattis made
4 those regular elements of our strategy in the Asia-Pacific.

5 And finally, Secretary Mattis put together the
6 National Defense Strategy, one of the most important and
7 bipartisan documents that many have seen on national
8 security in a generation. He often got back to Senators
9 quickly. In terms of oversight, with all due respect to
10 Secretary Carter, sometime it took weeks just to schedule a
11 phone call or a meeting.

12 So, General Austin, do you think Secretary Mattis had
13 a failed tenure as Secretary of Defense because he had
14 previously served as CENTCOM commander? I would like your
15 assessment of that. It is being used right now as somehow
16 a warning for your confirmation, and I think it is a
17 conventional wisdom that I personally reject.

18 Mr. Austin: I do not think he should be considered as
19 a failed Secretary of Defense because of his work in
20 CENTCOM earlier. I think Secretary Mattis was a very
21 thoughtful Secretary, and he did a lot of goodness for the
22 Department. And certainly I would not want to evaluate his
23 tenure as Secretary. I have great respect for him.

24 As you know, I served alongside him. I have worked
25 with him on a number of tough issues, and I watched from

1 afar as he was Secretary. So I have no reason to believe
2 that his role or his tenure at CENTCOM made his tenure at
3 -- or diminished his role as the Secretary of Defense.

4 Senator Sullivan: And that would not be less a
5 reflection on what you will be able to accomplish in the
6 Department as well? People are using that as a warning, so
7 to speak.

8 Mr. Austin: And I think it is -- I do not think that
9 that is a fair assessment, and I would say also, Senator,
10 that we are completely different people --

11 Senator Sullivan: Yes.

12 Mr. Austin: -- as you know. You know us both. And
13 again, I will absolutely do the things that we have talked
14 about in this hearing, get the right civilians in the right
15 positions to help me exercise civilian control of the
16 military. And I will make sure that we have the very best
17 experts focused on our toughest issues, like the China
18 issue, the issue of our acquisition reform, and those kinds
19 of things.

20 Senator Sullivan: Mr. Chairman, if I may, just one
21 final question. General, I just want you to have the
22 opportunity to answer two other criticisms. One, that you
23 have not had experience in the Asia-Pacific and, two, that
24 with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs being an Army
25 general, that somehow your tenure, with General Milley,

1 would be favoring the Army. Can you quickly address those
2 two criticisms that have come about your nomination?

3 Mr. Austin: Well, I will take the last one first,
4 Senator. If you look at my history, I spent a lot of time
5 in joint assignments, both in Iraq and Afghanistan as the
6 director of the Joint Staff, as commander of Central
7 Command. You know, I have -- I know as many sailors and
8 airmen as I do soldiers, I mean if you look at the folks
9 that I have worked with over the past.

10 So in terms of being able to focus adequately on the
11 issue of China, the reason that I was focused on the Middle
12 East for quite some time was because that was the most
13 important thing for our country. And so we put our best
14 equipment towards that effort, our best people, and it was
15 absolutely necessary at the time.

16 But if confirmed, you can expect that I will put a
17 laser-like focus on developing the right capabilities,
18 plans, operational concepts that will ensure that we
19 maintain a competitive edge as we look at ourselves with
20 respect to China. I think we will present a credible
21 deterrent to China and any other adversary that looks to
22 take us on.

23 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Sullivan. Your
24 time has expired.

25 Via Webex, Senator King is recognized.

1 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 And Mr. Austin, thank you very much for your
3 testimony. As you can see perhaps, I am on the road. You
4 have taken me today from just south of the George
5 Washington Bridge to the George Washington Parkway. So I
6 am almost there.

7 [Laughter.]

8 Senator King: First, I want to associate myself with
9 two particular comments by my colleagues, one on the issue
10 of the Arctic raised by Senator Sullivan. Incredibly
11 strategic area, an area of enormous importance and
12 developing importance.

13 And one of the things about the Arctic is we have been
14 able to work cooperatively with Russia on most Arctic
15 matters, and yet they are moving very rapidly toward
16 militarization. So I commend that area to you for
17 attention. The Navy just released a new Arctic strategy.
18 So a very important issue.

19 The other issue is procurement that Senator Tillis
20 mentioned. The whole idea of 10 years for a handgun and a
21 600-page spec, we just cannot do that. We need to be more
22 agile, particularly in this day and age where technology is
23 so important in terms of our ability to defend the country.

24 So those two things I do commend to your attention,
25 when and if you are confirmed.

1 Now at the beginning of the hearing, there was a lot
2 of talk about civilian control of the military. One of the
3 problems is, Mr. Austin, that tomorrow, when David Norquist
4 assumes the title of Acting Secretary, he will be the 10th
5 Secretary or Acting Secretary in 10 years. And the last
6 Secretary to serve more than 2 years was Bob Gates, and he
7 left in 2011.

8 So when you have a Joint Staff that has continuity and
9 a civilian side that manifestly lacks continuity, I think
10 that is one of the areas where we can try to move to shore
11 up civilian control of the military. So I guess my
12 question is, are your bags unpacked, and are you prepared
13 to move your loyalties from the Falcons and the Braves to
14 the Nationals and the Washington Football Team? We want
15 you to stay a while, Mr. Austin, if you are confirmed.

16 Mr. Austin: You can absolutely count on me staying a
17 while if I am confirmed, Senator. And by the way, my wife
18 is a native of this area, of D.C. So it did not -- I mean,
19 my bags are already unpacked. But to the point that you
20 are making, I am absolutely committed to making sure that
21 we are doing the right things for the long haul.

22 Senator King: I appreciate that. To change the
23 subject somewhat, in 2018 you gave an interview where you
24 discussed the importance of coalitions as being one of the
25 key elements of modern conflict. And Churchill once said

1 the only thing worse than fighting with allies is fighting
2 without allies. Can you expand a bit on your views about
3 coalitions and how and what we need to do to shore up our
4 relationships with our allies?

5 Mr. Austin: I truly believe, and I believe this in my
6 heart, that we perform better when we are operating as a
7 part of a team. And throughout in all of the operations
8 that I participated in that are major operations in Iraq
9 and Afghanistan and the counter-ISIS campaign and so many
10 other things, our allies brought valuable capability and
11 capacity to the fight.

12 And I truly believe that you cannot just show up and
13 fight and be effective. I think that these relationships
14 have to be developed. You have to train, work, and live
15 together in a lot of cases in order to have an effective
16 and credible fighting force.

17 So I think that fighting as a part of a team, as part
18 of a coalition is absolutely a part of who we are,
19 something that we treasure. And if confirmed, I will look
20 forward to re-establishing some of the critical
21 partnerships and alliances that we have had and working
22 with our allies to make sure that we keep them onboard as
23 we move forward fast.

24 Senator King: Well, I think that is absolutely right.
25 The way I like to put it briefly is that you have to have

1 the relationship before the ask.

2 Mr. Austin: I absolutely agree with that, Senator.

3 Senator King: Now we are turning our attention, and
4 have been for the last several years, to the Asia-Pacific
5 and particularly to China. And I have asked a question of
6 a number of people that have appeared before this
7 committee. I would like your thoughts on what does China
8 want? What do you believe China's strategic goals are?

9 Are they looking to be the dominant world power or
10 regional hegemon, an economic power? What is their -- what
11 are their goals? Because it seems to me in order to
12 determine how we best counter or cooperate, we need to
13 understand where they are headed.

14 Mr. Austin: Yes, I think it is all of that. They are
15 already a regional hegemon, and I think their goal is to be
16 a dominant world power. And they are working across the
17 spectrum to compete with us in a number of areas, and it
18 will take a whole of government approach to push back on
19 our efforts in a credible way.

20 Not to say that we will not see things down the road
21 that are in our best interest that we can cooperate with
22 China on, but we do things that are in our best interest.
23 But certainly, some of the things that we have seen from
24 them in recent past in terms of coercive behavior in the
25 region and around the globe tend to make us believe that

1 they really want to be a dominant world power.

2 Senator King: Finally, I do not really have time for
3 a long answer, but I just want to commend to you with the
4 issue of cyber, 2 years ago this committee led the creation
5 in the National Defense Act of something called the Cyber
6 Solarium Commission, which I was honored to serve upon,
7 along with a bipartisan group from the Congress and the
8 private sector and the executive. I would commend to you
9 our report, which was released last March, talks a lot
10 about the issues we have talked about today.

11 As you know and as Senator Rounds mentioned, the area
12 of cyber is not a potential area of conflict, it is a
13 current area of conflict. And I will be sure that we get a
14 copy of the report to you, and you can take a look at it.
15 Because part of it is structure, but also part of it is
16 policy, deterrence, resilience, and I think that this is
17 something that obviously we need to attend to.

18 You have General Nakasone, who is crucial in this
19 effort, and I look forward to working with you on those
20 issues as well.

21 Thank you very much, Mr. Austin, and congratulations
22 on your testimony today.

23 Mr. Austin: Thank you, sir.

24 Senator Sullivan [Presiding]: On behalf of the
25 chairman, Senator Cramer.

1 Senator Cramer: Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

2 Thank you, General, for your decades of service and
3 your willingness to continue in this new way. And
4 congratulations to both you and your wife and your entire
5 family.

6 First of all, I want to tell you how pleased I was
7 with the very specific answer of affirming the chairman's
8 question related to your support for a nuclear triad that
9 includes the platforms of land, air, and sea as specified
10 in the chairman's favorite book, the National Defense
11 Strategy. That was very helpful to me, and I appreciate
12 that. I appreciated the conversation we had about it and
13 several other things last week as well.

14 With that specific answer to that specific question in
15 mind, I want to drill down a little bit on just one of
16 those three legs. As you know, as we talked about, Minot
17 has two of the two three legs. It is the only place in the
18 country that has two of the three legs of the triad.

19 You were asked -- of course, you did in the qualified
20 questions, the previous questions, you were asked about the
21 assessment of past Secretaries of Defense, and you said
22 this. You said, "I agree that nuclear deterrence is the
23 Department's highest-priority mission and that updating and
24 overhauling our Nation's nuclear forces is a critical
25 national security priority." Today, you specified the

1 words "triad."

2 In your advance policy question response, though, you
3 did in referencing the aging nuclear deterrent, you chose
4 the words "overhaul" and "updating," but you never used the
5 word "replace." And I do not know if that was simply an
6 error or omission or if it was strategic. But you did say,
7 "U.S. nuclear weapons have been extended far beyond their
8 original service lives."

9 And as Senator Fischer -- earlier, she quoted Admiral
10 Richard of STRATCOM, and I am going to quote him now in a
11 different quote where he said, "You cannot life extend
12 Minuteman III. It is getting past the point where it is
13 not cost effective to life extend the Minuteman III."

14 But you are going to get a lot of pressure from
15 organizations, good folks, some Members of Congress, maybe
16 some on an Armed Services Committee either here or on the
17 other side of the Capitol, to delay the ground-based
18 strategic deterrent, the replacement of Minuteman III, and
19 maybe even shrink it. Do you think that we can extend the
20 life of Minuteman III, even that means unilaterally
21 decreasing our nuclear deterrent?

22 Mr. Austin: I think I may have indicated to you
23 before that in order to really answer this question, I
24 really need to sit down with not only the STRATCOM
25 commander, but also sit down and take a look at where we

1 are in that modernization effort and what choices are being
2 proposed and the rationale for that. And I have not had
3 the ability to do that to this point, Senator Cramer. But
4 when I do, I would love to have that discussion with you.

5 Senator Cramer: Well, and I would look forward to
6 that. And on your way to INDOPACOM before you get to
7 Alaska, you could just stop in Minot. We will have a talk
8 right there if it works. But anyway -- Senator Sullivan
9 thinks the Arctic starts and ends in Alaska, and I just
10 like to remind him every now and then there is other lands
11 between here and there.

12 Anyway, I wanted to ask you about the joint
13 comprehensive plan of action that the Iran nuclear deal,
14 and there have been some questions about Iran. But under
15 the 2015 agreement, the restrictions on Iran's uranium
16 enrichment sunset are beginning in 2025, and that is
17 obviously only 4 years from now. And so I want to know, in
18 your view, are the risks of entering an agreement under the
19 same conditions that would allow Iran to significantly
20 increase its uranium enrichment only 4 years from now -- I
21 mean, what would some of the risks of that be, do you
22 think?

23 Mr. Austin: I would hope, and I think the President-
24 Elect has been clear, that the preconditions for us
25 considering to re-enter into that agreement would be that

1 Iran meet the conditions outlined in the agreement. So
2 back to -- back to where they should have been.

3 I would hope that as we enter into that agreement, we
4 could have this discussion about when things sunset and
5 also take a look at some broader things that may or may not
6 be a part of this treaty, but certainly things that I think
7 need to be addressed. And one of those things is ballistic
8 missiles.

9 Senator Cramer: Very good. Thank you. You
10 anticipated or at least you answered my next question. I
11 appreciate that.

12 Another area that you and I discussed quite a bit was
13 ISR. And of course, you would know more than a little bit
14 about that, given your background particularly at CENTCOM,
15 of course. There has been a lot of cutting of legacy
16 programs recently to help pay for more advanced programs
17 and technology in the future, and a lot of times we are
18 confronted with either/or challenges. But sometimes, we
19 have to do "all of the above" as well.

20 A lot of these cuts have been, of course, to ISR
21 programs like the RQ-4 Global Hawk and the MQ-9 Reaper
22 that, again, you depended on a lot at CENTCOM. Do you
23 think we can strategically afford to cut back ISR to places
24 like the Middle East, Africa, South America even, and to
25 some degree, even the Pacific while we save up money for

1 future missions?

2 Mr. Austin: Well, I think our -- to look at our
3 global force posture is one of the things I really want to
4 have the opportunity to do and look at our requirements
5 versus where our forces are postured. Our focus is going
6 to be, as we talked earlier, in making sure that we have
7 what we need in the Indo-Pacific.

8 But in terms of the sentinel forces that are required
9 by the CENTCOM commander, I really would like to see what
10 he thinks his requirements are, what the threats are that
11 he needs to stay abreast of, and that sort of business.
12 But most likely, there will be some requirements for those
13 types of capabilities going forward. The Air Force
14 certainly has a strong voice in this in terms of what they
15 can afford to keep on in light of the investments that they
16 are making in modernization.

17 So, again, pretty complex equation that we will have
18 to tackle, but certainly, I look forward to taking it on.

19 Senator Cramer: Thank you, General.

20 Thank you, Chairman. I am out of time, or I would
21 have asked you about the \$40 billion passthrough budget at
22 the Air Force, but we can talk about that another time.

23 Thank you.

24 Senator Sullivan: On behalf of the chairman, Senator
25 Warren.

1 Senator Warren: Thank you very much. Thank you.

2 General Austin, I very much appreciate the opportunity
3 to speak with you a few weeks ago. And as I told you when
4 we talked then, I believe we have to do a lot more to end
5 the cozy relationship between the Pentagon and the defense
6 industry, and over the years, I proposed number of legal
7 changes in this area.

8 Now since 2016, you have served on the board of
9 Raytheon Technologies and its predecessor, United
10 Technologies, which is one of the largest defense
11 contractors in the Nation. I am very pleased to hear that
12 you have pledged that you will extend your recusal from
13 matters involving Raytheon for 4 years and that you are not
14 going to seek a waiver from those recusals. Do I have that
15 right?

16 Mr. Austin: Senator, I can make the commitment to you
17 that I will extend my recusal for Raytheon. And I
18 certainly appreciated the opportunity to discuss these
19 issues with you.

20 As you are aware, what you have asked goes beyond what
21 is required by law, and I am making --

22 Senator Warren: Absolutely.

23 Mr. Austin: I am making this commitment because I
24 recognize the unique circumstances here that you have
25 highlighted. And Raytheon is one of the --

1 Senator Warren: And I -- I am sorry. Go ahead.

2 Mr. Austin: Raytheon is one of the world's largest
3 defense contractors, and I am sensitive to the appearance
4 concerns that you raise in this particular situation. And
5 with respect to the issue of seeking a waiver, I do not
6 expect to do that or to need one. But if such an
7 unanticipated circumstance were to arise, I would consider
8 available alternatives to a waiver before seeking one and
9 would consult very carefully with agency ethics officials.

10 Senator Warren: Okay.

11 Mr. Austin: And if I am privileged enough to be
12 confirmed, I can pledge to you that I will be mindful not
13 only of the legal requirements that govern my conduct, but
14 also of the appearances to ensure that the public has no
15 reason to question my impartiality. And I will consult
16 with the DOD career ethics officials on these issues and
17 will require everyone that serves with me to ensure that
18 public service is and will remain a public trust.

19 Senator Warren: Well, I very much appreciate that.
20 And if I can, let me just ask one more aspect of this. You
21 know, I have also called for new laws to prevent
22 contractors from hiring senior Government officials who
23 leave Federal service for a period of years. Again, to
24 help eliminate the appearance of trading on Government
25 service to help improve -- the idea is to try to help

1 improve public trust in our leaders.

2 So let me ask you about that. After you leave, are
3 you willing to make any commitments on that?

4 Mr. Austin: Well, I have -- I do not intend to seek
5 employment as a lobbyist or sit on the board of a defense
6 contractor like Raytheon after my service. Quite frankly,
7 I will be too old to sit on a board of a defense contractor
8 after my service. I have -- I have no intent to be a
9 lobbyist as well.

10 Senator Warren: All right. Well, I just want you to
11 know I really do appreciate that, General. Going above and
12 beyond what Federal law requires, as you are doing here,
13 sends a powerful message that you are working on behalf of
14 the American people and no one else.

15 Now I want to try to focus, if I can, on defense
16 spending. But before I do, I just want to say a very quick
17 word about military housing.

18 Two years ago, this committee heard horror stories
19 from military families about mold, termites, lead paint,
20 other terrible conditions at military houses managed by
21 private, for-profit companies. The military has a
22 responsibility to oversee these contracts, and this
23 committee has some sweeping reforms increasing oversight
24 powers, but I am still hearing from families who say that
25 their situation is not substantially improving.

1 So, General Austin, can I ask for your public
2 commitment on two things? First, to respond to my request
3 for information about what is going on and, second, to
4 pledge that you are going to make fixing this problem a
5 priority.

6 Mr. Austin: I absolutely will respond to your request
7 for information, if confirmed. And this has been a
8 priority of mine and will always be a priority of mine. So
9 I look forward to working with the services on this issue.
10 I think, as I said earlier, in some cases, we have broken
11 trust with some of our family members.

12 Senator Warren: Yes. So thank you very much. I am
13 going to hold you to that commitment. I really appreciate
14 it, General.

15 A few weeks ago, Congress passed the annual defense
16 authorization appropriations bill that allocated over \$740
17 billion to the Department of Defense. Now that is more
18 than President Reagan spent during the height of the Cold
19 War. It is more than the Federal Government spends on the
20 rest of the discretionary budget combined.

21 In fact, it is more than the next 10 nations combined
22 spend on defense, and most of those countries are our
23 allies. The money that Congress appropriated a few weeks
24 ago also comes on top of what we spent on two decades of
25 endless wars in the Middle East that cost roughly \$6.4

1 trillion and killed more than 7,000 American service
2 members and did very little to make America safer.

3 Now, General Austin, you have been nominated to lead
4 the Defense Department. So I am not expecting you to start
5 out your job by turning down the money that Congress just
6 gave you, but I want to ask you a different question. Do
7 you agree that protecting our Nation is not just about how
8 much money our Nation spends on defense, but also about how
9 we spend it and what specific challenges we focus on?

10 Mr. Austin: I do. My view, as the Secretary of
11 Defense, job one for me is the defense of this country, and
12 we are going to do what it takes to make sure that we are
13 successful at that. As we talked earlier, our strategy --
14 our resources ought to match our strategy, and our strategy
15 ought to match our policy. And so, again, I think I have a
16 requirement to be a good steward of our resources, but you
17 can count on me always asking for what we need to
18 accomplish the strategy that has been laid out for us.

19 Senator Warren: Well, I appreciate the approach that
20 looks at how we are spending that money and exactly what
21 challenges we are focusing our money on.

22 I see that I am out of time. So I am not going to get
23 to ask you about the importance of investing in our
24 diplomatic corps and making sure that we have adequate
25 funding for the State Department in order to help you in

1 the defense of our Nation. I promise, though, I will send
2 you some questions for the record about that.

3 Thank you very much.

4 Mr. Austin: That is an easy answer for me, Senator.
5 I think it is absolutely important that the State
6 Department be resourced adequately.

7 Senator Warren: Good. That is what I like to hear.
8 Thank you, General.

9 Chairman Inhofe [Presiding]: Thank you, Senator
10 Warren.

11 And now via Webex, Senator Scott.

12 Senator Scott: Hi, thanks. Chairman, can you hear me
13 all right?

14 Chairman Inhofe: Loud and clear.

15 Senator Scott: Okay. And thank you, Chairman, for
16 holding this meeting.

17 First off, I want to thank General Austin for all of
18 his hard work. We had the opportunity to work together
19 when he was at CENTCOM, and I just want to thank the
20 general for his distinguished service as a soldier and
21 commander and just what a great job he did in the military.
22 So I am very appreciative.

23 We had the opportunity to talk the other day, and so
24 if you could talk a little bit about how if you look at the
25 people in the military just have not spent a whole bunch of

1 time dealing with the risk of Communist China and how you
2 will get up to speed. Because we actually do not have the
3 same experience in dealing with Communist China as we do
4 with people in the -- dealing with the Middle East.

5 So, General Austin, can you talk a little bit about
6 how you will get up to speed and how important you think it
7 is to get up to speed on the risk of Communist China?

8 Mr. Austin: Well, I think it is absolutely important.
9 As I outlined in my opening statement, Senator Scott, I
10 think China is our most challenging -- our most significant
11 challenge going forward. So you can expect that I will
12 continue to focus the resources of the Department on this
13 issue to make sure that we are prepared to meet any
14 challenge and that we continue to present a credible
15 deterrent to China or any other aggressor who would want to
16 take us on and convince them that that would be a really
17 bad idea.

18 The issue of China, though, is very complex, and I
19 fully recognize that while I have the military component of
20 this problem set, it is a whole of government approach
21 because China looks to compete with us along a spectrum of
22 activities, you know, economic and IT and cyber and space
23 and other domains. So we will have the right experts. We
24 will have the right capabilities and plans and operational
25 concepts that are required to make sure that we are

1 effective in our efforts to deter China and any other
2 aggressor.

3 Senator Scott: Thank you, General Austin.

4 So you, in your military career, you did a great job
5 of building teams. From the people I have heard, including
6 Senator Sullivan, you built a great team to get the results
7 you wanted. And in this job, in this role, you have to do
8 the exact same thing. So how are you going to be able to
9 vet the people that will be working with you to make sure
10 that they share your view on the importance of holding
11 Communist China accountable and actually make sure we are a
12 great deterrent to their ambition to dominate at a minimum
13 the Indo-Pacific region?

14 Mr. Austin: Well, certainly, I will issue the -- I
15 will make sure that I issue the appropriate guidance to
16 focus the Department's efforts on this issue. We will make
17 sure that the right processes and procedures are in place
18 to review our efforts and to coordinate our efforts to make
19 sure that we are operating as a joint force.

20 And you mentioned teams. And part of the team effort
21 here is obviously and certainly with our allies. I think
22 it is really important to make sure that we continue to
23 reach out to our allies, we build the capacity necessary to
24 be effective against China. And those allies include --
25 certainly include the people in the region, but they also

1 include allies around the rest of the globe.

2 So I will issue the right guidance. We will have the
3 right policies in place and the right mechanisms to make
4 sure that we are operating as a joint force and that we are
5 focused appropriately and acquiring the right technologies
6 to make sure that we are relevant going forward.

7 Senator Scott: Do you believe that with the Biden
8 administration, you will have the opportunity to have
9 influence on the people that will be part of your team
10 internally to make sure that they share your view on the
11 importance of holding Communist China accountable?

12 Mr. Austin: I absolutely believe that, Senator Scott.

13 Senator Scott: Okay. And one thing that Senator
14 Sullivan brought up to me when I spoke to him yesterday
15 about you was the fact that with your military background,
16 you will be one of the few individuals in the Biden
17 administration that will have the military background. Do
18 you believe you will have the ability to influence their --
19 influence and convince them of the importance of having a
20 strong military to be able to be a great deterrent and a
21 great promoter of world peace?

22 Mr. Austin: I do, Senator Scott. I also believe that
23 I have a great relationship with the President-Elect, and I
24 certainly would like to be able to express my views to him
25 as frequently as necessary.

1 Senator Scott: One of the issues we are dealing with
2 is ambiguity with regard to Taiwan. I think a lot of us
3 believe that Taiwan is worth making sure that we can
4 continue -- help them continue as a democracy and as an
5 entity independent of Communist China. Well, how -- I
6 personally believe we have got to quit being ambiguous, and
7 we have got let Communist China know the importance of
8 Taiwan to us, and how would you do that to make sure that
9 we are not sitting here down the road having to make a
10 decision that Communist China has decided to invade Taiwan?

11 Mr. Austin: Well, certainly, our efforts will be to
12 ensure that we do everything to make sure that China does
13 not take that decision. But our support to Taiwan has been
14 rock solid over the years, and it has been bipartisan
15 support, and I would certainly want to thank this committee
16 for their support and their willingness to work together on
17 this issue.

18 We have been strong in our commitments, and certainly,
19 if I am confirmed as Secretary of Defense, I will make sure
20 that we are living up to our commitments to support
21 Taiwan's ability to defend itself.

22 Senator Scott: Thank you, General Austin.

23 Thank you, Chairman.

24 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Scott.

25 Senator Manchin?

1 Senator Manchin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 And thank you, General. Appreciate very much your
3 service and your family's dedication and commitment to our
4 country.

5 Sir, the 7-year cooling-off period, you have 5 years
6 you have been in the private sector. What do you think
7 could be accomplished in 2 more years? What are we missing
8 there? I mean, I think that you segued pretty well into
9 the private sector and understand the balance there.

10 Mr. Austin: Well, certainly, I will be 2 years older,
11 but certainly, I do not think I will be -- I will have any
12 more commitment --

13 Senator Manchin: And change.

14 Mr. Austin: -- to serving as a civilian than I have
15 now.

16 Senator Manchin: Just from history, people know that
17 it used to be 10 years. Then we changed it to 7 years. We
18 should be looking at the quality of the person at the time
19 we need them.

20 Mr. Austin: Senator Manchin, I absolutely agree. It
21 is about what is in the mind and the heart of the person
22 that is being asked to serve, and I certainly agree with
23 you on that.

24 Senator Manchin: The strength of our military and the
25 admiration the whole world has for it is because of the

1 separation and led by the private sector, and have the
2 knowledge you have and being able to come from the private
3 sector now, I think it is going to be a great asset.

4 There are other people in that cooling-off period down
5 the chain. Do you see any need to have any waivers for
6 those? Because I think it is a much smaller waiver. Most
7 of it is 180 days. People do not understand that either.
8 It is a very short period of time, but yet the person that
9 we need to lead it.

10 Mr. Austin: We have not yet completely fleshed out
11 who would be serving in key positions. But if there is
12 talent there that is a China expert or something else that
13 we really need, I think it is important to -- to kind of
14 weigh that out --

15 Senator Manchin: To have the flexibility.

16 Mr. Austin: -- and make sure that we are focused on
17 the right thing.

18 Senator Manchin: Well, I know you will get the right
19 people. A couple things. The people have been asking me
20 ever since I just came in today about tomorrow's security.
21 Right now, there has been 12 Guardsmen that have been
22 relieved from the detail, and you talked about an
23 experience you had in your earlier life in the military.

24 What do you see? I mean, it is a concern that I have
25 now more so than ever before, and more people, we never

1 realized it. But now we are seeing that all the conspiracy
2 theories and all the different people are on the dark web,
3 or wherever they are, are being recruited that have
4 military experience. What can we do, and how should we
5 approach this?

6 Mr. Austin: Well, I think we can do a better job of
7 screening our -- you know, the folks that we bring in, the
8 people that we bring in. I also think we need to do a
9 better job of once we have people onboard, that we are
10 paying attention to them, that we are creating the right
11 kind of environment for them to live in, and that they are
12 embracing the values that we think are important in the
13 military and the values that are important for this
14 country.

15 And I think this is a thing that we have to work at
16 day in and day out. And so --

17 Senator Manchin: Knowing the presence of what we have
18 and what we are dealing with and what happened last week,
19 how do you feel about the security we have for tomorrow?

20 Mr. Austin: I do not know the specifics or the moving
21 parts. The Secret Service is, I think, in charge of the
22 overall effort. I think I have every reason to believe
23 that they will do a very credible job and provide for our
24 security.

25 I have confidence in our Guard. Again, the fact that

1 we are screening people and making sure that we do not have
2 the wrong kinds of people in the formation I think is a
3 credit to their efforts.

4 Senator Manchin: Well, you know that all the reports,
5 and we do not have all the evidence yet and all of the --
6 but we will have that probably during this new trial we
7 have coming up that the ball was dropped at the Department
8 of Defense, that we did not get the support we needed or
9 the help we needed or the protection we needed quick
10 enough.

11 Mr. Austin: I think that is still under review,
12 Senator.

13 Senator Manchin: Yes, yes.

14 Mr. Austin: And you know --

15 Senator Manchin: I am not accusing until we see the
16 facts --

17 Mr. Austin: Yes.

18 Senator Manchin: -- but that has been the reports
19 coming out. So I know that you have a lot of work ahead of
20 you trying to build up that confidence level and the
21 morale.

22 Mr. Austin: Right.

23 Senator Manchin: If I can ask you the greatest threat
24 that we face as a country, if you were going to name one of
25 the greatest threats or the greatest challenge you think

1 you are going to have coming into this position, what would
2 it be?

3 Mr. Austin: I think there are a number of challenges
4 --

5 Senator Manchin: I know.

6 Mr. Austin: -- as we discussed before. And quite
7 frankly, the greatest challenge to our country right now,
8 Senator Manchin, is the pandemic. It has killed over
9 400,000 of our America citizens, and that is just an
10 incredible, incredible loss of life. I think we have to do
11 everything that we can to break the cycle of transmission
12 and to begin to turn this thing around. I know that the
13 President-Elect is very, very much focused on this.

14 I think DOD can add value to this effort and speed and
15 scale, and I would certainly hope -- again, if I am
16 confirmed, one of the first things I will do is take a look
17 at how we are contributing, and if there is more that we
18 can do -- and I believe that there probably will be -- that
19 we will lean into this and help this effort along.

20 You know, in terms of other challenges, we have talked
21 about China, we have talked about Russia, we have talked
22 about --

23 Senator Manchin: The pandemic is number one, though,
24 you think from your standpoint?

25 Mr. Austin: China is the most concerning competitor

1 that we are facing.

2 Senator Manchin: Let me ask you this about finances.
3 John McCain, the late John McCain, my dear friend, and we
4 all knew John pretty well. If you worked with John, you
5 knew John pretty well. He made sure of that.

6 But John and I had a bill that we always worked on,
7 auditing the Pentagon, auditing the Department of Defense.
8 It was the only agency in all of Government that was never
9 audited. But they have been doing a good job, but they are
10 still a little bit relaxed there. I just would like for
11 your commitment on that to do everything you can to make
12 sure that the finances that people know how we are
13 investing their money and what type of return we are
14 getting on that.

15 Mr. Austin: You have my commitment, Senator.

16 Senator Manchin: And let me just say this, sir. I
17 truly believe with all my heart you are the right person at
18 the right time to do this job because it is a tremendous
19 undertaking. And I think to restore the confidence back to
20 the American people that our Defense Department basically
21 is there to defend us and it is basically run by the
22 civilians, who basically who are not going to let military
23 be used against us at any time. And what we saw last
24 Wednesday was an anomaly that will never happen again.

25 Thank you, sir. I look forward to voting for you.

1 Mr. Austin: I look forward to working with you,
2 Senator, if I am confirmed. Thank you.

3 Senator Manchin: Thank you.

4 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Manchin.

5 Now via Webex, Senator Blackburn.

6 Senator Blackburn: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I
7 appreciate this and the opportunity to talk with General
8 Austin.

9 And I will say, General, I enjoyed our conversation
10 yesterday so much. Thank you very much for your time, and
11 thank you to your family for sticking with you as you go
12 through this process.

13 I will say, and we discussed this, I am one of those
14 who is not in favor of waivers. I believe that rules are
15 -- and processes are put in place over time because of
16 specific reasons. With that said, however, you and I do
17 have mutual friends, and they have all spoken to your
18 strength of character, the way that you fulfill your role,
19 the work that you did with the military, and the leadership
20 that you bring to different situations. And I thank you
21 for that.

22 I do want to go back to the topic we discussed, the
23 issue of China. And we talked about a quote that is
24 attributed to you about strategic patience, and you had
25 applied that to China. And you thought it was an

1 attribution or mentioned it was an attribution in the
2 article, but I went back and looked at this, and it was a
3 quote from an interview and, thus, later picked up by Asia
4 Today or Asia Times and other foreign policy articles and,
5 as you have heard from other members on the committee,
6 China.

7 And I think you also believe China and great power
8 competition is our greatest threat. Whether we are looking
9 at what is happening on the economic side, and I appreciate
10 you mentioned that earlier, because we discussed we do not
11 know exactly where MOFCOM ends or where their economic
12 sector ends and their military sector begins.

13 So what I would like for you to do is spend a minute
14 and talk about why you cannot use strategic patience with
15 China and why it is an imperative that we address the
16 economic and the military side of that China problem coin,
17 if you will, and how your budget priorities are going to
18 reflect the desire to deal with China, to work with Taiwan,
19 to work with Hong Kong? So if you would take a minute and
20 just address that for us.

21 Mr. Austin: I think over the last two decades,
22 Senator, as we have been focused on -- necessarily focused
23 on issues in the Middle East, we have seen China modernize
24 its military. We have seen its -- we have seen it employ
25 aggressive, in some cases coercive behavior against our

1 allies in the region. We have seen it do a number of
2 things that tend to make us believe that China really wants
3 to be the preeminent power in the world in the not-too-
4 distant future.

5 I think, again, China looks to compete with us against
6 -- looks to compete with us in a number of areas across a
7 spectrum that includes, as you pointed out, economics,
8 cyber, competition in the domain of space. So China,
9 because of its desires, because of its worldview, is
10 clearly a competitor that we have to make sure that we
11 begin to check their aggression.

12 It will require a whole of government effort to do
13 that. The Department of Defense's piece in this is to make
14 sure that we are presenting a credible deterrent to China
15 so that it will think twice before it decides to take on
16 the United States of America, China or any other aggressor.

17 And that requires investment in a number of areas. We
18 have talked about this a bit before.

19 Senator Blackburn: Yes.

20 Mr. Austin: In modernization, things like AI and
21 space-based platforms and directed energy and just a number
22 of things. If we are called upon to conduct operations
23 against a near peer such as China or Russia, it is a
24 different type of engagement, and we need different
25 capabilities. We need the operational concepts that can

1 employ those capabilities. And again, as I said earlier,
2 we will be required to understand what is going on on the
3 battlefield much better, much faster, be able to decide
4 very -- a lot quicker, and then be able to act a lot
5 quicker.

6 Senator Blackburn: Well, I appreciate that, and I
7 think it is important for the record to reflect that you do
8 not view dealing with China as a strategic patience. It is
9 a different approach than we have had with ISIS.

10 Let me move on. We also talked a little bit about
11 workforce and utilization of the Guard. As we look at some
12 of the skill sets that are necessary moving into 5G
13 deployment, a utilization of artificial intelligence,
14 building out ISR, and some of those areas. So for the
15 record, make a comment about Guard recruitment, retention,
16 and how you would interface the Guard with the active duty
17 men and women.

18 Mr. Austin: Well, we certainly have great talent in
19 our Guardsmen and that we have seen that on display
20 throughout these years of conflict that we have been in.
21 Our Guard has performed very, very well.

22 Many of our Guardsmen have skills that you do not
23 typically find in a normal unit or a normal organization,
24 and so I think in a lot of cases, we can do a better job of
25 leveraging those skills, those unique skill sets to help

1 our efforts in things like IT and other things.

2 Senator Blackburn: Well, thank you for that. We
3 appreciate your service. We appreciate your time today.

4 And Mr. Chairman, thank you for the hearing. I yield
5 back.

6 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Blackburn.

7 Now via Webex, Senator Peters.

8 Senator Peters: Well, thank you. Thank you, Mr.
9 Chairman.

10 And General Austin, I want to say thank you. Thank
11 you for your service over many, many years to this country,
12 and thank you for your willingness to take on this job.
13 Clearly, we are in an incredibly difficult time in our
14 history, and we are facing significant challenges, and your
15 willingness to serve your country once again is
16 commendable. So, thank you.

17 I want to pick up briefly on some comments made by my
18 colleague Senator Heinrich, and I think although you
19 answered his question, I think it is important for you to
20 know that there are many of us on this committee that are
21 very concerned about PFAS contamination in military sites
22 across the country. Clearly, this is a bigger problem than
23 just military sites. We have got PFAS sites throughout the
24 country.

25 Michigan has been particularly hard hit with sites

1 containing this very toxic chemical. In fact, I think of
2 the 700 sites identified around the country, roughly 200 of
3 them are in Michigan, although we think the reason that
4 number is so high is just because we have been looking for
5 it more than other States. It is likely to continue.

6 But we do have military sites that have been impacted,
7 and one in particular in Michigan, which is the former
8 Wurtsmith Air Force Base in Oscoda. The folks in Oscoda
9 and that area have been dealing with this contamination for
10 many years. They are, and rightly so, incredibly
11 frustrated by the slowness from the Air Force and others to
12 deal with it.

13 We have started to see some pick-up in activity in
14 clean-up, but they have waited too long. And I know you
15 made a commitment to Senator Heinrich to expedite this, but
16 I want you to know that this is a major issue for me, for
17 folks in Michigan, folks around Wurtsmith Air Force Base,
18 as well as other military sites across the country. I am
19 sure many of my other colleagues would join in.

20 And so I hope that you are, indeed, committed to
21 making sure we do right by these communities that have
22 hosted these bases for years and are now suffering the
23 consequences. So I do not know if you want to add anything
24 to what your response was to Senator Heinrich, but please
25 know this is a serious issue for us across the country.

1 Mr. Austin: No, I am committed, Senator. I think, as
2 I said earlier, that the health and welfare of our military
3 members, our families, our DOD civilians, and our
4 communities is very, very important. And again, Secretary
5 Esper stood up a PFAS task force. I will check in with
6 them and make sure that I expedite their work if at all
7 possible.

8 And certainly, I look forward to working with my EPA
9 counterpart on this issue. I think it is very, very
10 important to mitigate the effects of these contaminants as
11 soon as we can. You can look for us to stay committed to
12 that.

13 Senator Peters: I appreciate that, General. Thank
14 you so much.

15 You mentioned it in a number of questions about the
16 changing nature of warfare, and we are on the cusp of major
17 changes as a result of technology. You alluded to some in
18 the last answer, whether it is AI, automation, directed
19 weapons. We just know that we are in a technological
20 revolution that will change the way we live dramatically.
21 And when that happens, that also changes the face of
22 warfare in dramatic ways.

23 And it is not just the complexity of our tools, but as
24 you mentioned, it is the strategic and operational
25 environment as well. And so it is going to require some

1 really -- some creative thinking outside of normal policies
2 in how we prepare for this change. And I think a lot of
3 that requires changing some of the culture, particularly
4 when you have a large bureaucratic organization like the
5 Department of Defense. That is no different than any other
6 large bureaucratic organization. It is sometimes difficult
7 to get out of the established mindsets and understand that
8 things are changing rapidly.

9 And so guidance from the top is incredibly important.
10 That means in my mind -- and love to have your thoughts.
11 That means placing a premium on digital skills by expanding
12 eligibility for billets in the Joint Artificial
13 Intelligence Center, for example, Defense Innovation Unit
14 and their service-level equivalents both inside as well as
15 outside the Department.

16 So, General, if you can give me a sense of how do you
17 assess the ability, for example, of defense innovation
18 offices to develop systems that are going to be able to
19 enhance both our performance and our effectiveness. And as
20 you are thinking of this and answering this question, try
21 to mention in particular how this will be helpful as we
22 start operating perhaps more below the threshold of armed
23 conflict, which may likely be an emerging pattern that we
24 have to deal with more often than we would like.

25 Mr. Austin: Yes. So I think it is really important

1 that we have the ability to develop the kinds of
2 capabilities that you just described, Senator. You asked
3 specifically about the people that we have that are
4 dedicated to and working on these issues and whether or not
5 it is we are managing them the right way. Something that I
6 will have to look at.

7 I will have to go in and talk to the leadership about
8 what their needs are and how we can improve our efforts
9 right now. And I look forward to that conversation, but I
10 would not want to speculate on that issue right now.

11 But I really believe that what you just said is
12 absolutely important. We have got to be able to develop
13 the ability to move things with the appropriate speed and
14 focus that will enable us to be relevant going forward.

15 Senator Peters: And I think part of that speed -- and
16 there have been several questions related to the
17 procurement process -- is a lot of this innovation in the
18 past would take place within the Department of Defense.
19 Now we are seeing a lot of this innovation in commercial
20 markets, in the commercial sector. But as you integrate
21 that and having an era of centers or innovation centers
22 that work with those commercial centers, I think they are
23 incredibly important.

24 And I am happy to say in Michigan, we have our Ground
25 Vehicle Systems Center that takes advantage of the auto

1 industry and some of the developments we are seeing in
2 automation. Would you commit to continuing to invest in
3 those kinds of programs that work in partnership with
4 advanced innovation in the commercial sector?

5 Mr. Austin: I think automation is really important to
6 us. You have heard a number of leaders talk about that,
7 and I think we are going to -- that will be an area of
8 focus for us going forward.

9 Senator Peters: Well, I appreciate it, General.
10 Thank you.

11 I yield back.

12 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Peters.

13 Via Webex, Senator Hawley.

14 Senator Hawley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 Thank you, General, for being here, and
16 congratulations on your nomination. It is always nice to
17 see a graduate of Webster University in St. Louis before
18 the committee. So congratulations on that as well.

19 Let me come back to something you said at the very
20 beginning of your testimony, during your statement at the
21 beginning. You said that China is a pacing threat, "a
22 pacing threat." I just want to be clear. Are there other
23 pacing threats, and what would they be?

24 Mr. Austin: China is the most significant competitor
25 that we are focused on. It is the pacing threat.

1 Senator Hawley: Thank you for that. That is a
2 helpful clarification.

3 On that same point, you are going to have the
4 opportunity here to oversee the next National Defense
5 Strategy. You have said, and other committee members have
6 quoted this today, you have talked about the competition,
7 strategic competition with China and Russia. You have also
8 said today, though, several times, including to me just now
9 that you think that China is "the pacing threat" or China
10 is the top priority. So can you commit to us that as you
11 oversee the next NDS that China will be unequivocally
12 identified as the top challenge, threat, competitor of the
13 United States?

14 Mr. Austin: Yes. Clearly, the strategy will be
15 arrayed against the threat, and China is -- presents the
16 most significant threat going forward because China is
17 ascending. Russia is also a threat, but it is in decline.
18 It can still do a great deal of damage, as we have seen
19 here in recent days, in an area -- and it is a country that
20 we have to remain -- maintain some degree of focus on. But
21 China is the pacing threat.

22 Senator Hawley: Very good. And you would expect --
23 just to press my point here, but you would expect to see
24 that identified -- China, that is, identified as the pacing
25 threat in the next National Defense Strategy? In other

1 words, you do not see any reason why that would not be the
2 case? Is that correct?

3 Mr. Austin: That follows. That makes sense, Senator
4 Hawley, I think. But again, I certainly do not want to try
5 to write the strategy here. We want to make sure we go
6 through the process of arraying the threats and identifying
7 what capabilities we are going to place against them. But
8 it certainly follows it is the pacing issue, the pacing
9 threat currently, and I fully expect that it will remain so
10 going forward.

11 Senator Hawley: Good. Well, I am pressing you on it
12 only because I think there has been some confusion with the
13 last National Defense Strategy, the way it has been
14 interpreted in some quarters to put China and Russia on a
15 plane. And what you just said just a second ago I think is
16 very encouraging, that China is the pacing threat.

17 Russia, of course, is a threat. There is no doubt
18 about that. But to your words, it is in decline. And of
19 course, we have limited resources and capacities, and we
20 are going to have to make sure that those limited resources
21 and capacities are deployed corresponding to the relevant
22 threat. So I am encouraged by what you said. I am going
23 to hold you to that.

24 Let me shift to Taiwan, which is obviously closely
25 related. I would like to follow up on something Senator

1 Scott asked you about.

2 Under the Taiwan Relations Act, the United States has
3 committed to maintaining the capacity to resist any resort
4 to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize
5 the security of the people of Taiwan. Given our
6 obligations under that statute, General, do you agree that
7 DOD should maintain the ability to deter a Chinese fait
8 accompli when it comes to Taiwan?

9 Mr. Austin: Senator, you came in broken on that last
10 piece there. If I could ask you to repeat the end of that,
11 please?

12 Senator Hawley: Yes. When it comes to Taiwan,
13 General, do you agree that the Department of Defense should
14 clearly prioritize defeating a fait accompli scenario in
15 Taiwan on the part of China, the attempt to invade, their
16 pressure that would put us in a fait accompli scenario.
17 Should that be our top priority?

18 Mr. Austin: Well, certainly, I do not want to go down
19 the road of getting into hypotheticals about what we would
20 do if certain things happened. I would just say that my
21 job as the Secretary of Defense, if confirmed, is to
22 present credible options to the President to ensure that we
23 can protect our interests and defend ourselves.

24 And you know, one of our interests is to make sure
25 that Taiwan -- and a commitment is to make sure that Taiwan

1 has the ability to defend itself. And so we will stay
2 committed to that going forward.

3 Senator Hawley: Yes, and I certainly appreciate the
4 fact that you cannot anticipate all threats going forward.
5 However, we do have to plan. And to go back to points you
6 have made about husbanding our scarce resources, making
7 sure that we are using them well, we have got to identify
8 the scenarios that we are prioritizing to plan for.

9 And so I just want to say, ask you one more time, with
10 regard to the fait accompli scenario in Taiwan, which is
11 identified, of course, in the current -- the 2018 National
12 Defense Strategy, is that a scenario you think we ought to
13 prioritize in our planning purposes in order to deter
14 China?

15 Mr. Austin: Again, we are committed, we have been
16 committed to the support of Taiwan throughout. And again,
17 it has been bipartisan support. We will remain committed
18 to supporting Taiwan, and so we will have the right options
19 available to protect our interest and to defend ourselves.

20 Senator Hawley: Let me shift to Afghanistan here
21 briefly, General, in the time I have got remaining. If the
22 Taliban violates its part of the peace agreement, there is
23 going to be significant pressure on the President-Elect to
24 send thousands of troops back into Afghanistan and
25 perpetuate the cycle that we have seen there.

1 How do you think we should respond if the Taliban
2 violates our peace agreement so that we can achieve our
3 counterterrorism objectives without increasing the number
4 of troops that we have there in the region?

5 Mr. Austin: Senator, you know that we are currently
6 operating as a part of a coalition effort there in
7 Afghanistan. And what I have heard General Milley and
8 General Miller say publicly is that they believe they have
9 adequate resources to accomplish the objectives that they
10 are assigned currently.

11 And so, if I am confirmed, as I go in, I would like to
12 be able to assess the situation myself and then make my
13 recommendations to the President in terms of what is
14 required and what is not required.

15 Senator Hawley: I see my time has expired. Thank you
16 again, General.

17 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Hawley.

19 And finally, we now have, via Webex, Senator
20 Duckworth.

21 Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 I spoke in this committee last week about my concerns
23 with making exceptions to allow any person to serve as
24 Secretary of Defense less than 7 years after leaving
25 regular military service. Mr. Austin, you and I spoke

1 about this issue on our recent call as well. I want to
2 reiterate that my concerns are the same now as they were
3 when we considered Secretary Mattis' nomination 4 years
4 ago.

5 My vote against a waiver that would allow you to serve
6 as Secretary of Defense has everything to do with restoring
7 the bedrock principle of civilian control of the military
8 and nothing to do with you, your qualifications, or your
9 character. Last week, I pledged to my colleagues that if
10 they choose to pass an exception to the statute, I will
11 consider your nomination fairly and on its merits. Mr.
12 Austin, I make that same promise to you today.

13 Based on our call last week, in fact, I feel we are
14 aligned in our thoughts on a number of the most urgent
15 national security issues facing our country. I am pleased
16 to get the chance now to follow up on a few of those
17 challenges that I believe the DOD is facing that concerns
18 me the most.

19 First, I have raised alarms before about President
20 Trump's total disregard for good order and discipline.
21 Over the last 4 years, he has valorized ruthless killing
22 and pardoned war criminals like convicted former SEAL Eddie
23 Gallagher. He directly undermined leaders like former
24 Naval Special Warfare Commander Admiral Green, who
25 attempted to hold service members accountable when they

1 violated their oaths and failed to uphold good order and
2 discipline.

3 And then some communities, like the SEAL community,
4 were already struggling with service members drifting from
5 their core values likely due to the stress of 19 years of
6 war and deployments. President Trump's rhetoric has
7 damaged attempts to restore discipline in our Department of
8 Defense. Now in the fallout of violent insurrection at the
9 Capitol on January 6th, we are starting to learn the depth
10 of the problem in our military services.

11 Veterans, active duty troops, members of the National
12 Guard have already been found to have participated in an
13 actual attack on elected leaders and our constitutional
14 process in direct violation of their oaths of office. We
15 have seen significant reporting on the ways that extremist
16 groups specifically target military members and veterans,
17 and it is likely that we will discover more in the coming
18 weeks.

19 Mr. Austin, it is clear that we are at a crisis point.
20 We need strong leadership to root out extremists in the
21 military and reaffirm the core values that have defined
22 military service. If confirmed, what steps would you take
23 to assert your leadership, set the example for the service
24 chiefs, and reinstate good order and discipline?

25 Mr. Austin: Well, the activity that we have seen

1 recently in terms of potential racist or extremist behavior
2 within our ranks is, in my view, absolutely unacceptable.
3 And I think you have heard the chiefs, service chiefs and
4 the Chairman recently speak to that as well.

5 I will work with the leaders of the various
6 departments to make sure that it is absolutely clear to
7 everyone in the Department, military or civilian, that this
8 is behavior that does not -- does not fit our values, does
9 not comport with our values. And so I will want the
10 leaders of all of the services and all the departments to
11 make sure that they are doing the right things to set the
12 right example and to create the right climate that
13 discourages and eliminates that type of behavior.

14 And this is not something that we can be passive on.
15 This is something I think we have to be active on, and we
16 have to lean into it and make sure that we are doing the
17 right things to create the right climates.

18 Senator Duckworth: And there needs to be consequences
19 for bad actors as well?

20 Mr. Austin: Certainly, if someone is accused and an
21 investigation determines that that person is guilty of that
22 type of behavior, then we will take the appropriate
23 actions.

24 Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

25 Mr. Austin, you oversaw one of our military's largest

1 and most complex logistics operations in Iraq. So you
2 understand better than most, almost anyone else going
3 forward we cannot rely on the same logistics system and
4 practices that we used in Iraq and Afghanistan as we look
5 to future potential areas of conflict.

6 Great power competition demands that we innovate our
7 approach to logistics, and so it is critical that we invest
8 in TRANSCOM and ensure that logistics-related planning
9 factors are central to our op plans and our major
10 exercises. If confirmed, what initiatives will you
11 prioritize to ensure that confrontation command and the
12 rest of the DOD's logistics enterprise is modernized and
13 resourced to support global operations and to withstand
14 threats from peer competitors, especially when we are
15 talking about in contested environments?

16 Mr. Austin: I think, Senator, you are absolutely
17 correct. Our logistics capabilities really enable us to do
18 the great work that we have done around the globe. I think
19 we have to continue to invest in the right things. I look
20 forward to having a conversation with our senior logistics
21 leaders in all of the branches and also in the Department
22 as well.

23 And I want to invest in those types of things that can
24 provide us innovative approaches to delivering the types of
25 logistics that we will need to sustain ourselves. I agree

1 with you that we will not be able to do business as we have
2 always done it going forward, as we are looking to compete
3 with a near-peer competitor.

4 Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

5 The DOD is also well positioned to lead the way on
6 developing the kind of clean energy technology that can
7 accelerate our fight against climate change, one of the
8 biggest national security threats of our time, and reduce
9 the military's reliance on fossil fuel, which would shorten
10 that logistics tail. If confirmed, how would you lead DOD
11 to reduce its emissions and develop the sort of
12 breakthrough energy technology that can make forward-
13 deployed troops less reliant on fuel delivery and other
14 energy-related sustainment?

15 Mr. Austin: Well, I think while we are no doubt doing
16 some things on all of our installations now to reduce our
17 energy consumption and reduce our carbon footprint, I think
18 there is more that we can do. You know, we consume a lot
19 of energy, and so I think that we can have a substantial
20 impact if we are focused on the right things.

21 You know, this affects us in a lot of ways. I think
22 that if we look at utilization on installations in other
23 capacity, utilization of electrical vehicles and reducing
24 the amount of energy that we are consuming and just a
25 number of other things, we can make a pretty substantial

1 impact on our overall effort here. And so I look forward
2 to working with the administration and my colleagues and
3 working with the Department to really improve our
4 performance thus far.

5 I will appoint a specific person on my staff to help
6 me focus on this issue and to coordinate issues within the
7 Department and within the services as well.

8 Senator Duckworth: Thank you very much. I am over
9 time, Mr. Chairman.

10 Chairman Inhofe: All right. I have been told that
11 this completes our members that were wanting to
12 participate, and we want to thank you very much, General
13 Austin, for the time you have given us, and we look forward
14 to working with you.

15 Senator Reed, did you want to make any further
16 comments?

17 Senator Reed: Mr. Chairman, no. I just want to thank
18 you for conducting this hearing and thank General Austin
19 for participating. And good luck, sir.

20 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed.

21 And when we meet again 2 days from now, I think you
22 will be the chairman, and I will be the ranking member.
23 That transition will take place very peaceably --

24 [Laughter.]

25 Chairman Inhofe: -- and I want to tell you how we

1 have enjoyed working together for a number of years, and we
2 will continue to do that.

3 Senator Reed: Mr. Chairman, it has been an honor and
4 a great pleasure working with you. And I think, with your
5 leadership, we have accomplished a great deal, and I thank
6 you.

7 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you very much.

8 General Austin, did you have any other -- any
9 questions that were not asked that you would like to
10 volunteer answers to now? I think the answer is no.

11 Mr. Austin: That is correct, Mr. Chairman. I just
12 want to thank you and the committee members for allowing me
13 the time this afternoon to engage with you, and I want to
14 thank you all also for the tremendous support that you have
15 given to our military over the years. And if confirmed, I
16 look forward to working with you and doing the same kinds
17 of things that you have done in the past.

18 Again, thanks.

19 Chairman Inhofe: That is good. Thank you very much.
20 And we are adjourned.

21 [Whereupon, at 6:37 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

22

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24

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