

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATIONS OF:
MS. MILANCY D. HARRIS;
DR. RADHA I. PLUMB;
MR. BRENDAN M. OWENS; AND
DR. LAURA D. TAYLOR-KALE

Thursday, July 28, 2022

Washington, D.C.

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

1 HEARING TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATIONS OF:
2 MS. MILANCY D. HARRIS TO BE DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF
3 DEFENSE FOR INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY;
4 DR. RADHA I. PLUMB TO BE DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
5 FOR ACQUISITION AND SUSTAINMENT;
6 MR. BRENDAN M. OWENS TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
7 FOR ENERGY, INSTALLATIONS, AND ENVIRONMENT; AND
8 DR. LAURA D. TAYLOR-KALE TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF
9 DEFENSE FOR INDUSTRIAL BASE POLICY

10
11 Thursday, July 28, 2022

12
13 U.S. Senate
14 Committee on Armed Services,
15 Washington, D.C.
16

17 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:32 a.m.,
18 in Room G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Jack
19 Reed, chairman of the committee, presiding.

20 Committee Members Present: Senators Reed [presiding],
21 Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, King, Warren,
22 Peters, Kelly, Inhofe, Wicker, Fischer, Rounds, Ernst,
23 Tillis, Sullivan, Scott, Blackburn, Hawley, and Tuberville.
24
25

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

3 Chairman Reed: Good morning. The committee meets
4 today to consider the nominations of Dr. Radha Plum to be
5 Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and
6 Sustainment, Mrs. Milancy Harris to be Deputy
7 Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security,
8 Dr. Laura Taylor-Kale to be Assistant Secretary of Defense
9 for Industrial Based Policy, and Mr. Brendan Owens to be
10 Assistant Secretary of Defense for Energy, Installations
11 and Environment.

12 On behalf of the committee, I want to thank each of
13 you for your willingness to serve in these important
14 positions. I would also like to welcome the guests and
15 family members who are present today.

16 Dr. Plum, I would like to welcome your husband, John,
17 your father, Ravi, your mother, Rama, Aunt Sheila, and
18 cousin Tara. Mrs. Harris, I would like to welcome your
19 husband, Caleb, your father, William, and your mother,
20 Robin. And Dr. Taylor-Kale, I would like to welcome your
21 family members, Julian, Rana, Isaiah, Caleb, and Jaina.
22 And I think I have got them all, but if not, I welcome
23 everyone.

24 And Mr. Owens, I welcome your wife, Wendy, daughter,
25 Harper, son, Aman, father, Francis, and mother, Kathleen.

1 We are grateful to each you for your support. Dr. Plum,
2 you were nominated to be Deputy Undersecretary of Defense
3 for Acquisition and Sustainment.

4 You bring decades of technical expertise to this
5 position, including your current role as Chief of Staff for
6 the Deputy Secretary of Defense, and in previous
7 experiences as Director of Research and Insights for Trust
8 and Safety at Google, and as a Senior Economist at the RAND
9 Corporation.

10 This position has a wide range of duties, including
11 delivering timely, cost effective capabilities to the armed
12 forces, supervising all elements of defense acquisition and
13 the defense industrial base, overseeing the modernization
14 of our nuclear forces, and serving as a principal advisor
15 to the Secretary on acquisition, sustainment, and core
16 logistics.

17 If confirmed, an urgent priority must be working to
18 speed up the acquisition process. We need a way to find --
19 a way to provide our warfighters with the equipment they
20 need, while also ensuring acquisitions remain on time and
21 on budget.

22 Although some progress and reforms have made in recent
23 years, the Defense Department's acquisition process still
24 remains on the Government Accountability Office's high risk
25 list. Similarly, the Department must improve the operation

1 and sustainment of weapons systems over their lifecycle, a
2 course that is often overlooked in the acquisition process.

3 Dr. Plum, I would like to know how you would plan to
4 address these challenges as we go forward. Mrs. Harris,
5 you are nominated to be Deputy Undersecretary of Defense
6 for Intelligence and Security. If confirmed, you will
7 serve as a principal intelligence advisor to the Secretary
8 of Defense and will oversee the defense intelligence
9 enterprise.

10 Your considerable experience in irregular warfare and
11 counterterrorism policy across the Defense Department and
12 Intelligence Community will serve you well in this role.
13 Among many challenges, you will need to ensure the security
14 and integrity of all Defense Department business and
15 Government entities and personnel.

16 Specifically, it is vital to protect our industrial
17 base from cyber theft and adverse investments by competitor
18 nations. The Defense Department's innovation strategy
19 relies on trustworthy technology and intellectual property,
20 and it is imperative for the Department to be able to
21 access critical technology that is being developed by
22 commercial and nontraditional defense companies.

23 Additionally, you will need to ensure that the defense
24 intelligence collection agencies, NRO, NSA, and NGA, devote
25 resources and management attention to the support of agile

1 joint all domain military operations and peer competitors
2 -- against peer competitors. These operations require a
3 split second targeting support, and I would like to know
4 how you would ensure their success.

5 Dr. Taylor-Kale, the Assistant Secretary of Defense
6 for Industrial Base Policy will serve as the principal
7 advisor to the Undersecretary of Defense for acquisition
8 and sustainment, and for all industrial based policies and
9 related matters. This position has a wide scope of
10 responsibility, from ensuring supply chain security,
11 guiding Department wide acquisitions and investments, to
12 coordinating small business programs.

13 I would note your considerable experience in economic
14 and business affairs in both the Commerce and State
15 Departments, as well as your record of leadership at the
16 Council on Foreign Relations. If confirmed, it would be
17 the first person to hold this office.

18 As such, there are a number of important challenges
19 you will need to address. Notably, the Department must
20 build domestic production capacity to support key
21 technology areas such as microelectronics, artificial
22 intelligence, and hypersonics.

23 These are game changing technologies that will be key
24 to maintaining our advantages over China, Russia, and other
25 adversaries, and our defense industrial base needs an

1 advocate in the Department to ensure it receives the
2 support it requires to deliver these products.

3 Further, as we have seen with greater clarity over the
4 past several years, ensuring supply chain security and
5 access to critical strategic materials such as rare earth
6 elements is fundamentally important for the Department and
7 the defense industrial base. I would like to know your
8 thoughts on how you would address these challenges.

9 Finally, Mr. Owens, you are nominated to be Assistant
10 Secretary of Defense for Energy, Installations and
11 Environment. If confirmed, you will oversee the Defense
12 Department's physical footprint and provide management of
13 military installations worldwide, as well as leadership on
14 environmental safety and occupational health programs.

15 Your strong engineering background both in and out of
16 Government, as well as your experience as an energy manager
17 at Fort Belvoir for seven years, should serve you well.
18 Among the challenges for this position is the persistent
19 threat posed by PFAS contamination at defense installations
20 around the world.

21 Cleanup and remediation efforts for these chemicals is
22 very costly and technically challenging, and we would like
23 to know what steps you would take to help implement a
24 better strategy moving forward. You will also need to
25 ensure rigorous oversight of the privatized housing

1 companies in the Defense Department's Military Housing
2 Privatization Initiative. This is an issue that this
3 committee has devoted considerable attention and effort to.

4 Relatedly, the Department will need to take steps to
5 protect and maintain mission readiness by addressing the
6 climate resiliency of military installations. I would ask
7 that you share how this process can be accelerated,
8 particularly for installations most vulnerable to climate
9 risks like wildfires, drought, and flooding.

10 Lastly, I welcome your thoughts on how the Department
11 can increase its use of distributed energy on its
12 installations using non-defense funded contracting
13 nationally mechanisms, especially in the Air Force as it
14 has lagged behind the other services.

15 Thank you again to our nominees. I look forward to
16 your testimony. And just a note, we will work
17 expeditiously to get these nominees through since we
18 anticipate and hope for a recess in the coming week.

19 So we will have an expedited timeline for questions to
20 the record. Now, let me recognize the Ranking Members
21 Senator Inhofe.

22

23

24

25

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

3 Senator Inhofe: I like the recess coming. That is
4 good. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was not going to
5 actually read my statement, but I know that the Democrats
6 are whining up a meeting right now, so I will go ahead and
7 do so.

8 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks to our witnesses for
9 being here and willing to serve the Nation. As I have said
10 many times, this is the most dangerous world that we have
11 seen in my lifetime, in my lifetime is longer than anyone
12 else in here. And so, we have had quite a few challenges
13 facing us in your areas of responsibility. The NDS
14 maintains that China is our facing threat.

15 The CCP is making historic investments to modernize
16 its military and we are falling behind because we haven't
17 been resourcing our strategy adequately, and that was
18 before we had record high inflation. We are also moving
19 too slowly and providing too few munitions to our Ukrainian
20 partners. We need a sense of urgency to make bold, smart
21 decisions at the Pentagon, and that actually starts with
22 senior civilian leadership.

23 Drs. Plum and Taylor-Kale, you have been nominated for
24 the number two acquisition position in the top industrial
25 base policy position in the Department, respectively.

1 Congress and the Pentagon work together and have made good
2 strides in acquisition reform, but the Chinese are still
3 moving faster than us.

4 Earlier this month, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of
5 the Air Force for Acquisition said that the PLA getting new
6 equipment five to six times faster than we are. And we all
7 understand, this is a problem that we have, and we will
8 continue to have, and just we understand their form of
9 Government. That they can do some things faster than we
10 can do them.

11 Mr. Owens, you are nominated to be an Assistant
12 Secretary of Defense for Energy, Installations, and
13 Environment. I am interested in hearing your thoughts on
14 the current status of the military housing privatization
15 issue. We spent a lot of time in the last few years. Ms.
16 Harris, you are nominated to serve as the number two
17 intelligence officer in the Department of Defense.

18 We must do a better job at understanding our
19 adversaries and articulating the threat they pose to the
20 American public. We still don't have a handle on how to
21 best prevent the Chinese from stealing our technology for
22 military and commercial purposes. We will be -- key
23 responsibility for yours, for when you are confirmed.

24 The Department requires strong civilian leadership.
25 We look forward to hearing each of your views in these

1 areas. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

3 And I will recognize the first Dr. Plum, then Mrs. Harris,

4 and then Dr. Taylor-Kale, and then Mr. Owens. Dr. Plum,

5 your testimony, please.

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1 STATEMENT OF RADHA PLUMB, NOMINEE TO BE DEPUTY UNDER
2 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR ACQUISITION AND SUSTAINMENT

3 Ms. Plum: Good morning, Chairman Reed, Ranking Member
4 Inhofe --

5 Chairman Reed: Could you bring the microphone as
6 close as possible?

7 Ms. Plum: Sure.

8 Chairman Reed: Some of us have hearing challenges.

9 Ms. Plum: Is that better?

10 Chairman Reed: Much better.

11 Ms. Plum: Good morning, Chairman Reed, Ranking Member
12 Inhofe, and distinguished members of the committee. Thank
13 you for your consideration of my nomination to serve as
14 Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and
15 Sustainment. I am honored by the trust and confidence that
16 President Biden and Secretary Austin have placed in their
17 support for my nomination.

18 I also wanted to thank this committee for its
19 bipartisan work, including the faithful passage of the
20 National Defense Authorization Act for over six years.
21 Before I start, I want to thank my family, my parents and
22 sister and cousin, and, of course, my husband and our two
23 sons.

24 I would also like to thank a number of mentors,
25 including the late Michael Sheehan, General Stanley

1 McChrystal, and of course, Deputy Secretary Hicks, for
2 their support and guidance throughout the years.

3 I have been privileged to work in and around military,
4 civilian, and contractor workforce of the Department of
5 Defense, and if confirmed to serve as the Deputy
6 Undersecretary of Defense for acquisition and sustainment,
7 it would be an honor to continue to support their mission
8 by enabling cost effective, streamlined processes to
9 develop and field capabilities critical to our warfighters.

10 For more than 70 years, the United States leadership
11 and democratic values have laid the foundation for peace
12 and prosperity. But we are now operating in one of the
13 most complex and rapidly evolving environments in decades,
14 one that challenges much of that foundation. It is clear
15 that the pacing challenge of our time is China, who
16 leverages its coercive authoritarian means to threaten U.S.
17 interests and democratic values around the world.

18 Added to that is the acute threat of Russia, whose
19 unprovoked attack on Ukraine has highlighted the crucial
20 role our defense industrial base plays in delivering
21 capabilities needed to both reassure our allies and defend
22 against our adversaries.

23 No doubt the U.S. can and will prevail against our
24 competitors but doing so will require dedicated focus to
25 leverage the enduring advantages we derive from our

1 democratic values and a free society. We have the finest
2 military in the world, and the creativity and confidence of
3 a thriving commercial sector that is also the envy of the
4 world.

5 If confirmed, my task will be to match warfighter
6 requirements from our military with the technologies and
7 that vibrant industrial base to ensure our military has the
8 capabilities it needs to prevail in critical missions
9 anytime, anywhere. To do this, we must establish clear
10 transition pathways for critical new technologies like
11 hypersonics, artificial intelligence, and directed
12 energies.

13 We must field solutions more rapidly. We must
14 leverage new acquisition pathways to acquire software and
15 software intensive systems to meet the needs of our
16 warfighters and invest in our defense industrial base to
17 reduce foreign dependency. We must sustain our fielded
18 weapon systems in a cost effective manner and ensure the
19 resilience of our installations and our systems to the full
20 range of biological, nuclear, chemical, and environmental
21 threats.

22 And of course, we must empower the defense acquisition
23 workforce to ensure they have the tools, authority, and
24 leadership they need. If confirmed, I will strive to
25 accomplish these critical priorities under the leadership

1 and guidance of the Secretary of Defense, Deputy Secretary
2 of Defense, and Undersecretary for Acquisition and
3 Sustainment.

4 To be successful in that task will require regular and
5 transparent dialog with Congress and, of course, this
6 committee. Again, I want to thank you for its decades of
7 bipartisan work, and I am committed to working together to
8 ensure we can deter adversaries and defend the United
9 States. In all that I do, I pledge never to lose sight of
10 that mission.

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

12 [The prepared statement of Ms. Plum follows:]

13 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Dr. Plum. Mrs.
2 Harris, please.

3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

1 STATEMENT OF MILANCY HARRIS, NOMINEE TO BE DEPUTY
2 UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY

3 Ms. Harris: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, and
4 distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to
5 appear before you this morning as President Biden's nominee
6 for Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence and
7 Security. I appreciate your consideration of my
8 nomination. I have been blessed with an incredible family
9 and community of friends who have supported me throughout
10 my career.

11 To my husband, Caleb, thank you for being my biggest
12 cheerleader and my best sounding board. To my parents,
13 Robin and Bill, and sisters, Mackenzie and Caitlin, thank
14 you for your support, instilling me with a sense of public
15 service, and expanding my worldview. I would also like to
16 thank all of the National Security professionals with whom
17 I have served throughout my career.

18 Your commitment to service, your resilience, and your
19 character inspires me every day, and I am grateful for your
20 friendship and mentorship. My journey to this hearing room
21 today began when I joined the Defense Intelligence Agency
22 as an Intelligence Analyst in 2004. From that work, I
23 learned the importance of analytic rigor, integrity, and
24 precision.

25 Through countless significant National Security

1 challenges, I saw the importance of speaking truth to power
2 and having a strong intelligence foundation for policy
3 decisions. As I later transitioned to policymaking roles,
4 that perspective was only reinforced as I became reliant on
5 integrated intelligence support to inform policy
6 recommendations and decisions.

7 If confirmed, I look forward to ensuring the defense
8 intelligence enterprise is best positioned to continue
9 providing that critical support to our senior leaders.
10 This committee has long supported our Nation's intelligence
11 community and the essential missions conducted within the
12 defense, intelligence, and security enterprises.

13 I am humbled to be nominated to serve alongside those
14 women and men, women and men who demonstrate a high
15 standard of excellence and drive innovation while
16 maintaining a clear focus on some of the Nation's most
17 critical challenges we face as a Nation.

18 Defense, intelligence, and security efforts provide
19 critical support to the Secretary's National Defense
20 Strategy and are essential to ensuring the United States
21 retains its strategic advantage today and in the future.

22 I approach my nomination with a clear focus on
23 ensuring we are best positioned to collaborate with allies
24 and partners, collect information, conduct analysis on
25 intelligence priorities, and protect our intelligence and

1 innovations. Positioning ourselves for the future also
2 means ensuring we recruit and retain a workforce that
3 reflects the diversity of our country. Our work is only as
4 strong as those professionals who work in the intelligence
5 community. Efforts to increase diversity are paramount to
6 ensuring we have the diverse perspectives and skillsets we
7 need to retain our edge.

8 As we seek to recruit these professionals to public
9 service, we need to ensure we do our best to onboard them
10 quickly, facilitate career mobility, and ensure the work
11 the intelligence community can retain this talent base.
12 This only increases the importance of the work to
13 streamline the clearance process, increase reciprocity
14 across the intelligence community, and create educational
15 and broadening opportunities.

16 If confirmed, I look forward to supporting Secretary
17 Austin, DNI Haines, and Undersecretary Moultrie on these
18 priorities, and ensuring that the defense, intelligence,
19 and security enterprise is well integrated in the national
20 intelligence enterprise.

21 I am also committed to working closely with this
22 committee and other committees of jurisdiction to provide
23 the information needed to carry out your oversight
24 responsibilities. Thank you for your time today and
25 consideration of my nomination. I look forward to your

1 questions.

2 [The prepared statement of Ms. Harris follows:]

3 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much. Dr. Laura
2 Taylor-Kale, please. And I probably pronounced the name
3 five different ways, so forgive me.

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1 STATEMENT OF LAURA TAYLOR-KALE, NOMINEE TO BE
2 ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INDUSTRIAL BASE POLICY

3 Ms. Taylor-Kale: It is great. That is fine. Good
4 morning, Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, and
5 distinguished members of the committee. I am incredibly
6 grateful for this opportunity to appear before you, and for
7 your consideration of my nomination to serve as the
8 Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy.

9 This committee deserves great credit for your insight
10 and leading the way to establish the Department's focal
11 point for industrial based policy at the Assistant
12 Secretary level. I am deeply honored and humbled by
13 President Biden's nomination to serve in this historic
14 role, and by the trust and confidence that Secretary
15 Austin, Deputy Secretary Hicks, and Undersecretary LaPlante
16 have placed in me.

17 I come from humble origins. That I sit before you
18 today is a testimony to this country's opportunities. I
19 was born and raised outside of Chicago, Illinois, by a
20 single mother who used the community college education to
21 escape poverty. I would not be here without the countless
22 teachers, friends, mentors, and family who encouraged me
23 and instilled in me the importance of hard work and
24 selfless service.

25 I would like to give a special thanks to my D.C. area

1 friends and family, especially the Dotsons, who join me
2 here today. And thank you, Chairman Reed, for personally
3 welcoming Jaina, Caleb, and Isaiah. This brings me a lot
4 of street cred in teenager world. If confirmed, my service
5 as the Assistant Secretary of Defense would be shaped by my
6 stalwart belief that our economic security is fundamentally
7 our National Security.

8 My experience in international economics and
9 development finance has reinforced my view that our open
10 democratic system and market driven rules based economy is
11 our strength, and that our resilience and innovative
12 defense industrial base powers our ability to prevail in an
13 age of strategic competition against China and other
14 competitors.

15 As you noted, Mr. Chairman, I began my career in
16 public service as a State Department Foreign Service
17 officer. I also served in Afghanistan as an economic
18 officer. I served alongside brilliant, dedicated members
19 of the Armed Forces, and I remain deeply proud of our
20 servicemen and women, and if confirmed, it would be my
21 privilege to support our Nation's warfighters wherever they
22 may be.

23 I have worked closely with manufacturers as the Deputy
24 Assistant Secretary for Manufacturing at the Department of
25 Commerce and studied changes in the industrial workforce.

1 If confirmed, my priorities will be securing the
2 health and resilience of the defense industrial base,
3 balancing our short term gaps and long term priorities by
4 focusing on these key issues, engaging industry and our
5 strategic allies as partners to mitigate supply chain
6 risks, increasing competition and supporting small business
7 and nontraditional suppliers, supporting partnerships to
8 develop the defense, industrial, and manufacturing
9 workforce, protecting the defense industrial base from
10 foreign adversary capital, increasing our domestic
11 production of critical minerals and strategic materials,
12 and working across the Defense Department, particularly
13 with the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for
14 Research and Engineering, to infuse greater innovation in
15 the defense industrial base, and move new technologies
16 through and past the valley of death.

17 Again, I am humbled and honored and profoundly
18 fortunate to be nominated for this position, for which
19 there is significant bipartisan support, on behalf of the
20 Nation that I love. I commit to you that, if confirmed, I
21 will give this position my all.

22 Further, if confirmed, today will mark the beginning
23 of a robust and meaningful dialog between us. I commit to
24 consulting regularly, clearly, robustly, and transparently
25 with this committee and its subcommittees, and with

1 Congress on the full range of issues confronting the
2 defense industrial base.

3 Ultimately, I hope that our joint efforts will ensure
4 the necessary resources for our warfighters and secure our
5 Nation's economic future. Thank you again, and I look
6 forward to your questions.

7 [The prepared statement of Ms. Taylor-Kale follows:]

8 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

Chairman Reed: Thank you, doctor. Mr. Owens, please.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

1 STATEMENT OF BRENDAN OWENS, NOMINEE TO BE ASSISTANT
2 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR ENERGY, INSTALLATIONS, AND
3 ENVIRONMENT

4 Mr. Owens: Thank you. Chairman Reed, Ranking Member
5 Inhofe, distinguished members of the committee, thank you
6 for taking the time today to consider my nomination to be
7 Assistant Secretary of Defense for Energy, Installations
8 and Environment.

9 Throughout this process, it has been clear to me how
10 seriously this committee takes its responsibility to assess
11 the qualifications of nominees for key positions within
12 DOD. I thank you for your critical role in this process.

13 The confidence President Biden, Secretary Austin, and
14 Deputy Secretary Hicks have placed in me is deeply
15 humbling. If confirmed, I will do everything I can to live
16 up to the examples of service and principled leadership
17 they have set throughout their distinguished careers.

18 By my family's standards, I am quite late to public
19 service, but I am honored to have the opportunity to become
20 part of a tradition I have always been extremely proud of.
21 My father, Bucky, retired as captain of the port in Mobile,
22 Alabama, after a distinguished 25 year career in the United
23 States Coast Guard, the example he and my mother, Cathy,
24 set for my brothers and I during their service, has had a
25 deep and lasting effect on all of us.

1 Ryan, Matt, and Terry now setting the example my
2 parents set for us with their own families. Ryan has
3 worked for the Coast Guard for almost 20 years, and Matt
4 and Terry first responders across the river in Arlington.
5 I am also proud of the dozens of other aunts, uncles, and
6 cousins who in our family have served or are serving with
7 distinction.

8 To my wife and kids, Wendy, Harper, and Eamon, I am
9 excited for the opportunity to continue our journey
10 alongside the incredible people who dedicate their lives to
11 the safety and National Security. I am grateful, if
12 confirmed, that you are willing to join me in returning to
13 a version of the life that defined the first 25 years in
14 mine.

15 I am thrilled to have the opportunity to serve the
16 people who safeguard the Nation. Growing up, we learned
17 reverence for, and deep appreciation of the sacrifices our
18 military service members and their families make when they
19 answer the call. The Defense Department's people are its
20 greatest strength, and their service and professionalism is
21 unrivaled anywhere in the world.

22 I am honored, if confirmed, to serve these
23 extraordinary people. I will do everything I can to ensure
24 their ability to decisively execute their mission, while
25 those of us serving in support of that mission safeguard

1 their well-being. For most of the Force, this starts by
2 ensuring they have safe, healthy, efficient, and resilient
3 places to live and work.

4 These places should be enhancing the health, well-
5 being, and readiness of our service members and their
6 families. If confirmed, I will put a 25 year background in
7 efficient, healthy, and resilient buildings to work, and be
8 a champion for our service members to ensure their
9 environment, homes, workplaces, and infrastructure enhance
10 their ability to complete their mission and thrive as
11 people.

12 The EI&E portfolio is broad and extends well beyond
13 installation fence lines. Defense communities provide
14 indispensable services the Department relies on to support
15 our uniformed military families.

16 So I intend, if confirmed, to put our service members
17 and their families first. I know that the relationships
18 the Department cultivates and maintains with defense
19 communities are critical components of installation
20 resilience and force readiness.

21 I admire the foresight embodied in the integrated
22 approach to capability improvement and community engagement
23 in programs like ERSA, REPI, Sentinel, and the Defense
24 Communities Infrastructure Pilot Program.

25 The DCIP pilot is one example of many of the

1 innovative programs in the EI&E portfolio that recognize
2 the interdependency of mission continuity and the defense
3 community. Our installations rely on non-DOD partners for,
4 practically speaking, all of their energy. Installation
5 resilience in the face of malign and naturally occurring
6 disruption is crucial.

7 As DOD works to implement installation level mission
8 readiness strategies like microgrids, building the grid
9 integration, energy generation and storage, its sheer size
10 also presents an opportunity to not only support its
11 community partners, but also the entire country in
12 commercializing new and scaling existing technology, with
13 an eye towards enhancing resilience, energy independence,
14 reliability, equity, and health in the U.S..

15 The DOD's success and ability to complete its mission
16 and secure the Nation is predicated on regular,
17 constructive dialog between Congress and the Department. I
18 fully understand the importance of this partnership, and if
19 confirmed, I will work with the DOD leadership to ensure
20 timely and substantive communication with you and your
21 staffs.

22 Thank you again for your consideration of my
23 nomination. I look forward to your questions today and
24 forward -- if confirmed, going forward as well.

25 [The prepared statement of Mr. Owens follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25

1 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Mr. Owens. Before we begin
2 our round of questioning, I have a series of questions that
3 are required for all nominees, and you may answer in
4 unison. Have you adhered to applicable laws and
5 regulations governing conflicts of interest?

6 [All four witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

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

10 [All four witnesses answered in the negative.]

11 Chairman Reed: Exercising our legislative and
12 oversight responsibilities makes it important that this
13 committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate
14 committees of Congress receive testimony, briefings,
15 reports, records, and other information from the Executive
16 Branch on a timely basis. Do you agree, if confirmed, to
17 appear and testify before this committee when requested?

18 [All four witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

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

25 [All four witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

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

6 [All four witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

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

10 [All four witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

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

13 [All four witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

14 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much. Dr. Plum, a lot
15 of focus is on acquiring more, you know, quantity. But we
16 also are struggling to maintain our readiness and the
17 forces and the systems we use today.

18 What opportunities exist to increase coordination and
19 communication between Department's acquisition and
20 sustaining communities to help ensure sustainment is
21 adequately considered during the acquisition process?

22 Ms. Plum: Senator, Chairman Reed, thank you. As you
23 know, the sustainment costs for a number of our major
24 programs account for the vast majority of the total cost
25 over the lifecycle of the programs.

1 I am aware that in the Department we have been moving
2 to more -- develop a more data driven approach to
3 controlling those sustainment costs, including pulling
4 together some of that data to control the cost drivers, as
5 well as integrating that cost information on the front end
6 during contract development and oversight of contract
7 execution.

8 If confirmed, my focus would be on making sure we can
9 identify, as early as possible, key issues and drivers of
10 sustainment, include that in early negotiations, as well as
11 regularly maintain oversight of those cost drivers as
12 program -- as capabilities are fielded so we can control
13 costs during the deployment and fielding of capabilities
14 over their entire lifecycle.

15 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much. Mrs. Harris, one
16 of the many, many duties you will have is modernizing the
17 security clearance process, including intelligence support
18 and oversight. How will you approach this modernization,
19 and how can you take maximum advantage of commercially
20 available digital data?

21 Ms. Harris: Mr. Chairman, thank you for the question.
22 As I am aware, security clearance reform is a major
23 priority for the Department. The Defense
24 Counterintelligence and Security Agency is focused on
25 ensuring that we can clear people in a timely fashion and

1 that we have a process that allows for us to do so in an
2 efficient manner.

3 If confirmed, I commit that I will work to ensure that
4 we are using the maximum technology solutions available to
5 ensure we can do that quickly, and that we continue to work
6 to streamline the processes and shorten the timelines to
7 maximize our cleared personnel.

8 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much. Mr. Owens, EPA
9 last month released new drinking water advisory levels for
10 four PFAS chemicals, which will have an impact on the
11 Department of Defense. In addition, the NDAAs over the
12 last few years have required reporting on PFAS conditions.
13 If confirmed, will you ensure that alternative water is
14 provided when these chemicals are detected in drinking
15 water supplies?

16 Mr. Owens: Senator, Chairman Reed, thank you for the
17 question. And I want to thank the committee for being so
18 stalwart in and focused on the issues of environmental
19 contamination and the potential health and safety
20 challenges they present.

21 Because the health and well-being of service members
22 and their families and the civilian workforce are
23 paramount, and every leader in DOD should be laser beam
24 focused on making sure that we are doing what we can in
25 response to the ability for DOD to provide for the needs of

1 the installation in the community in the presence of
2 situations that make any of the infrastructure that they
3 are relying on right now unusable. I commit to being able
4 to focus on ensuring that they have what they need.

5 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much. And of course, I
6 assume that in a simple yes, you will comply with the
7 reporting requirements within the NDAA?

8 Mr. Owens: Absolutely, yes.

9 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much. And Dr. Taylor-
10 Kale -- that is the sixth mispronunciation. Over the past
11 several years, we have come to discover that our industrial
12 base is fragile, and we need to take steps in the
13 Department of Defense, all throughout the Government. So
14 what do you believe are the most pressing issues for the
15 health of the defense industrial base, and how will you
16 address them?

17 Ms. Taylor-Kale: Thank you, Chairman Reed. Actually,
18 you correctly pronounced my name, it is Taylor-Kale. You
19 know, as you noted, that the health and resilience of our
20 defense industrial base is absolutely essential to our
21 economic security, I believe. We need to be able to deter
22 strategic adversaries like China and Russia and provide the
23 tools and capabilities that our warfighters need.

24 You know, the defense industrial base has a unique
25 challenge in striking a balance between long term and short

1 term needs and goals, between producing and sustaining
2 mature systems and adopting new systems and capabilities
3 and innovations. I think some of the key challenges are
4 around workforce, aging workforce, a shortage of workers
5 with STEM and industrial skills that makes it difficult to
6 meet production targets.

7 Also supply chain, security and vulnerabilities, as
8 well as, frankly, internal issues, programmatic and
9 budgetary predictability and stability. If confirmed, I
10 will work closely with this committee, across the
11 Department enterprise, and with industry in the interagency
12 to come up with solutions that address these critical
13 challenges.

14 Chairman Reed: Well, thank you very much for your
15 testimony. And thank you all for your commitment to
16 service and your testimony. Let me recognize the Ranking
17 Member, Senator Inhofe.

18 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Dr. Plum,
19 you spent time recently working at both Facebook and
20 Google. And Ms. Harris, you also spent time working at
21 Facebook and on the oversight board of Facebook. Can you
22 both please describe your work at these companies, and what
23 involvement you had, if any, in the development of the
24 content, moderation policies, or in decisions to moderate
25 content? Let's start with Dr. Plum.

1 Ms. Plum: Ranking Member Inhofe, my role, similar to
2 roles throughout my career at both companies, was focused
3 on applying data and analysis to help identify problematic
4 issues like at Facebook, child pornography, ICE's
5 recruiting content.

6 At Google, my roles focused on applying data and
7 analysis to improve business operations to address issues
8 like copyright violations, and financial fraud, and helping
9 make those business processes more effective and efficient.

10 Overall, I was focused on the research and analysis
11 pieces rather than on content moderation policy or content
12 moderation decisions.

13 Senator Inhofe: Ms. Harris.

14 Ms. Harris: Ranking Member Inhofe, thank you for the
15 question. My role at Facebook was focused on designing a
16 way to bring outside experts in to look at Facebook's
17 content decision. I did not work on content moderation
18 actions or the policies. I was focused on the operational
19 -- operations issues to facilitate those outside expert
20 reviews.

21 Senator Inhofe: All right. And Mr. Owens, in your
22 advanced policy questions, you stated that, and this is a
23 quote, "in many cases, the Department's installation energy
24 projects should not only bolster resilience, but also
25 enhance conservation, increase energy efficiency, and

1 implement low -- clean, low carbon energy solutions."

2 Now, I believe that the number one priority of the
3 Department of Defense is lethality. I would ask you if you
4 agree with that. And secondly, do you think that there is
5 a point where strategic and economic costs outweigh
6 potential environmental benefits?

7 Mr. Owens: Ranking Member, thank you very much for
8 the question. I absolutely agree that DOD's number one
9 priority is to provide military forces to deter and ensure
10 our Nation's security, 100 percent.

11 In terms of how I would characterize the joint
12 benefits that investments in resilience and efficiency can
13 provide. I absolutely see that those two things need to be
14 considered together. They need to be balanced.

15 And then they need to make sure that they are doing --
16 everything that we are doing from an efficiency standpoint
17 or from a resilience standpoint is supporting lethality.

18 Senator Inhofe: So you repeat then the two areas that
19 you feel should be hand-in-hand.

20 Mr. Owens: Efficiency -- well, I think it is more of
21 a triad, efficiency, resiliency, and lethality.

22 Senator Inhofe: On somewhat of an equal basis?

23 Mr. Owens: I think I said them in the exact opposite
24 order of the way that they would be precedent for DOD.

25 Senator Inhofe: Okay. And lastly, Ms. Harris, you

1 have served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
2 for Irregular Warfare and Counterterrorism since February
3 of 2021. Can you describe the role that you played in
4 planning for the withdrawal of Afghanistan last year?

5 Ms. Harris: Ranking Member Inhofe, thank you for the
6 question. As you correctly state, I work for in the Office
7 of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy. I am one of a
8 number of Deputy Assistant Secretaries of Defense with
9 responsibilities related to our mission in Afghanistan.

10 My role is focused primarily on CT policy and the
11 employment of Special Operations Forces. So with regards
12 to our withdrawal from Afghanistan, those are the primary
13 areas in which I was involved.

14 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Inhofe. And let me
16 recognize Senator Shaheen, but also point out that my
17 colleagues arriving now because of the special Democratic
18 caucus that began at 9:00 a.m. and just concluded.

19 Senator Shaheen, please.

20 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. My
21 timing was perfect. And congratulations to each of our
22 nominees. Thank you for your willingness to serve our
23 country. I want to begin both with Dr. Plum and Mr. Owens
24 on the issue of PFAS, because as I know you are aware, that
25 is a contaminant that has -- is affecting a number of our

1 military installations across the country.

2 We have seen it in the former Pease Air Force Base in
3 Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where because of the
4 firefighting foam, we have groundwater that has been
5 contaminated. And I will tell you that the Air Force has
6 been very cooperative and helpful with the community, but
7 it remains a challenge. And your respective offices play a
8 critical role in overseeing and implementing energy and
9 environmental policies that will address PFAS
10 contamination.

11 So I guess my question is for both of you, if the
12 Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Act included funding to
13 address PFAS contamination and required the Department to
14 adhere to a testing schedule, required DOD to develop PFAS
15 remediation schedule to clean up military installations,
16 and the schedule is due to Congress on September 23rd, if
17 confirmed, will each of you commit to ensuring on time
18 delivery of that report to Congress?

19 Ms. Plum: Senator, thank you. And let me start with
20 saying, I share your concern on PFAS. It is a really
21 critical area that we do need to focus on. We owe our
22 service members and their families safe and healthy places
23 to live and work. If confirmed, I absolutely commit to
24 making sure we have on time delivery of required reports
25 and meeting other Federal requirements.

1 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. Mr. Owens.

2 Mr. Owens: I will follow on to what Dr. Plum said
3 about making this a priority for the Assistant Secretary
4 EI&E, if confirmed. And we will also commit to ensuring
5 that we are giving you the reports that you need, according
6 to NDAA.

7 Senator Shaheen: Thank you very much. Well, we will
8 talk again on October. One of the other concerns that I
9 have is that when Congress has sought to provide higher
10 levels of funding for PFAS testing and remediation beyond
11 what has been appropriated in the past, DOD has claimed
12 that it was not executable.

13 And I think that is just unacceptable. If Congress is
14 going to provide funding, you need to work with us to
15 ensure that that funding is going to be used in the way the
16 Congress intends.

17 So again, if confirmed, will you ensure that the
18 appropriate plans are developed to ensure that DOD can make
19 use of any additional funding provided by Congress for PFAS
20 related activities, and that you will not turn away that
21 critical funding?

22 Ms. Plum: Senator, if confirmed, I commit to working
23 with the committee and with our colleagues and Comptroller
24 to develop the necessary products to figure out how to
25 spend the money and do the right remediation.

1 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. Mr. Owens.

2 Mr. Owens: I will commit to the same.

3 Senator Shaheen: Also, Mr. Owens, you will assume the
4 role of Chair of the PFAS Task Force, if confirmed. It is
5 an important body that was put in place initially as an ad
6 hoc group by the former Secretary Esper.

7 It was codified in Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA to ensure
8 sustained attention. And can you speak to, assuming you
9 are going to take over and get confirmed, I am assuming
10 that you are, what would be your top priorities in leading
11 this task force?

12 Mr. Owens: Senator, I think, in terms of the specific
13 remit of the task force, I am not that familiar with what
14 the roles and responsibilities would be. I know that it,
15 PFAS is a critically important issue, and I commend this
16 committee for making it such an area of focus.

17 If I am confirmed, I think the process to engage in
18 ensuring that we understand testing limitations, ensuring
19 that we understand what the strategy for finding
20 alternatives for any places that PFAS are still in use, and
21 then also remediation would be the three top priorities.

22 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. I look forward to
23 working with you on those priorities. Dr. Plum, one of the
24 things that has worked very successfully in terms of
25 dealing with our energy use have been third party financing

1 vehicles, so energy saving performance contracts, ESPCs.
2 Can you talk about what your views are relative to ESPCs
3 and their importance in helping our military achieve the
4 energy savings that we are all looking for?

5 Ms. Plum: Senator, I think ensuring we have energy
6 savings, and more generally, energy resilient and energy
7 efficient installations is a critical priority for our
8 Department, both to be faithful stewards of taxpayer
9 dollars, and frankly to have the resilience our
10 installations need.

11 So creative solutions like these third party
12 partnerships can be really helpful in helping us achieve
13 those goals. If confirmed, I would want to work to
14 understand these deals, these approaches, and other
15 approaches to make sure we are identifying the right
16 solutions for the right installations to get those cost
17 savings and resilience.

18 Senator Shaheen: Well, thanks very much. I
19 appreciate that. And I think the Army should be commended
20 for its efforts to revamp the way it deals with performance
21 contracting. I know the Navy is also looking at this
22 issue.

23 I understand the Air Force has been more reluctant, so
24 I hope they will take this as a shot across the bow. This
25 is something they need to look at. Thank you very much,

1 Mr. Chairman.

2 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Shaheen. Senator
3 Tuberville, please.

4 Senator Tuberville: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
5 Congratulations to all of you. And it is great to see your
6 family members back here in the back.

7 They are all smiling, those that we can see. You
8 know, while our military boast the best equipment in the
9 world, ask to any service member what they think about DOD
10 websites and office systems that -- and they will tell you,
11 they are slow, old, frustrating. Our military members
12 spend hundreds of hours logging on to an ancient system.

13 The Navy still use a program called NAVFIT98A to
14 process evaluations. Now, 98 ought to give you a good idea
15 of when that was originated. Some of you worked for the
16 most cutting edge tech leaders in the world.

17 And as you take your new leadership roles, I would
18 like each of you to refuse to approve any new websites in
19 your areas of responsibility that are not, that are not
20 built to be compatible with the three most popular internet
21 browsers and top two operating systems. I hope you do
22 that.

23 You know, this is a -- we are long past, you know, the
24 stone age. Ms. Harris, in September 2018, the Department
25 of Defense released its cyber strategy. The strategy

1 charges DOD to defend forward, shape the day to day
2 competition, and prepare for war in the cyber domain. DOD
3 is now in the process of updating its cyber strategy.

4 If confirmed, what actions will you take to mitigate
5 any gaps between defense intelligence and the goals of the
6 current and emerging cyber strategy?

7 Ms. Harris: Senator, thank you for the question. I
8 agree, cyber security and cyber threats are a critical
9 concern for the Department today. Cyber is an issue that
10 bridges a number of stakeholders within the Department.

11 And so, if confirmed, I will commit that I will ensure
12 that the intelligence and security apparatus is best
13 supporting those efforts, both on assessing cyber threats
14 in the intelligence community, but also in ensuring that we
15 are taking the proper cybersecurity practices.

16 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. Dr. Plum, thank you
17 for meeting with me last week. Every Secretary of Defense
18 since Rumsfeld has sought to refine and streamline how the
19 DOD handles procurement. The DOD has no -- has a no fail
20 mission, but success continues to be held up by the red
21 tape and contract protests. In your opinion, one of the
22 most important factors to monitor, to understand the health
23 of the defense acquisition systems?

24 Ms. Plum: Senator, you rightly note our defense
25 acquisition system is not as fast as we need it to deliver

1 our warfighter capabilities. It is my understanding that a
2 combination of factors, including, as you note, protests,
3 timelines, contract timelines notice, timelines as well as
4 factors during the negotiation process can slow that
5 delivery.

6 If confirmed, I commit to work within the authorities
7 we have and work with this committee to identify ways to
8 shorten that timeline, streamline the process, also
9 identify efficiencies, and leverage different pathways for
10 our different technologies to speed that up.

11 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. Mr. Owens, we didn't
12 get to meet yesterday. Had a lot to talk about. Hopefully
13 we can do that in the future. Just a question about, have
14 you been briefed on the Project Pele?

15 Mr. Owens: Senator, not directly, but I am aware of
16 what it is.

17 Senator Tuberville: You know, obviously, we are
18 looking for reforming, you know, our power to our troops.
19 Pele is a moving reactor that you can move into the field.
20 I would love for you to look into that once you once you
21 get in. It is an amazing program that I think we are going
22 to need in the very future.

23 The DOD pioneered nuclear power. I don't think a lot
24 of people know that. Few people know that the first
25 commercial reactor was a DOD project. You know, in

1 addition to Project Pele, the Fiscal Year 2023 NSAA directs
2 the DOD to look at how a thorium cycle could safely harden
3 our military bases and fuel space propulsion and power.

4 I would like you to pledge that you would look into
5 that and be very familiar with this review that we are
6 going to do through the NDAA.

7 Mr. Owens: Senator, I think the balancing energy,
8 diversity, resilience, and combat superiority is a critical
9 role of what is in the EI&E portfolio. And if confirmed,
10 my commitment -- [technical problems.]

11 Senator Tuberville: Thank you, Dr. Taylor-Kale, a
12 significant portion of critical and strategic materials
13 required for major defense programs come from non-allied
14 countries, including China. What steps should the
15 Department take to support the domestic manufacturing and
16 processing of these materials?

17 Ms. Taylor-Kale: Thank you, Senator. As I noted, I
18 think that the having reliable and secure supply chains is
19 absolutely critical for the health and resilience of the
20 defense industrial base. I think, you know, I want to
21 thank this committee and the Senate for supporting the
22 CHIPS Act.

23 I think this is an important -- this will be an
24 important step. The Department, I think needs to take a
25 number of steps, some of which they have outlined, but

1 certainly moving towards more domestic sourcing and also
2 working with international partners and allies for friend
3 shoring, as some call it.

4 So I would, if confirmed, be very focused on working
5 with stakeholders in the interagency to facilitate domestic
6 sourcing and also working with some of our international
7 allies to facilitate areas where we can work together.

8 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. You know, have a hard
9 job. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

10 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Tuberville.
11 Senator King, please.

12 Senator King: I don't think it is going to work. Try
13 this. Okay. Ms. Harris, you are entering one of the most
14 important jobs in the Defense Department. Intelligence, I
15 am coming to believe, is the secret sauce in modern
16 conflict, and so capable intelligence, widely distributed
17 within the agency and within the warfighter groups, I think
18 is critical.

19 One thing that I am very worried about, however, is
20 cyber and electronic warfare, and resiliency in the face of
21 cyber-attacks. I hope that you will have put cyber at the
22 top of your priority list because nothing else works if we
23 are able -- if we are disabled in terms of cyber or
24 electronic warfare attacks.

25 One strategy I think that is very important is red

1 teaming. Everybody thinks they are invulnerable until they
2 are not. And I would like your thoughts on the issue of
3 cyber and cyber resiliency.

4 Ms. Harris: Senator, thank you for the question. I
5 agree with you both in the criticality of our intelligence
6 and intelligence analysis to support the warfighter, and
7 also in the need to ensure that we are giving cyber and
8 cyber security the attention that they deserve.

9 If confirmed, you have my commitment that I will
10 ensure that we are giving the proper analytic attention to
11 that and prioritizing the types of intelligence sharing
12 that will facilitate a broader understanding of the
13 challenges we face in the technology environment today.

14 Senator King: In a modern conflict, the first 30
15 minutes is going to be all about cyber and electronic
16 warfare and trying to blind the opponent, so I think that
17 should be a very high priority.

18 An intelligence question that I have raised and have
19 had briefings on and am following is the determination of
20 the will to fight. We found in Afghanistan that we
21 overestimated the will to fight of the Afghan army. We
22 underestimated the will to of the Ukrainian people. This
23 is an important factor.

24 It is difficult to assess, I understand, but I hope
25 you will work with General Barrier and pursue the work that

1 they are doing because it is an important policy question.
2 Could be very important for us in the future, for example,
3 with regard to Taiwan.

4 Ms. Harris: Senator, I couldn't agree more. Clearly
5 will to fight is an area that we need to continue to refine
6 our understanding of. My understanding is that the
7 intelligence community, as part of their continual
8 processes to improve their analytic abilities, is looking
9 at just this issue. And if confirmed, I look forward to
10 learning more about those efforts and keeping the committee
11 informed.

12 Senator King: I can commend General Barrier and his
13 staff because I know they are, and the Director of National
14 Intelligence, is looking very closely at this subject. Dr.
15 Plum, sustainment and resiliency in acquisitions. I
16 believe that every time we buy a major platform, whether it
17 is an aircraft, a ship, any kind of mobile vehicle, we
18 should be also buying the intellectual property so that the
19 Government has the power to make parts.

20 Every depot, every hangar, every ship should have a 3D
21 printer. We should not have a major weapons system out of
22 commission because of the lack of a part. So I hope that
23 that is part of your acquisition strategy.

24 We are not just buying pieces of metal anymore. We
25 should be buying the intellectual properties that will

1 allow us to maintain those and not rely on a long and
2 somewhat uncertain supply chain.

3 Ms. Plum: Senator, absolutely. We need to figure out
4 better strategies to deal with the supply chain for our
5 weapons system. That includes dealing with part
6 obsolescence and our ability to produce them in-house, and
7 in more robust and resilient ways.

8 If confirmed, I commit to looking at ensuring we have
9 the intellectual property, as well as other solutions that
10 can allow us to build in that supply chain and parts
11 resilience to enable us to maintain and sustain our
12 warfighting capabilities at a much more reasonable cost.

13 Senator King: Just remember, for want of a nail, the
14 shoe was lost, for want of the shoe, the horse was lost,
15 for want of the horse, the battle was lost, and the war
16 could be lost. I don't want that to be the story of our
17 military. Dr. Taylor-Kale, we have had a good discussion.
18 Two items.

19 One is, I would like to see more emphasis on smaller
20 firms and trying to develop the acquisition process so that
21 smaller firms can compete and participate in the Defense
22 Department acquisition process.

23 Secondly, I would like to invite you to Maine, where
24 we have a diverse defense industrial base, where we have
25 large facilities like Bath Ironworks, Pratt Whitney,

1 Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. But we also have many smaller
2 firms that participate.

3 And I think it would be useful for you to see that
4 kind of universe of the defense industrial base. And I
5 know you realize how important it is to maintain the
6 industrial base in a vigorous and healthy acquisition
7 atmosphere.

8 Ms. Taylor-Kale: Thank you, Senator. I appreciate
9 our discussion that we had. I also enjoyed learning our
10 mutual love for road trips across country. I would be more
11 than delighted, if confirmed, to visit Maine. I have done
12 similar trips in my capacity as Deputy Assistant Secretary
13 for Manufacturing to Tennessee, North Carolina, Alabama,
14 Pennsylvania, other States where there is industrial base
15 and --

16 Senator King: So Maine is better than any of those,
17 just to be clear.

18 [Laughter.]

19 Senator King: Thank you very much. I am out of time.
20 Mr. Owens, I am going to ask you some questions for the
21 record. Thank you all and congratulations on your
22 nomination. I look forward to working with you on behalf
23 of the United States of America. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator King. Senator
25 Rounds, please.

1 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, let
2 me thank all of you for your continued service to our
3 country. Mr. Owens, I am going to add my voice to the
4 voices that have already expressed concerns with regard to
5 PFOS and PFAS. Thanks for taking the time to meet with me
6 in my office this last week.

7 If confirmed, you will be the chairman of the PFAS
8 force. Given how pervasive this substance is, and the
9 longer that we take to address the issue, the more money it
10 will cost in the long run. This stuff doesn't stay in one
11 place. It continues to permeate throughout the soils in
12 and around the bases where it has been used for
13 firefighting material.

14 If we don't begin to tackle this as soon as possible
15 and get ahead of it, it is just going to cost us more money
16 in the long run. So we are either going to pay now or we
17 are going to pay a whole lot more later on.

18 I am just going to ask right now for your commitment
19 that if confirmed, you will promptly grab a hold of this
20 issue and make sure that the communities that support our
21 military installations across this country will be taken
22 care of and that it will be a priority for you.

23 Mr. Owens: Senator, thanks for your focus on this
24 issue. You have my commitment that this will be a
25 priority.

1 Senator Rounds: Thank you. Dr. Plum, if confirmed,
2 you will have oversight over the Assistant Secretary of
3 Defense for Energy, Installations and Environment, the
4 position that Mr. Owens had been nominated for.

5 And as such, will also play a major role in making
6 sure our installations and surrounding communities are
7 taken care of with regard to this particular issue. Do I
8 have your commitment that, if confirmed, you will also look
9 into the issue?

10 And if any additional resources or authorities are
11 needed to address PFAS remediation, you will promptly let
12 this committee know?

13 Ms. Plum: Senator, you have my commitment to look
14 into it, to proactively identify where we can make more
15 progress, and to work directly with this committee.

16 Senator Rounds: Thank you. Dr. Taylor-Kale, I did I
17 say that right?

18 Ms. Taylor-Kale: Taylor-Kale. Close.

19 Senator Rounds: Kale. Thank you. I am going to work
20 at it. I have expressed my confusion in the past and my
21 frustration as well of why with DOD plans -- and when DOD
22 plans and prepares for a one year or a one war scenario,
23 and in most cases a short one war scenario at a time,
24 basically on one front, many leading defense experts
25 believe that if engaged in a shooting war with a peer or a

1 near-peer competitor, we would run out of many of our best
2 weapons systems and munitions in one to two weeks.

3 R&D for the future is needed, but we also need
4 procurement now, otherwise we are going to have some very
5 serious problems in the Fiscal Year 2026 and 2027
6 timeframe. Recognizing right now and learning from what we
7 have seen in Ukraine and the challenges of moving munitions
8 that are used day to day around right now and the shortages
9 that immediately begin to become apparent, I simply don't
10 believe that the defense industrial base, the mobilization
11 of that, or the type that we have seen in the past is
12 possible in the current operational environment.

13 And it would appear to me that we are going to have to
14 refocus on how we -- how quickly we can come up to speed
15 and begin to produce munitions that we have sometimes just
16 have taken for granted in the past.

17 Would you agree with me that we have got to do
18 something in order to expedite the acquisition of munitions
19 in a more timely fashion?

20 Ms. Taylor-Kale: Senator, I absolutely share your
21 concern about our supply chain vulnerabilities. I think
22 the war in Ukraine and following COVID-19 really laid bare
23 some of these vulnerabilities and these critical challenges
24 that we have known for a while, but certainly they are more
25 acute now.

1 I think, if confirmed, it will be a very important to
2 apply lessons learned from this Ukraine, you know, aid, and
3 also to figure out how best to support the industrial base
4 in building more hot production lines that Undersecretary
5 LaPlante has advocated for.

6 I think some of the key issues that I outlined
7 earlier, like workforce issues, challenges with
8 programmatic and budgetary stability, will be, you know,
9 key pieces to look out for and to focus on.

10 If confirmed, I commit to you that I will work closely
11 with industry, work with this committee and your staffs, as
12 well as across the Department enterprise to really address
13 these issues.

14 Senator Rounds: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
15 My time has expired.

16 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Rounds.
17 Just let me recognize Senator Hirono, please.

18 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
19 Congratulations to all of you on your nominations and thank
20 you for your service. I ask the following two initial
21 questions of all nominees on any of the committees on which
22 I sit, so I would like to ask each of you and the response.

23 We will start with Ms. Harris, and we will just go
24 right down the line. Since you became a legal adult, have
25 you ever made unwanted requests for sexual favors or

1 committed any verbal or physical harassment or assault of a
2 sexual nature?

3 Ms. Harris: No.

4 Ms. Plum: No.

5 Mr. Owens: No.

6 Ms. Taylor-Kale: No.

7 Senator Hirono: Have you ever faced discipline or
8 entered into a settlement related to this kind of conduct?

9 Ms. Harris: No.

10 Ms. Plum: No.

11 Mr. Owens: No.

12 Ms. Taylor-Kale: No.

13 Senator Hirono: Thank you. Mr. Owens, my home State
14 of Hawaii is still reeling from the catastrophic fuel leak
15 at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility. I don't know
16 if you -- do you have a familiarity with this facility?
17 Have you ever visited the facility?

18 Mr. Owens: I have never visited it, but I have seen
19 pictures and it is gigantic.

20 Senator Hirono: It is massive. It is in the order
21 of, in terms of an engineering feat, in the order of Hoover
22 Dam. And, you know, it is massive. But you have been
23 asked some questions relating to PFAS, and there are
24 various contamination issues that the military has to deal
25 with, but the situation at Red Hill is quite immediate.

1 It led to the widespread water contamination, forcing
2 thousands of Navy personnel and their families to leave
3 their homes for months until their safe return could be
4 assured. And due to the leak and the ongoing concerns
5 about the facility's safety, DOD has announced its intent
6 to entirely defuel and permanently closed Red Hill by the
7 end of 2024.

8 You can imagine what kind of enterprise this is going
9 to be to defuel hundreds of millions of gallons of fuel.
10 The U.S. Navy has proposed a defueling plan which the
11 Hawaii Department of Health recently rejected.

12 In whole, since the Department plans lacks the
13 requisite detail and specificity necessary for the DOH to
14 fully evaluate how the Department will execute safe and
15 expeditious defueling. If you are confirmed, oversight of
16 facilities across the country, including Red Hill, will be
17 under your purview.

18 This year's NDAA currently authorizes \$1 billion for
19 the Red Hill Recovery Fund, and Congress is expecting to
20 receive a detailed breakdown of how this money will be
21 spent from the Department. Delay in providing this
22 justification risks compromising the safe and timely
23 closure of the facility and could further disrupt the
24 community's confidence in DOD in the State.

25 So when all of this happened, of course, the Navy's

1 handling of the spill and all of that left a lot to be
2 desired. And so the community has a lot of questions.
3 Since -- I would like you to assure me that the defueling
4 and closure is completed in a safe and expeditious manner,
5 and that you will be -- take personal responsibility along
6 with the other people who are going to be involved in this,
7 but in your position, can I look to you to make sure that
8 the defueling happens safely and in an expeditious manner?

9 Mr. Owens: Senator, I absolutely commit to doing
10 everything within the purview of the AS EI&E to ensure that
11 the resources that are necessary to safely defuel Red Hill,
12 in alignment with the Secretary's plan, are executed.

13 Senator Hirono: Yes. And our Appropriations
14 committee is awaiting a much more detailed defueling plan,
15 so I hope that is something that, should you be confirm,
16 that this is another thing that you will pay attention to.

17 Again, for you. Mr. Owens, DOD currently has more
18 than 174,000 non-tactical vehicles across the service
19 branches, making it the second largest share of the Federal
20 vehicle fleet after the U.S. Postal Service.

21 Earlier this year I introduced the Military Vehicle
22 Fleet Electrification Act with Senator Warren, King, and
23 others, and included language in the Fiscal Year 2023 NDAA
24 that would require DOD to transition to fully electric or
25 zero emission non-tactical vehicles by the end of 2030.

1 Mr. Owens, do you agree that transitioning to electric
2 non-tactical vehicles will help combat climate change while
3 helping to ensure our military has the advantage of a
4 modern fleet of vehicles that reduce the military's
5 dependance on oil?

6 Mr. Owens: Senator, I think that the combination of
7 several investments that are being made on installations,
8 including electric vehicles, particularly microgrids, and
9 the ability for microgrids to provide a backbone for more
10 energy diversity and resilience, is an excellent reason to
11 proceed as you have outlined.

12 Senator Hirono: I take it that that is a yes?

13 Mr. Owens: It is a yes. That is a big yes.

14 Senator Hirono: Thank you very much. I think we need
15 to move ahead on this kind of transitioning because the DOD
16 is the biggest user of fossil fuels of all of the agencies.
17 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Hirono. Senator
19 Tillis, please.

20 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And
21 congratulations to all of you on your nominations. I
22 actually want to start by thanking Senator Warren for the
23 work that she and I have done over the past several years
24 for military housing.

25 I would say it is steps in the right direction, but it

1 seems to me it is a continuing journey that we have got to
2 get right. We do have a measure in NDAA that takes another
3 step in the right direction, but Mr. Owens, we have got a
4 lot more work to do.

5 In North Carolina, I have made it a focus and have
6 done town halls down there and it seems to have improved.
7 But I think system wide, we have challenges, and we have
8 challenges in North Carolina.

9 So I am curious, your thoughts, what your priorities
10 would be? How can we really regain the trust of military
11 families, personnel that are living in military housing?
12 And secondly, we have to recognize that because of mold, a
13 number of other exposures that these, the occupants have
14 had to endure, that we have some health implications.

15 So in addition to fixing the inventory moving forward,
16 we have also got to take a serious look at instances where
17 we think illnesses can clearly be linked to exposures in
18 some of this, what I consider to be substandard housing.
19 How are you going to tackle that?

20 Mr. Owens: Thank you for the question. And I really
21 want to again commend this committee for taking such a
22 strong interest in ensuring that military family housing is
23 up to the dignity of the people that are living in it.

24 Housing is a readiness issue. Housing is a --
25 something that we owe to our servicemembers for the

1 sacrifices that they make. In terms of how to prioritize,
2 I think this committee has done an excellent job in
3 providing direction to and resources for increasing the
4 amount of oversight that has been happening, and I would
5 look to continue to do that.

6 Look to ensure that the tenant bill of rights that has
7 been established is something that can be universally
8 accessed and driven to ensure that our tenants have the
9 ability, our military families have the ability to get
10 answers to questions that they may have.

11 And then in terms of the health implications, if there
12 are any, I will commit to working with senior leaders in
13 DOD to ensure that we are providing the resources and --
14 that are necessary to address any situations to arise.

15 Senator Tillis: Thank you for that. Dr. Plum,
16 anytime I see somebody going before this committee that has
17 anything to do with acquisition, I always have to bring one
18 of my favorite props.

19 A nearly 600 page request for proposal for the next
20 generation handgun. It started in the Air Force and ended
21 up in the Army. It took a half a generation to decide what
22 the next generation handgun would be. This is not a
23 complex platform. This is something that just boggles my
24 mind that we haven't figured out how to tailor acquisition
25 processes in a way that gets it done sooner.

1 That gets the capability deployed sooner and also
2 provides the opportunity for a larger group of people to
3 participate. In North Carolina, we have a very strong --
4 we have a military business center. In fact, we just had a
5 meeting this week with a number of small businesses that
6 contribute to the defense industrial base. But if they
7 look at something like this, they are out before they ever
8 start.

9 They can't simply afford to go through hundreds of
10 pages and a multiyear process to put forth what may be one
11 of the best innovations that we could potentially consider.
12 So we are squeezing out, I think, a number of innovators in
13 the acquisition process. So what can we do, number one,
14 just generally to increase and to bolster our industrial
15 base by engaging more small businesses?

16 And secondly, how can we make progress on acquisition
17 processes that don't result in 600 page next generation
18 handgun RFPs?

19 Ms. Plum: Senator, that is an excellent example that
20 really highlights how we need -- we absolutely need to be
21 faster and better at bringing technology to the warfighter.
22 Now, we do have some approaches that we need to leverage
23 more.

24 We have the adaptive acquisition framework that gives
25 us a couple other tiers, middle tier acquisition

1 authorities, software acquisition authorities. This
2 committee has really been very supportive in helping us
3 have some innovative authorities and approaches. We need
4 to use them more.

5 Senator Tillis: Thank you. And I hope to work with
6 you. I spent a fair amount of time in supply chain and
7 acquisition in the private sector, and after you are
8 confirmed, would like to talk specific initiatives. Ms.
9 Kale, doctor -- did I pronounce that right? I just have a
10 quick question in closing.

11 We just recently passed the Chips bill. And the Chips
12 bill clearly recognizes that we have insufficient
13 indigenous semiconductor manufacturing capability in this
14 country. If we see how the sanctions on Russia,
15 particularly with respect to importing chips, has
16 disrupted their military supply chains, do you consider
17 that a wise investment with respect to our own military
18 industrial base?

19 Ms. Taylor-Kale: Well, thank you, Senator. I think
20 that is going to be very important to focus on
21 microelectronics in the short term as well as in the long
22 term. I think that the CHIPS Act will bring us closer to
23 more readiness and sort of resilience in our defense
24 industrial base. I share your concern that having
25 shortages in this area will lead to insecurity later on, as

1 well as in, you know, in the immediate future, I think. If
2 confirmed, I will work closely with industry as well as
3 with the interagency, particularly the lead agencies
4 focused on microelectronics to make sure that we can assure
5 the needs of our defense industrial base.

6 Senator Tillis: Thank you. Again, congratulations on
7 your nominations.

8 Chairman Reed: Thank you. Senator Tillis. Senator
9 Warren, please.

10 Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And
11 congratulations to all of you. I want to thank Senator
12 Tillis. I so appreciate his partnership in our work on
13 military housing, and he has asked my questions.

14 So I think Mr. Owens knows that Senator Tillis and I,
15 and this entire committee, is going to stay on this issue.
16 It is powerfully important to our military and to our
17 national defense, and also it is about what is right. So,
18 I am going to try to be efficient and ask about some other
19 issues.

20 And what I would like to focus on is conflicts of
21 interest and ethics at the Pentagon. This year, the
22 Pentagon's budget is going to exceed \$800 billion. About
23 half that spending is going to go to the for profit defense
24 contractors to build weapons, to perform maintenance, and
25 to provide consulting services.

1 Contract and program decision should be based on what
2 is in the best interests of National Security, period. But
3 the revolving door between the Pentagon and private defense
4 contractors sometimes happens so fast, it looks like a
5 blur. Senior Pentagon officials leaving work for Lockheed
6 to Boeing.

7 Top lobbyists or executives from these companies
8 coming into Government to hand out contracts to their
9 former employees and employers. You know, real or
10 perceived conflicts of interest undermine the public's
11 confidence and can also lead to program delays or even
12 cancelation.

13 So, Dr. Plum, you have been nominated to a top role in
14 the part of the Pentagon that focuses on acquisition. Can
15 you say a word about your views about why it is important
16 that Government officials making decisions, about which
17 defense contractors get taxpayer dollars, must be free from
18 conflicts of interest?

19 Ms. Plum: Senator, thank you. And thank you for your
20 leadership on this issue. As you note, it is just so
21 important at the Department that our number one job is to
22 deliver capabilities to the warfighter.

23 And those capabilities need to be selected to get the
24 best capabilities. And that means that conflict of
25 interest, apparent or actual, can undermine, as you note,

1 that trust, but also make it harder for key new ideas to
2 break through and getting to that process.

3 We have a number of efforts underway, ethics
4 agreements in this Administration, improved oversight of
5 our standards of conduct. If confirmed, I pledge to
6 continue those, but also more to fulsomely work with you
7 and this committee to make sure we are getting this balance
8 right of getting the conflicts out.

9 Senator Warren: Well, that is a really good point
10 about how conflicts of interest can actually keep us from
11 finding the best products, from innovating in the ways we
12 need to innovate. Very strong point. So let's talk about
13 the things we can do in order to reduce the conflicts of
14 interest.

15 You know, through the years, I have proposed a number
16 of changes to strengthen our ethics laws. Now, some of my
17 colleagues think that strong ethics requirements will stop
18 people from wanting to go into Government. There have been
19 at least 10, 10 Government funded studies now on this exact
20 issue, how to improve the recruitment and retention of the
21 Federal workforce.

22 And not a single one of them has concluded that ethics
23 laws are the barrier. When we talked last week, you said
24 that we need to consider both, needing to attract and
25 retain people who want to solve big problems and preventing

1 the appearance of self-dealing.

2 Dr. Plum, do you agree that we could strengthen ethics
3 standards at the Pentagon without hurting our ability to
4 attract top talent in public service?

5 Ms. Plum: Senator, I do agree. I think we need to
6 think about how we structure and make precise our ethics
7 requirements and our oversight so that we can attract top
8 talent, let them work on hard problems, let them solve hard
9 problems for this country while making sure we avoid
10 conflicts of interests. And there is absolutely space to
11 make progress there, and I, if confirmed, would really
12 welcome an opportunity to work on that with you.

13 Senator Warren: Well, I think you have already
14 answered the question I was going to ask, and that is, will
15 you commit to working with me to ensure that Government
16 officials working on acquisition programs and policies are
17 free of conflicts of interest?

18 Ms. Plum: Senator, I would welcome an opportunity to
19 work with you on that. Thank you.

20 Senator Warren: That is terrific. Thank you very
21 much. You know, this is a problem across Administrations
22 and across Government agencies, but it is particularly
23 acute at DOD given the size of the Pentagon's budget.

24 A lot of money is at stake here. Our last three
25 Secretaries of Defense came to DOD straight from the board

1 or from being a lobbyist for the Pentagon's top five
2 contractors. We have got to do a lot more to end the cozy
3 relationship between the Pentagon and the defense industry.
4 Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Warren. Senator
6 Blackburn, please.

7 Senator Blackburn: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And to
8 each of you, congratulations on your nominations. As you
9 can tell, we are a very busy committee here, and this will
10 not be the last time you all hear from us. And we look
11 forward to working with you to make certain that our men
12 and women in uniform have what they need to carry out their
13 mission.

14 And you have heard about ethics. You have heard about
15 what we need for our housing for the military, about
16 acquisitions. I know that Senator Inhofe even talked a
17 little bit about Facebook and big tech and some of those
18 applications. I am going to turn now to a topic you are
19 going to hear me talk about a lot.

20 And it is about maintenance and deferred maintenance.
21 And Mr. Owens, I am going to come to you on this, because
22 we have got 550,000 buildings that we have a backlog.
23 There is a goal of getting to 90 percent on this. But the
24 current estimate, I think last time I looked, it was at
25 \$121 billion and FSRM. Does that sound right to you?

1 Mr. Owens: Senator Blackburn, the briefing paper that
2 I read on FSRM had that number in it and it didn't sound
3 right to me. I have come to learn that it is right.

4 Senator Blackburn: It is right. And DOD has over
5 550,000 buildings and facilities worldwide. And as my dad
6 would always say, if you build it, you have to maintain it.
7 And it seems as if we are getting to the point that
8 deferred maintenance and that backlog is way out of
9 control.

10 So I want to bring this home to you with an example in
11 Tennessee, and I am going to ask you to visit this facility
12 with me. It is an Air Force base. It is Arnold
13 Engineering and Development Center, and it is located there
14 in Tullahoma, Tennessee. Those of you involved with DOD
15 have probably heard about this.

16 We have got great Tennesseans that work there. They
17 are leading the way on testing some of our mission critical
18 engine and hypersonic testing. It is going to be
19 imperative for the growth of our Air Force and for Space
20 Force. And they are doing this research work in buildings
21 that are crumbling around them.

22 And the deferred maintenance is -- it keeps getting
23 pushed off, and I do give the Air Force Secretary credit
24 for having pushed forward to try to get resources there.
25 This is part of our critical infrastructure future and

1 needs to be addressed.

2 So how are you going to begin addressing that backlog
3 because you just said you saw that figure and you thought
4 this can't be right, but it is. So how do you begin to
5 reshape that, whittle it down, and prioritize it?

6 Mr. Owens: Senator, I want to thank you for bringing
7 this issue to the forefront and being so stalwart in your
8 in your focus on it. In my view, the DOD has to balance
9 their mission requirements and their sustainment
10 requirements.

11 And, you know, I think one of the things that is
12 critical to understand is that the health and well-being of
13 the warfighter is directly connected to the built
14 environment and the physical environment that they inhabit.
15 So one of things that I would like to do is try to
16 highlight the connection between the fact that the people
17 who are in these buildings are being affected by them. If
18 they are not --

19 Senator Blackburn: They are human capital
20 infrastructure, and they are a very vital and necessary
21 component. So what kind of analysis, what kind of
22 partnerships, what kind of approach do you plan to bring to
23 this? You have obviously given some forethought to this.

24 Mr. Owens: Yes. And I think that the prioritization
25 exercises that are necessary to ensure that we are putting

1 the money in the places where it can have the maximum
2 benefit to support the mission and then the health and
3 well-being of the military and military service family
4 members is going to be a priority for the ASD(A). And
5 working across in collaboration with all of the other EI&E
6 positions for the services.

7 Senator Blackburn: Okay. I also want to ask you
8 about climate change, because that -- DOD is saying this is
9 a -- they have identified climate change as a critical
10 National Security issue, a threat multiplier, a top
11 management challenge, but we have never seen data that
12 would support that. So how do you -- I am running out of
13 time, and we are over.

14 Let's do this, why don't you submit that answer for
15 the record? And then I -- Dr. Plum, I have got a question
16 I will submit to you. Ms. Harris, I do have a question
17 specific to you that I will submit. Thank you all very
18 much.

19 Chairman Reed: Thank you. Senator Blackburn.
20 Senator Peters, please.

21 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And each of
22 the nominees, thank you for your willingness to serve and
23 congratulations on your nomination. Mr. Owens, my first
24 question is for you.

25 If you are confirmed, your office will clearly have

1 significant role in leading the Department of Defense's
2 PFAS cleanup efforts, and I know you have spoken about that
3 to some of my colleagues in questions that they have
4 addressed to you already. This is, unfortunately, a
5 subject that Michiganders know all too well.

6 We have communities all across our State from Oscoda,
7 which is the former home to Wurtsmith Air Force Base, to
8 the K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base in Marquette that have been
9 grappling with PFAS contamination literally for decades.

10 These folks are sick and tired of what they have seen
11 as a slow response and basically some disrespect from the
12 Department of Defense when it comes to dealing with what is
13 a significant issue.

14 So my question for you, sir, is, if confirmed, will
15 you ensure that the Department of Defense commits to
16 pursuing remediation in these two sites in particular in
17 Michigan, and give it the type of attention that the folks
18 there deserve and have been waiting far too long to get?

19 Mr. Owens: Senator, the health and well-being of our
20 service members and the defense communities that support
21 them is critical. If confirmed, I will commit to ensuring
22 that we are addressing and budgeting for the appropriate
23 resources that are necessary to do the remediation.

24 Senator Peters: Well, if confirmed, I intend to
25 invite you to come up to Michigan to see these sites

1 firsthand and talk to these individuals, and I would hope
2 you consider accepting that invitation if confirmed.

3 Mr. Owens: Yes, Senator.

4 Senator Peters: Dr. Taylor-Kale, an analysis
5 conducted by Frans Stefan Gady, a senior fellow at the
6 International Institute for Strategic Studies, concluded
7 that at the current rate the Ukrainian military is firing
8 hammers rockets, they will exhaust in less than two months
9 the 9,000 missiles that the United States currently
10 produces annually.

11 Simply put, I think it is clear the U.S. defense
12 industrial base needs to consider what it will require --
13 what is required to fully equip a war in a modernized
14 industrial war like we are seeing between Ukraine and
15 Russia.

16 And so my question for you is, if confirmed, how would
17 you work within the Pentagon, with Congress and with the
18 industrial base partners, to ensure that the U.S. military
19 would remain well supplied in the event of a conventional
20 conflict with a near-peer competitor, whether that be China
21 or Russia or someone else. Clearly, our stockpiles need to
22 be bigger, but our production rates need to be higher as
23 well.

24 Ms. Taylor-Kale: Thank you, Senator. First, I want
25 to note that I believe our support to Ukraine has been

1 invaluable in combating Russian aggression. The crisis has
2 clearly laid bare some of the critical vulnerabilities in
3 our supply chain.

4 As I have noted before, some of these we have known
5 for a while and others are becoming more apparent. You
6 know, if confirmed, supply chain resilience would be an
7 absolute priority for this role and for this office. And,
8 of course, working across the Department enterprise will be
9 key.

10 So if confirmed, I would work closely with
11 Undersecretary LePlante and others in acquisition and
12 sustainment, but also with the military Departments and the
13 Joint Chiefs planning to better understand the needs of the
14 industrial base and also working with industry partners to
15 understand where the gaps are, where the critical needs
16 are.

17 As I have stated before, I think workforce is going to
18 be a particular concern for the industrial base moving
19 forward. And it is something that I think the Department,
20 and of course, the industrial base policy will need to work
21 closely with industry to address.

22 Senator Peters: Very good. Dr. Taylor-Kale, another
23 question for you here. The Senate just recently passed the
24 Chips and Science Act to ensure that we are producing
25 semiconductors essential for so many products here in

1 America, including the auto industry.

2 Particularly important that we passed that bill for an
3 industry that is a major industry in the State of Michigan,
4 but important for the whole country. Could you please
5 speak to how vital it is for us to ensure that we have a
6 supply of semiconductors that are manufactured here in the
7 United States, and how that relates to National Security in
8 your mind?

9 Ms. Taylor-Kale: Senator, I want to underline my
10 support for this, for the CHIPS Act, and appreciate the
11 work of the Senate in moving that bill forward. You know,
12 microelectronics are an important issue within the supply
13 chain because they cut across areas. They cut across
14 sectors.

15 And I think like workforce, like some of these other
16 issues that are cross-cutting, the Defense Department, you
17 know, along with industry, and as partners along with the
18 rest of the interagency, needs to work together and
19 understanding better how to, you know, increase supply and
20 make sure that these critical components are available, and
21 allow for our defense industrial base to be able to
22 replenish and restock as necessary.

23 Senator Peters: Tight. Well, thank you. Thank you,
24 Mr. Chairman.

25 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Peters. Senator

1 Sullivan.

2 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to
3 thank our nominees today. Congratulations. Dr. Taylor-
4 Kale and Dr. Plum, you are going to have a very important
5 position here, defense industrial based policies. Can both
6 of you briefly talk about how important critical minerals
7 are for our defense industrial base, how reliant we are on
8 China, critical minerals, rare earth, and -- well, are they
9 important? Can you just give me a quick answer? I have a
10 number of questions on this.

11 Ms. Plum: Senator. Yes, both critical minerals and
12 specifically rare earths are really important inputs. And
13 there are, as you know, supply chain issues.

14 Senator Sullivan: Supply chain and reliance issues on
15 China, correct?

16 Ms. Plum: That is my understanding, sir.

17 Senator Sullivan: And does that undermine our
18 National Security?

19 Ms. Plum: Senator, I think making sure we have a
20 robust and resilient supply chain for them is absolutely
21 critical for our National Security.

22 Senator Sullivan: Do you agree with that, Dr. Taylor-
23 Kale?

24 Ms. Taylor-Kale: Absolutely. I am concerned about
25 our supply chains being vulnerable to foreign adversaries,

1 as well as the sole source suppliers. So, absolutely.

2 Senator Sullivan: And if it is possible, and the
3 President has held summits on this already, the best
4 approach is to be able to source these from home,
5 particularly critical minerals, rare earths, which we have
6 an abundance of, isn't that correct?

7 Ms. Plum: Yes, sir, that is my understanding. Yes.

8 Senator Sullivan: Would you agree with that?

9 Ms. Taylor-Kale: That is my understanding as well.

10 Senator Sullivan: So I want to talk a little bit
11 about an issue that is just is a head shaker for me. My
12 State has enormous natural resources, oil, gas, critical
13 minerals, rare earth elements, great State of Alaska. Some
14 estimates more than almost any other country in the world.

15 Yet the Biden Administration has issued 26 Executive
16 Orders and Executive Actions focused on shutting down these
17 things. I am going to talk about one because it is just
18 remarkable. And we have an area called the Ambler Mining
19 District that is considered one of the most extensive
20 mineral resources, critical minerals of undeveloped zinc,
21 copper, lead, gold, silver of anywhere in the world.

22 We have no transportation to it, so for decades we
23 have worked on a road to the Ambler Mining District. This
24 project began under the Obama Administration. Seven years
25 of permitting, millions and millions of dollars. Got the

1 final record of decision on this in July of 2020 to start
2 the road to the Ambler Mining District.

3 Everybody supported it. On February 22nd, 2022, the
4 same day the President hosted a summit to announce steps to
5 enhance America's critical minerals supply chains, the
6 Department of Interior reversed the previous
7 Administration's record of decision and shut down the
8 record of decision for the road to the Ambler Mining
9 District.

10 So, the President is holding a summit on these issues.
11 Other part of the Administration, as they do on most things
12 in Alaska, shut it down, crushing jobs, of course, but
13 really undermining our National Security, defense issues.

14 The President then in March announced his plan to use
15 the Defense Production Act to secure reliable supply chains
16 for critical minerals used in batteries in the power
17 electric vehicles, which include those from the Ambler
18 Mining District.

19 How smart do you think that move was in Alaska to shut
20 down critical mineral production? By the way, seven year
21 EIS, 36,000 public comments, 30 public hearings, 30
22 consultations with tribal groups. How smart do you think
23 that is for our industrial base, the defense industrial
24 base, which the two of you will oversee?

25 Ms. Plum: Senator, as you noted at the beginning, we

1 need to figure out ways to get onshore more reliable access
2 to critical minerals. And if confirmed, I would absolutely
3 work on making sure I understand these cases, other cases
4 like this, and make sure we robustly advocate for the right
5 mix of investments and support to get that reliable supply
6 chain for those critical minerals.

7 Senator Sullivan: Dr. Taylor-Kale, how -- do you
8 think this makes sense?

9 Ms. Taylor-Kale: Senator, I understand how important
10 this Ambler mine is to the people of Alaska. And I thank
11 you for raising the issue and for bringing this up. I am
12 not familiar with the decision making process and the
13 details, but I want to reiterate my colleague in noting
14 that, you know, general looking at the case by case
15 understanding of how we can better improve access to
16 critical minerals and strategic materials will be
17 absolutely important --

18 Senator Sullivan: Well, look, I appreciate your
19 answers. This is an ongoing -- I can't get answers from
20 anybody in the Pentagon, at the Department of Interior.
21 Why would you do this? Why would you do this? Okay.

22 This thing has the highest environmental standards.
23 So until I get answers -- I think both of you are
24 qualified. Until I get answers, I am going to put a hold
25 on both of your nominations, until I get answers from high

1 level Administration officials. I am sick and tired of the
2 targeting of my great State.

3 26 Executive Orders. Can you imagine, Mr. Chairman,
4 if they did that to Rhode Island? And it is hurting not
5 just my State, my workers, it is hurting the National
6 Security of America. So until I get answers on Ambler at
7 high levels, unfortunately, I am not going to help move
8 your nominations forward, even though I think you are
9 qualified to have important positions. But this is
10 important.

11 The same day the President holds a summit on critical
12 minerals, they shut down one of the biggest critical
13 minerals supplies in America, maybe in the world, because
14 of their relentless war on the State of Alaska. So I need
15 answers, and then your nominations can move. I have more
16 questions for the record that I will submit. Thank you,
17 Mr. Chairman.

18 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Sullivan. Senator
19 Hawley, please.

20 Senator Hawley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
21 Congratulations to the nominees. Thank you for being here.
22 Mr. Owens, if I could just start with you. If confirmed,
23 you would oversee the military private housing initiative.

24 That is something that is of great interest to us in
25 the State of Missouri, particularly as it concerns Fort

1 Leonard Wood, where you may know, hopefully know that we
2 have many aging homes and facilities that are in need of
3 replacement.

4 My question is this, if you are confirmed, would I
5 have your commitment to prioritize those aging facilities
6 at Fort Leonard Wood so we can make sure that our service
7 members there and their families get the quality housing
8 that they deserve?

9 Mr. Owens: Senator Hawley, I think you have hit
10 exactly what I would say is a critical area in terms of
11 health and well-being of servicemembers and their families.
12 And if confirmed, I will work with the Army and make sure
13 that we are providing the resources necessary to
14 recapitalize those houses.

15 Senator Hawley: Very good. Thank you for that. Dr.
16 Taylor-Kale, if I could come to you. I have made it a
17 priority over the last two years that I have been in the
18 Senate to try and end DOD's use of Chinese printed circuit
19 boards in our critical defense systems.

20 And we have made some progress on this over pretty
21 significant industry opposition, I might note. But there
22 is a lot more that remains to be done to end DOD's reliance
23 on Chinese suppliers.

24 And so my question is, if you are confirmed, what
25 steps would you advocate in taking to reduce DOD's reliance

1 on Chinese suppliers and strengthen our own industrial
2 base?

3 Ms. Taylor-Kale: Thank you, Senator. I think you
4 have raised the key issue that is facing the defense
5 industrial base and the strategic threat of China. I agree
6 with the Administration, with Secretary Austin, that China
7 is the pacing threat. Taiwan is the pacing scenario. I
8 don't believe that we can afford to sit back on this.

9 If confirmed, I will work closely with this committee,
10 with industry, and across the Department enterprise to
11 address these issues and to see how we can come up with
12 solutions to reduce our dependance on China.

13 Senator Hawley: Very good. Let me just ask you a
14 little bit broader question. Give me your sense of how
15 consolidation in the defense industrial base has affected
16 the Department's ability to promote competition and secure
17 the kind of capabilities that we need in a manner that is
18 timely and also cost effective.

19 Ms. Taylor-Kale: Senator, from my understanding,
20 consolidation has over, you know, years has edged out a lot
21 of small businesses. I am concerned about this. I think
22 small businesses are important for the defense industrial
23 base. They bring in innovation. They bring in new ideas
24 and creativity.

25 I think we need that in the defense industrial base

1 now more so than ever. I think that really also
2 understanding how consolidation is part of a process of
3 just, you know, economic principles. It is really also a
4 big part of the concern as well. I think in Government we
5 need to be attentive to the challenges that industry faces
6 in the capital market.

7 So if confirmed, I will work closely across the
8 Department enterprise and also with the interagency, with
9 the appropriate agencies that oversee and look at mergers
10 and acquisitions in particular, to better understand how
11 consolidation is helping, or hurting actually, the defense
12 industrial base.

13 Senator Hawley: Very good. Dr. Plum, speaking of
14 consolidation, you are being nominated for an acquisition
15 and sustainment position. Are you concerned that the
16 military won't be able to obtain its objectives in this
17 area if it has to contract with monopolists on a regular
18 basis?

19 Ms. Plum: Senator Hawley, you rightly note, and I
20 agree with my colleague, Dr. Taylor-Kale, that competition
21 is absolutely critical for helping us leverage our vibrant
22 industrial base and make sure we get the capabilities we
23 need.

24 So, consolidation in that context, especially where it
25 drives out competition and innovation, is going to be

1 problematic. And if confirmed, I will -- this is one of
2 the areas I intend to focus on.

3 Senator Hawley: I ask in part because you have spent
4 a number of years at Google and Facebook, the two largest
5 monopolists arguably in the world, certainly in this
6 country.

7 And there is, I think it is safe to say, a lot of
8 bipartisan concern about the concentrated power of these
9 companies have exercised across industries, and frankly,
10 how they have used that power, which has been pretty
11 disturbing in both of their cases.

12 Talk to me about that. Are you -- let's start with
13 this, are you concerned that, let's take Google, that
14 Google's market power is an impediment to the operations
15 that you would need to, the mission that you would have at
16 DOD?

17 Is it an impediment to the sort of cooperation between
18 private industry and the Department of Defense that we need
19 to have in order for DOD and our military to be successful?

20 Ms. Plum: Senator, I think any time you have a large
21 concentration of market share in individual companies
22 without real competition, you need to start worrying about
23 innovation and whether the right sort of new technologies
24 are rising to the top.

25 So in that context, consolidation in any of the

1 sectors is something that, if confirmed, I would want to
2 look at and make sure we were taking steps to reduce
3 barriers for small businesses, creating pathways for new
4 innovative technologies to make sure we are getting the
5 best things that our warfighters require.

6 Senator Hawley: Let me just -- my time has expired,
7 so I will ask this question, then I will yield my time
8 back, Mr. Chairman, or I will yield the floor.

9 I guess I have taken all my time. But here is the
10 question, let me just give you a chance, Dr. Plum, to
11 address more broadly why shouldn't we be concerned about
12 your past work with Google and Facebook, given those
13 companies histories, given their monopoly power, given how
14 they have leveraged and used their monopoly power across
15 industries, and frankly, some of the pretty disturbing
16 things they have done from censorship to the targeting of
17 young children to the addiction model that they have
18 promoted.

19 I have been, as have many on this committee to be
20 fair, vocal, vocal critics of this. So let me just give
21 you a chance to respond to that. And with that, I yield.

22 Ms. Plum: Senator, appreciate the opportunity. My
23 role at both Facebook and Google was really focused on
24 taking data and analysis and using it to solve specific
25 problems, ISIS recruiting, online child pornography,

1 improving business operations to address copyright
2 violations, financial fraud.

3 So there are certainly bigger issues with both
4 companies and understand this committee and many more
5 publicly have been critical of them. But if confirmed,
6 what I could offer is that my skills in taking data and
7 analysis, in understanding the software development and
8 production cycle, and really how that type of software
9 innovation can be integrated into products at speed and
10 scale, are really key capabilities that we need for our
11 warfighters.

12 And while recognizing there are a range of concerns on
13 the companies, those skills are something I hope to bring
14 to bear to make sure we can effectively and efficiently get
15 the capabilities our warfighters need to match the pacing
16 threat of China.

17 Chairman Reed: Well, thank you very much, Senator
18 Hawley. And thank you all our witnesses for your testimony
19 today. And as I said, we will try to compress the
20 questions to the record so that we can be in a position to
21 move the nominations as quickly as possible. Thank you
22 very, very much. And with that, I will adjourn the
23 hearing.

24 [Whereupon, at 11:18 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

25