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Before the

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

## **UNITED STATES SENATE**

TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATION OF MR. ELBRIDGE A. COLBY  
TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY

Tuesday, March 4, 2025

Washington, D.C.

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1 TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATION OF MR. ELBRIDGE A. COLBY TO BE  
2 UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY

3  
4 Tuesday, March 4, 2025

5  
6 U.S. Senate  
7 Committee on Armed Services  
8 Washington, D.C.  
9

10 The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:32 a.m.,  
11 in Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Roger  
12 Wicker, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

13 Committee Members Present: Senators Wicker, Fischer,  
14 Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Cramer, Rick Scott,  
15 Tuberville, Mullin, Budd, Schmitt, Banks, Sheehy, Reed,  
16 Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King,  
17 Warren, Peters, Duckworth, Rosen, Kelly, and Slotkin.  
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1           OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROGER WICKER, U.S. SENATOR  
2 FROM MISSISSIPPI

3           Chairman Wicker: The hearing will come to order.  
4 Thank you all for being here.

5           This morning, the Committee meets to consider the  
6 nomination of Mr. Elbridge Colby to be Under Secretary of  
7 Defense for Policy. I want to thank Mr. Colby for his  
8 willingness to serve again. I want to thank his wife,  
9 Susana, and their children for being here today.

10          It also says a lot that Mr. Colby will be introduced  
11 today by two distinguished friends, Vice President JD Vance  
12 and Senator Banks. We are informed that the Vice President  
13 is in traffic, and so after consulting to my right and  
14 left, we will proceed, again, because there are time  
15 constraints. And when the Vice President arrives, I think  
16 he will be arriving just in time.

17          So proceeding on, if confirmed, Mr. Colby would  
18 oversee the developments of policy and strategy for the  
19 Department of Defense. He would assume these  
20 responsibilities during the most dangerous security  
21 environment since World War II.

22          The deepening military cooperation between China,  
23 Russia, Iran, and North Korea represents a complex and far-  
24 reaching set of threats. These threats demand a  
25 generational investment to revitalize America's military

1 strength. They demand rapid Pentagon reform, and they  
2 demand a fresh look at strategies needed to achieve our  
3 national security objectives.

4 The American people need to understand what is at  
5 stake. We should help the country appreciate the risks  
6 imposed to our way of life. Beijing is leading an emerging  
7 alliance of countries with one clear objective, to use  
8 their economic and military power to tear down the United  
9 States and impose their will on global affairs. The new  
10 axis of aggressors is a greater menace than we have faced  
11 in decades.

12 Under Xi Jinping's leadership, the Chinese Communist  
13 Party has undertaken one of the largest and most aggressive  
14 military buildups in history. Their speed has been  
15 astounding. In just a few short years, China has built  
16 more nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles than the  
17 U.S. has in decades. They have tested orbital bombardment  
18 weapons and unveiled what may be the world's first sixth-  
19 generation fighter aircraft. China possesses a  
20 shipbuilding capacity over 230 times that of the United  
21 States, over 230 times. That is almost inconceivable.

22 Over 3 years ago, Vladimir Putin launched the first  
23 invasion of a European country since World War II. He has  
24 barraged the Ukrainian people with constant missile and  
25 drone attacks. The Kremlin has developed a variety of new

1 weapons capabilities, including nuclear-armed satellites.  
2 Meanwhile, Russia actively provides enriched uranium to  
3 China to support Beijing's nuclear buildup. Putin has also  
4 been suspected of aiding North Korea's nuclear and missile  
5 programs.

6 Moving on to North Korea, the nuclear arsenal there  
7 continues to advance unchecked. Kim Jong Un has been  
8 aiding Russia's war machine as it terrorizes Europe.  
9 Pyongyang's missiles could soon be capable of overwhelming  
10 our defenses, North Korea's, especially if reports of  
11 Russian assistance are accurate.

12 In the Middle East, Israel has successfully crippled  
13 Iran's proxies in the region, but these setbacks may spur  
14 Tehran to take the final step to build a nuclear weapon,  
15 permanently altering the balance of power in that region.

16 Few really understand how this axis of aggressors is  
17 working to make Americans less safe. If confirmed, I hope  
18 Mr. Colby can help Secretary Hegseth makes sure the public  
19 sees these threats for what they are. During Secretary  
20 Hegseth's hearing I spoke about the importance of building  
21 a motivated and highly competent team of professionals at  
22 the Pentagon. In this regard, Mr. Colby is certainly  
23 qualified for the role to which President Trump has  
24 nominated him.

25 For more than 2 decades, he has worked on defense

1 policy. Mr. Colby previously served as the Deputy  
2 Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Force  
3 Development. In that role, Mr. Colby played a pivotal role  
4 in the formulation of the 2018 National Defense Strategy,  
5 the first real strategy in years. His leadership was  
6 crucial in helping the United States articulate the need  
7 for a new defense posture, one focused on strategic  
8 competition with China and Russia and the overdue  
9 modernization of our military.

10 Mr. Colby and I have been ringing the same bell on  
11 military unpreparedness for years, particularly as it  
12 relates to China. This Committee would echo exhortations  
13 on defense policy in the Western Pacific. We should make  
14 Taiwan a porcupine, and Taipei is sprinting in that  
15 direction. We should build a larger U.S. military  
16 footprint in East Asia, and we should accelerate the most  
17 important weapons programs to deter China.

18 President Trump has made it clear that he intends to  
19 rebuild the military and reform the Pentagon. He  
20 campaigned on peace through strength. We all want to keep  
21 America safe and prosperous. To secure that peace will  
22 enable a golden age for America. But we do not now have  
23 the strength that can guarantee us the peace.

24 Given the threat environment facing us, I strongly  
25 believe that we cannot simply pivot our attention and

1 resources from one threat to another. That is an approach  
2 the Obama Administration tried, and it did fail. We must  
3 be focused and strategic, but we need to be clear. Beijing  
4 sees its fight against America as a global fight. Beijing  
5 is not pivoting between theaters or among theaters.  
6 Significant American withdrawal in Europe, Africa, South  
7 America, or the Middle East will allow the Chinese  
8 Communist Party to overcome us strategically, even if we  
9 are able to prevent military conflict in East Asia in the  
10 near term.

11 In the past few weeks, President Trump has killed five  
12 top al-Qaida and ISIS terrorists. Good for him. He has  
13 green-lit a more aggressive campaign against the Houthis  
14 and promised to support Israel to the hilt. All these  
15 policies are in line with the President's desire for  
16 lasting peace and prosperity in the United States. And,  
17 Mr. Colby, I am sure that is your desire too.

18 Now, Mr. Colby, your views on each theater have  
19 seemingly evolved since 2018, and I am sure there will be  
20 discussions about that that are worth exploring. It goes  
21 without saying that the elephant in this hearing room today  
22 is the recent developments with regard to Ukraine and  
23 Russia and this Administration. I was disappointed and  
24 dismayed as I watched the televised meeting involving the  
25 President of the United States and President Zelensky. And

1 I was distressed that the White House meeting ended without  
2 the signing of the minerals agreement, which was there to  
3 be signed, as I understand it.

4 This was followed by a television appearance by  
5 President Zelensky and then a visit to some of our friends  
6 in Europe where there is much concern about the failure of  
7 that agreement to be signed. It was also followed that  
8 weekend by Mr. Putin's continued barrage of attacking  
9 apartments, civilian targets, and other areas in Ukraine,  
10 not a good weekend for peace in Ukraine or world peace.  
11 The President is trying to get a peace deal in Ukraine, and  
12 I certainly hope we will be able to get this back on the  
13 rails.

14 I would like to hear your views on the potential  
15 there. Your views on President Trump's crystal-clear Iran  
16 policy seem to have hardened considerably, yet your views  
17 on Taiwan's importance to the United States seems to have  
18 softened considerably. I hope we can clarify those views  
19 today. And your views on the relevance of nuclear weapons  
20 in the next decade remain unclear to me. I would  
21 appreciate your comments on each of those issues.

22 Mr. Colby, you have spoken frequently to audiences who  
23 are skeptical of the idea that U.S. peace and prosperity  
24 requires us to wield U.S. power abroad. I am grateful that  
25 you have led those discussions, discussions that U.S.



1 foreign policy professionals do not like having. I expect  
2 your points on the limits of U.S. power remain nuanced and  
3 complimentary to the President's peace-through-strength  
4 agenda, and it will be crystal clear that you will speak  
5 for the President in this regard.

6 If you are focused on finding innovative ways to blend  
7 America's comparative advantages in this global fight  
8 against Chinese communists, I strongly believe you will be  
9 a boon to the President and to the United States of  
10 America. I would like to hear your strategic vision for  
11 the next 4 years. I would like to hear your comments on  
12 the plans I have released for rebuilding and reforming the  
13 military.

14 In confirming Secretary Hegseth, we charged him with  
15 focusing on four guiding principles as he assumed office,  
16 lethality, efficiency, speed, and accountability. I also  
17 appreciate the easy access that he and I have had in  
18 conversations with each other since his confirmation. As  
19 Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, I would like to know  
20 how you plan to execute in these four areas to support  
21 President Trump's peace-through-strength agenda.

22 So thank you very much for being here. We look  
23 forward to your testimony.

24 And I now recognize Ranking Member Reed for his  
25 opening remarks.

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

3           Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr.  
4 Chairman.

5           Mr. Colby, congratulations on your nomination, and  
6 welcome to today's hearing. I would also like to recognize  
7 your wife, Susana, and sons, Orlando and Thomas, and your  
8 parents, siblings, and family members with us today. I  
9 would also, in anticipation of his arrival, like to welcome  
10 the Vice President and certainly my colleague, Senator  
11 Banks. Thank you.

12           Mr. Colby, you have been nominated to be the Under  
13 Secretary of Defense for Policy, or the USDP. The USDP  
14 serves as a principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense  
15 and plays a critical role in developing long-term strategic  
16 policies of the Department. If confirmed, you would lead  
17 defense policy at a consequential time. There is a common  
18 understanding that the future of our national security is  
19 tied significantly to our competition with China. This  
20 competition is occurring across every field of national  
21 power -- military, economic, political, technological, and  
22 more -- and across every region of the world.

23           Mr. Colby, as you have written extensively, America's  
24 success in this competition will depend on our credibility  
25 in the eyes of our allies and our adversaries. If our

1 allies in the Indo-Pacific perceive us to be untrustworthy  
2 or unreliable, they will hesitate to stand with us when we  
3 need them. And if China believes that we can be worn down  
4 through cajoling or bullying, they will take bold risks.

5 And I am deeply concerned that the Trump  
6 Administration is surrendering our credibility at this very  
7 moment. For 3 years, the United States has stood with  
8 Ukraine and with our NATO allies in the face of Vladimir  
9 Putin's unprovoked, bloody assault on Ukraine. Indeed, for  
10 the better part of a century, we have stood against  
11 Russia's aggression and been the global standard-bearer of  
12 democracy. But now, after barely a month in office,  
13 President Trump has attacked this legacy and signaled he  
14 would rather align the United States with Vladimir Putin  
15 than our democratic allies. Make no mistake, China is  
16 watching.

17 We should be proud that the United States has led a  
18 formidable group of nations to support Ukraine and defend  
19 democracy on the world stage. However, President Trump  
20 seems eager to strike a deal with Vladimir Putin at any  
21 cost, even conceding our most valuable points of leverage  
22 before reaching the negotiating table. His recent claim  
23 that Ukraine, not Russia, started this war is offensive,  
24 and his attacks against President Zelensky are badly  
25 misguided. Frankly, the spectacle in the Oval Office last

1 week was a failure of American leadership. President  
2 Zelensky and the people of Ukraine are fighting for their  
3 very lives, and to suggest that they are ungrateful for  
4 American aid is absurd.

5 Many of my colleagues and I, including those here  
6 today, have traveled to Ukraine many times and seen  
7 firsthand the death and destruction wrought by Vladimir  
8 Putin against innocent people. To deride Ukraine or our  
9 allies is a mistake that only benefits Putin. Just last  
10 night, President Trump cut off all military aid to Ukraine.  
11 Make no mistake, his callous decision will only endanger  
12 innocent Ukrainians and encourage Russia to escalate its  
13 attacks. The United States is paying with money; the  
14 Ukrainians are paying with their lives.

15 The Administration's actions are doing great harm to  
16 America's standing in the world, showing anyone who is  
17 paying attention that the United States can no longer be  
18 trusted. President Xi is certainly taking notice.

19 Mr. Colby, you have argued against U.S. support for  
20 Ukraine and called for steep reductions to America's role  
21 in Europe. I ask you to explain these views and how, if  
22 confirmed, you would work to repair America's standing with  
23 our allies, as well as our competitive position with  
24 respect to our adversaries.

25 The Department of Defense has long built its strategy

1 around the idea of winning in an armed conflict and  
2 deterring China through military dominance. That is no  
3 longer enough. The game has changed, and our capacity for  
4 outright victory through military strength should not be  
5 our only measure of success. The Defense Department needs  
6 to better understand China's strategy for increasing its  
7 capabilities and influence, including in the so-called gray  
8 zone, below the threshold of traditional armed conflict.  
9 We must also develop new tools for competition and  
10 integrate our activities with those of our allies and  
11 partners.

12 Mr. Colby, you have written and spoken extensively  
13 about these concepts. You are lead author of the 2018  
14 National Defense Strategy and have played an important role  
15 in defense policy through your previous positions in the  
16 Department and had a number of thinktanks. I would ask for  
17 your views on how the Department of Defense should pursue  
18 competition and deterrence with China, especially as it  
19 relates to the United States' relationship with Taiwan and  
20 our network of allies in the region. I would also like to  
21 know your priorities for the forthcoming round of defense  
22 policy reviews, including the next National Defense  
23 Strategy.

24 You have also argued that the United States must  
25 rigorously prioritize our efforts on great power

1 competition with China, to include withdrawing forces from  
2 other theaters. I agree that we should be thoughtful and  
3 disciplined about how we use the military. That is why I  
4 am skeptical of the President's deployment of thousands of  
5 troops to the southern border and Guantanamo Bay. Border  
6 security and immigration enforcement are critical to our  
7 national security, but these current missions are dubious  
8 at best. The Department estimates that it will spend \$1  
9 billion to \$2 billion for unplanned border missions this  
10 year, even as illegal migrant encounters are at the lowest  
11 level since August of 2020. The Government Accountability  
12 Office has assessed these missions in recent years and  
13 found, quote, "Separating units in order to assign a  
14 portion of them to the southwest border mission was a  
15 consistent trend in degrading readiness ratings."

16 Mr. Colby, I have serious doubts about these missions.  
17 I would like to know what role you believe military forces  
18 should play in border security and whether the Defense  
19 Department should be involved in enforcing immigration  
20 policies that fall in the purview of the Department of  
21 Homeland Security and essentially law enforcement  
22 operations which posse comitatus circumscribes dramatically  
23 for the military.

24 Finally, you will need to reconcile your views with  
25 the current, longstanding bipartisan approach of the United

1 States to the Middle East. The region remains extremely  
2 unstable after more than a year of violence between Israel,  
3 Hamas, Iran, and its proxies, and the fall of the Assad  
4 regime. Mr. Colby, you have advocated for a much more  
5 limited role in the region and suggested that the U.S.  
6 should be willing to tolerate a nuclear-armed Iran. I hope  
7 you will address your views on these issues and how you  
8 would work to advance U.S. national security interests in  
9 the Middle East.

10 If confirmed, you will lead at a challenging moment.  
11 All of our potential adversaries, including China, Russia,  
12 Iran, and North Korea, are seeking ways to undermine our  
13 interest and supplant our leadership. I would ask for your  
14 plans on how the Department can pursue every available  
15 opportunity to advance our national interest. I certainly  
16 look forward to your testimony.

17 Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

18 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Ranking Member.

19 And before we proceed, guests and members, including  
20 the Chair, are sternly admonished to silence all phones and  
21 electronic devices.

22 Mr. Vice President, I see that you have arrived and  
23 you are next on our list. Thank you very much for joining  
24 us this morning to introduce your friend and the nominee.  
25 And I now turn to you for your comments. Thank you so

1 much.

2 Vice President Vance: Great. Thank you, Chairman  
3 Wicker, and thanks to the Ranking Member, Senator Reed, and  
4 thanks to all my friends from across the aisle who permit  
5 this brief intrusion into what was otherwise, I am sure, a  
6 very distinguished and interesting conversation. But I  
7 wanted to be here because I thought it was important to  
8 tell you all about my friend Bridge Colby and why I think  
9 he is important to the President's defense policy and  
10 important to what the President is trying to accomplish  
11 with national security.

12 So, first, I think Bridge, more than any person I have  
13 ever spoken to, appreciates that military power, national  
14 security influence is downstream of economic power. As we  
15 have seen in so many of the conflicts that we have engaged  
16 ourselves in over the last 30 or 40 years, we cannot fight  
17 wars unless our troops have the ammunition they need. We  
18 cannot defend our own national security unless we have the  
19 tank shells, the artillery shells, and increasingly, the  
20 drones and other advanced weapon systems that are necessary  
21 to actually fight battles when, God forbid, those battles  
22 are necessary to fight. And I think Bridge has been  
23 particularly aware of and worried about the degradation of  
24 our defense industrial base and how we must rebuild it if  
25 we want to preserve our own national security.



1 I have had many conversations with Bridge before I was  
2 United States Senator, certainly before I was the Vice  
3 President of the United States where, in so many ways,  
4 Bridge predicted what we would be talking about 4 years  
5 down the road, 5 years down the road, 10 years down the  
6 road. He saw around corners that very few other people  
7 were seeing around. That doesn't mean he is always right  
8 about every issue or that you will agree with him on every  
9 issue, and I say that to both the Democrats and the  
10 Republicans on the Committee.

11 But I think that he has the type of perspective that  
12 we need so desperately in the Department of Defense. And I  
13 think that his role at the Department of Defense will be  
14 incredibly important in seeing around the corners of the  
15 next 5 years and the next 10 years. And that is one of the  
16 most important reasons why I think we should support his  
17 nomination at this great Committee, but obviously, support  
18 his confirmation in the United States Senate.

19 Let me say a couple of other things about Bridge, and  
20 then I will let you guys get on with the Committee hearing.  
21 First of all, Bridge is a person of incredible integrity  
22 and intellect. His educational credentials are  
23 extraordinary. But to my Democratic friends, I think you  
24 will also find he is a person who can actually work across  
25 the aisle. If you look at his long career in defense

1 policy, he has said things that has, you know, frankly,  
2 alienated Democrats and Republicans. He has also said  
3 things that I think both Democrats and Republicans would  
4 agree with.

5 He obviously is a conservative. He obviously is the  
6 nominee of President Trump, and we nominated him because we  
7 think he is going to do a great job. But I think you will  
8 find that he is the kind of guy that you can engage in  
9 meaningful conversation, whatever your agreement or  
10 disagreement with his views is. And again, that is one of  
11 the things that we need to bring to the Department of  
12 Defense.

13 Bridge is a good guy. And I said this in the only  
14 other confirmation hearing that I actually introduced the  
15 guest, Secretary Lutnick. You need good people in  
16 government. You need people who are going to tell you the  
17 truth, who are going to look you in the eye, who are going  
18 to disagree, sometimes amicably, of course, but actually be  
19 willing to look you in the eye and have an important  
20 conversation, who you can trust to tell you what they  
21 actually think, agree or disagree, and that is the kind of  
22 person that Bridge is.

23 He is a great family man. He comes from a life of  
24 service, but also a family of service going back many  
25 generations, and he is the kind of guy that we need working

1 on policy at the senior levels at the Department of  
2 Defense, and of course, that is why the President nominated  
3 him.

4 And the final thing that I want to say about Bridge is  
5 so much of this question of rebuilding the industrial base  
6 -- and I think it is one of the few areas of genuine  
7 bipartisan agreement. We may not always agree exactly how  
8 to do it, but I think everybody pretty much agrees that we  
9 have to build the industrial base in the United States that  
10 can support the national security policy of the next  
11 generation. Whether you have a Democrat or a Republican  
12 President 20 years from now, you need to ensure that the  
13 troops who are under the command of that Commander in Chief  
14 actually have the weapons systems necessary to support  
15 themselves and to accomplish the mission.

16 That is not a simple matter of throwing money at the  
17 problem. That is not a simple matter of saying we need to  
18 buy more weapons. It also goes deeply into questions of  
19 procurement. How are we buying those weapons? How are we  
20 engaging with the technologists of the 21st century?  
21 Because we are never going to beat China in a war of  
22 population. They have, what, 1.3, 1.4 billion people, and  
23 we have got just north of 300 million. But what we can do  
24 is actually have the kind of technology that gives our  
25 troops and gives our people the advantage over the long

1 haul, and that means not just buying more weapons. That  
2 means being smart about how we buy weapons in a way that  
3 enhances our technological edge and ensures that upstarts,  
4 not just the big five incumbents, but upstarts can  
5 participate in the process of procurement and of giving our  
6 troops the weapons systems that they need.

7 So I think that we need to think deeply about these  
8 questions. I think that President Trump and the Department  
9 of Defense Secretary Hegseth on down are thinking deeply  
10 about these questions. Bridge Colby is an important part  
11 not just of thinking about these questions, but also  
12 accomplishing important policy.

13 And so with all respect to all of you, and knowing  
14 that all of you will make up your own minds, I highly  
15 encourage you to give Bridge Colby your stamp of approval.  
16 He is a good guy, he is a smart guy, and he will do a good  
17 job for the United States of America.

18 Thank you all for having me.

19 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very, very much, Mr. Vice  
20 President. We appreciate you being here, and I know you  
21 are busy, but we certainly would be delighted to have you  
22 stay around. Thank you so much.

23 Senator Banks --

24 Senator Banks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 Chairman Wicker: -- can you top that?

1 Senator Banks: It is hard to follow our good friend.

2 Chairman Wicker: You are recognized, sir.

3 Senator Banks: Thank you, Chairman Wicker, Ranking  
4 Member Reed, fellow members of the most important Committee  
5 in the entire Congress, the Senate Armed Services  
6 Committee. It is good to be with all of you today to  
7 introduce my friend Elbridge Colby, the President's choice  
8 to be the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy at the  
9 Pentagon.

10 I have known Elbridge Colby, or Bridge, for a very  
11 long time. I got to know him in the first Trump term, but  
12 he became an advisor to me when I served on the House Armed  
13 Services Committee, and even more importantly, he became  
14 deeply involved in the Republican Study Committee that I  
15 chaired, the largest caucus on Capitol Hill in the House,  
16 helping us to understand the world, how to talk about it,  
17 what to do about the complex issues around the world.

18 The threats that we face around the world are  
19 increasingly sophisticated, but I am confident that with  
20 Bridge in charge of developing and implementing our defense  
21 strategy, America will be wholly prepared. Bridge already  
22 knows his way around the Pentagon from his time as a senior  
23 official in OSD policy in the first Trump term, the very  
24 office, by the way, that we are considering his nomination  
25 for today. He is eminently qualified for this role.

1           While in OSD, he co-led and was the key architect of  
2 the development of President Trump's 2018 National Defense  
3 Strategy. After 2 decades of prioritizing wars in the  
4 Middle East, the National Defense Strategy under Bridge and  
5 the first Trump Administration rightly refocused the U.S.  
6 military on great power competition with China and  
7 maintaining American superiority in the Pacific. Bridge  
8 has been a leader in courageously stating this truth:  
9 America's focus must be on the military threat from  
10 communist China, and the U.S. and our allies are running  
11 out of time to act on it.

12           Bridge has written numerous reports and articles on  
13 foreign policy and defense, as well as his widely studied  
14 book, The Strategy of Denial, which I will admit is dry but  
15 incredibly substantive. And I recommend that every member  
16 of this Committee read his book. I believe his answers to  
17 your question today will underline his expertise, his  
18 unique qualifications for this role and this position. He  
19 will make an excellent Under Secretary of Defense for  
20 Policy, and I look forward to working with all of you as  
21 fellow members of this Committee to swiftly confirm his  
22 nomination and get him on the job. You won't be  
23 disappointed.

24           Mr. Chairman, thank you. It is an honor to be with  
25 all of you today.

1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very, very much, Senator  
2 Banks. And you are welcome to resume your seat or to stay  
3 there at the desk. But thank you very much. And again,  
4 our thanks to our Vice President.

5 Mr. Colby, you are now recognized for your opening  
6 statement.

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1           STATEMENT OF ELBRIDGE A. COLBY, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY  
2 OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY

3           Mr. Colby: Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Reed,  
4 distinguished members of the Armed Services Committee, it  
5 is an exceptional personal honor to appear before you today  
6 to be considered for the position of Under Secretary of  
7 Defense for Policy. I would like to begin by expressing my  
8 deep gratitude to President Trump for nominating me for  
9 this role. I am committed to implementing his vision of a  
10 defense and foreign policy of putting Americans' interests  
11 first and of peace through strength. I am deeply honored  
12 by the President's confidence in me.

13           Thank you in particular to Vice President Vance for  
14 his exceptionally kind introduction and his confidence. I  
15 am profoundly honored by his support and presence here  
16 today.

17           And thank you very much to Senator Jim Banks for his  
18 incredibly generous introduction. I am deeply honored as  
19 well.

20           I would also like to express my great gratitude to  
21 Secretary of Defense Hegseth for his support and  
22 confidence.

23           I would also like to thank the members of this  
24 Committee for their consideration. I very much appreciated  
25 my engagement with you and your staffs over the last weeks



1 and have learned a great deal. If confirmed, I would look  
2 forward to deepening this engagement.

3 Finally, I would like especially to express my  
4 personal thanks to my family for their love and support,  
5 especially to my wife, Susana, and our sons, Orlando and  
6 Thomas, seated behind me. I would also like to thank my  
7 parents, Jonathan and Susan, as well as other family  
8 members and friends present here today, as well as the  
9 family and friends who are not here but have supported me  
10 in this process and throughout my life and career.

11 Members of this Committee, with your permission, I  
12 will keep my opening remarks brief.

13 The position of Under Secretary of Defense for Policy  
14 is a role that comes with genuinely profound and grave  
15 responsibilities, and my nomination comes at a time, as  
16 this Committee has eloquently laid out, of deep peril for  
17 our country. Peace and the protection of American  
18 interests in the world cannot be assumed. There is a real  
19 risk of major war, and we cannot afford to lose one. I  
20 recognize these realities in my bones. It is my great hope  
21 that we can get through the coming years peacefully with  
22 strength in ways that put us and our alliances on a  
23 stronger and more sustainable footing. If confirmed, I  
24 would do all in my power to make it so.

25 I know some of you will have different views on

1 important issues, but I can assure you of several things --  
2 that I am deeply committed to a foreign and defense policy  
3 that realistically protects and advances all Americans'  
4 security, freedoms, and prosperity; that I am willing and  
5 ready to engage with those who disagree with me and adapt  
6 my views based on persuasive arguments and the facts; that  
7 I value our alliances deeply, even as I think they must be  
8 adapted; and that I love our great country and will put its  
9 interests first and foremost.

10 If confirmed, I pledge to strive with every fiber to  
11 meet the grave responsibilities of this important office  
12 with judgment, commitment, and determination. I look  
13 forward to your questions. Thank you.

14 [The prepared statement of Mr. Colby follows:]  
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1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. At this point,  
2 I am required to ask you a number of questions, which we  
3 ask all nominees.

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

6 Mr. Colby: I have, Senator.

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

10 Mr. Colby: I have not, Senator.

11 Chairman Wicker: 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. Mr. Colby, do you agree, if  
17 confirmed, to appear and testify before this Committee when  
18 requested?

19 Mr. Colby: I do, Senator.

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

1 Mr. Colby: I do, Senator.

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

7 Mr. Colby: I will, Senator.

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

11 Mr. Colby: I will, Senator.

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

14 Mr. Colby: They will, Senator.

15 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much.

16 Now, we are going to begin a round questions limited  
17 to 5 minutes per member, and I am going to hold myself as  
18 Chair to that 5 minutes also.

19 So at this point, let me begin by asking about a  
20 couple of policy advisors that are already in place. One  
21 of your advisors, if confirmed, would be Mr. Michael  
22 Dimino. You did not choose Mr. Dimino for that --

23 Mr. Colby: Senator, no, I was not the hiring  
24 person --

25 Chairman Wicker: He said recently, quote, "There are

1 no vital or existential U.S. interests in the Middle East,"  
2 unquote. Mr. Colby, to your understanding, does that  
3 reflect the President's policy in the Middle East?

4 Mr. Colby: Senator, no, I think that the President  
5 has made clear that we do have really important interests  
6 in the Middle East.

7 Chairman Wicker: Does Mr. Dimino's policy  
8 pronouncement reflect your own views?

9 Mr. Colby: Senator, no, he does not speak for me, and  
10 I think I have a number of views that differ materially  
11 from his from what I understand just in public reporting.

12 Chairman Wicker: Another policy advisor is Mr. Andrew  
13 Byers. He is an advisor on southeast Asia. He believes  
14 that thinking about Communist China through the lens of  
15 deterrence is wrong. He thinks maybe we should give up  
16 what he calls, quote, "belligerent" policies toward China  
17 and see if they will reciprocate. He apparently thinks  
18 pressing Beijing on trade is a bad idea. So, Mr. Colby,  
19 does that reflect President Trump's policy on China in your  
20 view?

21 Mr. Colby: It does not, Senator, and I would say that  
22 it does not reflect mine. I mean, as I think Senator Banks  
23 and the Vice President kindly mentioned, I wrote a book  
24 really focused on the lens of deterrence. And, of course,  
25 as the Vice President I think rightly mentioned, we also

1 need to be thinking about the economic dimension. And, of  
2 course, the Administration is already taking measures in  
3 that direction. Again, I am not intimately familiar with  
4 his work, but it seems like a quite different perspective  
5 than my own.

6 Chairman Wicker: And I do understand that you have  
7 made no determination as to whether Mr. Dimino and/or Mr.  
8 Byers will be retained in those positions?

9 Mr. Colby: Sir, as part of not presuming, my  
10 understanding is that I should not be even sort of thinking  
11 in that way. Senator, what I would say is that, if  
12 confirmed, obviously, I would be only one person in a  
13 chain, including, of course, the Secretary of Defense, the  
14 Presidential personnel office, and ultimately, the  
15 President, the Vice President, and so forth. But what I  
16 would commit to you is that anybody in my organization, if  
17 I am confirmed, should be in line with the President's  
18 agenda, including the issues that you mentioned.

19 Chairman Wicker: Very well.

20 Mr. Colby: Yeah.

21 Chairman Wicker: Thank you. Mr. Colby, as I  
22 mentioned in my opening statement, I have appreciated what  
23 I view as your clear articulation of the core U.S. interest  
24 in Taiwan, which are too infrequently discussed in the  
25 public here in America. As you wrote in American Compass

1 last year, quote, "Nothing that could happen abroad is more  
2 plausibly and gravely threatening to Americans than China  
3 invading Taiwan," unquote. Your 2022 article at Stanford  
4 has about as good a one-paragraph summary of our interest  
5 in Taiwan as I have seen, yet in November of last year,  
6 some people believe your position may have taken a marked  
7 turn as you wrote, quote, "America has a strong interest in  
8 defending Taiwan, but Americans could survive without it."

9 So, Mr. Colby, I will let you respond to that. But  
10 specifically, can the United States enjoy a golden age for  
11 America with increasing prosperity for our citizens in this  
12 century if we fail to deter China and Taiwan, or worse yet,  
13 lose that war?

14 Mr. Colby: Well, thanks, Senator. Losing Taiwan,  
15 Taiwan's fall would be a disaster for American interests.  
16 The underlying logic behind my position is that the  
17 military balance vis-à-vis China, as you, sir, and your  
18 fellow Committee members have amply and eloquently pointed  
19 out, has deteriorated dramatically. What I have been  
20 trying to shoot a signal flare over is that it is vital for  
21 us to focus and enable our own forces for an effective and  
22 reasonable defense of Taiwan, and for the Taiwanese, as  
23 well as the Japanese, to do more.

24 So my position in terms of the value of Taiwan is  
25 consistent, but what I am very fearful of, Senator -- and I

1 think this is agreed across Administrations of both parties  
2 -- is that, you know, the military balance has declined.  
3 So I am trying to avoid a situation in which, because we  
4 are not adequately prepared, we get in a situation -- the  
5 analogy I like to use is Winston Churchill in 1940 wanting  
6 to send Spitfires and Hurricanes to the Battle of France,  
7 but Marshall Dowding saying, if we do that, we are not  
8 going to be prepared to be able to defend the Home Islands.  
9 That is sort of an extreme example, but that is what we  
10 are --

11 Chairman Wicker: How soon will it --

12 Mr. Colby: -- trying to avoid.

13 Chairman Wicker: -- take us to get prepared?

14 Mr. Colby: Essentially, my number one, or one of my  
15 very top priorities, if confirmed, to try to get us  
16 prepared as quickly as possible, and then over the medium  
17 and longer term as well, Senator.

18 Chairman Wicker: And you and I are absolutely united  
19 on that.

20 Mr. Colby: Great.

21 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much.

22 Chairman Reed.

23 Senator Reed: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 And, Mr. Colby, you have advocated reduction in  
25 support for Ukraine, which you characterize as a



1 distraction from Taiwan. Yet former CIA Director Bill  
2 Burns, one of the most astute commentators about Russia,  
3 former Ambassador, CIA Director, stated that no one is  
4 watching U.S. support for Ukraine more closely than Chinese  
5 leaders. And, quote, "One of the surest ways to rekindle  
6 Chinese perceptions of American fecklessness and stoke  
7 Chinese aggressiveness would be to abandon support for  
8 Ukraine." So what message are the President's actions  
9 sending?

10 Mr. Colby: Well, Senator, I would say a couple  
11 things. One, my arguments about Ukraine have been based on  
12 the need for strategic prioritization. I don't contest the  
13 fact that the Chinese are looking at what we are doing in  
14 Ukraine at all. But fundamentally, Senator, in my view --  
15 and I think it should be of particular interest to this  
16 Committee, sir -- is that we have to have the military  
17 capabilities in Asia or relevant to Asia to be able to  
18 conduct a local defense of Taiwan at a cost and level of  
19 risk that the American people are prepared to tolerate.  
20 And that has been my main focus.

21 My aspiration, if I would put another and to kind of  
22 build on what the Vice President was saying, a longer-term  
23 top priority for me, if confirmed, would be to revivify our  
24 defense industrial base so that we are no longer in a  
25 position where our defense industrial base cannot produce

1 at levels where we can resource in multiple theaters at the  
2 level that we need. That is where we want to get back to.

3 Senator Reed: Well, I don't think there is a dispute  
4 about reinvigorating the industrial base. I think, though,  
5 there is, from astute personalities like Bill Burns, the  
6 fear that we are sending dramatically the wrong lesson.  
7 Indeed, on November 2023 you stated, quote, "Invasion of  
8 the Ukraine is an evil act by the Russians, and I morally  
9 support the Ukrainian defense." Do you still agree with  
10 that statement?

11 Mr. Colby: Senator, I stand by my record, but at this  
12 point, I think there is a very delicate diplomatic process  
13 going on where the President is rightfully trying to  
14 resuscitate the peace process, and I don't think it would  
15 be appropriate for me to weigh in on the specific case --

16 Senator Reed: Well, the President indicated the  
17 Russians invaded Ukraine, which is completely erroneous,  
18 and that Zelensky is a dictator, which is, I think, also  
19 erroneous. And, you know, we are in an awkward situation  
20 now. He is cutting every sort of tool we have, and that is  
21 not the way to negotiate. I don't think that was in The  
22 Art of the Deal. So I think we are in a very serious  
23 situation.

24 Let me change topics for a moment. General Mattis,  
25 who I respect immensely as former Secretary of Defense and

1 as a Marine, stated, "If you don't fund the State  
2 Department fully, then I need to buy more ammunition,"  
3 which raises the question of the wisdom of eviscerating the  
4 USAID. In many places in the world -- and you know this --  
5 that is the only American presence. That is the  
6 counterpoint to Chinese incursions all across the globe,  
7 and now we have put them out of business. And it has been  
8 indicated that this will cause millions of unnecessary  
9 deaths, particularly the children and women, and it seems  
10 to be undercutting our power in the world, our soft power.  
11 Your thoughts?

12 Mr. Colby: Well, Senator, I think it is certainly  
13 very important to have an effective and efficient  
14 diplomatic arm, the State Department, as well as a  
15 development arm, and I would certainly support that. It  
16 would not be within my purview, obviously, a number of the  
17 issues that you are raising, if confirmed, but I certainly  
18 support a tight interaction and integration with the other  
19 arms of national power, especially in an era as our -- you  
20 know, as we said in Secretary Mattis' defense strategy  
21 where we are no longer in a kind of unipolar militarily  
22 dominant situation.

23 Senator Reed: With respect to NATO, I mean, one of  
24 the fallouts from our Ukrainian decisions over the last few  
25 days is that our European allies feel essentially

1 abandoned, that the NATO alliance is as fragile as it has  
2 ever been. And, as we all recognize, NATO was the key  
3 since 1949 to our ability to stabilize the world and to  
4 promote a democratic and economic agenda that favored the  
5 West, and that is in danger now.

6 The President, in his last term, was insisting on 2  
7 percent or everybody at NATO -- now it is more -- almost  
8 like a landlord saying, I am raising the rent unless you do  
9 something, something, something. Do you believe the NATO  
10 alliance has made us stronger and that if it is  
11 jeopardized, we will be in serious trouble?

12 Mr. Colby: Senator, I believe that the NATO alliance  
13 has been an exceptionally successful alliance, but I think  
14 if we are going to sustain it, it needs to move in the  
15 direction that President Trump is leading it in and where I  
16 think the Europeans are finally moving. If you look at  
17 Chancellor Merz, who is coming in in Germany, or President  
18 Macron or Prime Minister Starmer, they are not only  
19 spending more -- 2 percent is manifestly inadequate.  
20 General Cavoli has said that. Many others have said that.  
21 They need to see real combat capabilities. The  
22 conversation has materially improved in recent months and  
23 over the last few years where we can get NATO into a more  
24 balanced fashion. And, Senator, I believe that that is  
25 much more consistent with the model of NATO that existed

1 during the Cold War, rather than the post-Cold War model,  
2 which is too heavily lopsided in American responsibility,  
3 and it needs to change to be sustained.

4 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Colby.

5 Mr. Colby: Thanks.

6 Senator Reed: Thank you.

7 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Senator Reed. Mr. Colby,  
8 welcome.

9 Mr. Colby: Thank you.

10 Senator Fischer: Welcome to you --

11 Mr. Colby: Thanks, Senator.

12 Senator Fischer: -- and your family and friends.

13 In your answers to the Committee's advanced policy  
14 questions, you stated that, quote, "U.S. nuclear forces  
15 underpin our entire deterrence and defense posture," end  
16 quote, and that, quote, "Ensuring we retain a modern,  
17 capable, and effective nuclear deterrent should be our top  
18 priority," end quote. I agree with those statements.  
19 Nuclear deterrence must be the foundation for any defense  
20 strategy.

21 However, this foundation is threatened because of  
22 decades of underinvestment and poor management. I am  
23 confident this Administration can correct the course of our  
24 modernization programs, both through adequate resourcing  
25 and by approving our acquisition strategies for Sentinel,

1 Columbia, and B-21.

2 Mr. Colby, if confirmed, will you commit to working  
3 with this Committee to fully modernize all aspects of our  
4 nuclear triad and continuing the work of the first Trump  
5 Administration to rebuild our nation's most important  
6 military capabilities?

7 Mr. Colby: I do, Senator.

8 Senator Fischer: Thank you. Russia has nearly  
9 completed their modernization of all of their nuclear  
10 forces, and China is modernizing, and they are growing  
11 their arsenal at a breathtaking speed, yet the combination  
12 of an industrial base that we continually worry about in  
13 this country and overly complicated acquisition policies,  
14 it holds us back from keeping pace. You have talked about  
15 that. The Vice President talked about that in his  
16 introduction to you as well. If confirmed, what policies  
17 would you recommend to increase the overall capacity of  
18 that industrial base?

19 Mr. Colby: Well, Senator, I think actually a number  
20 of the things that the Vice President has spoken about and  
21 the President, which is that a broader reindustrialization,  
22 in my view, is necessary to fix a lot of the defense  
23 industrial base issues, not just with the nuclear forces,  
24 as critical as they are, but also with the broader  
25 conventional forces as well, which is to say -- and I know

1 this Committee has drawn attention to this problem -- that  
2 despite the investment of money, often the results are less  
3 than people would like to see, for instance, because of  
4 workforce issues.

5 So, if confirmed, I wouldn't approach the problem with  
6 saying I have all of the particular policy ideas set, and I  
7 am going to -- you know, in terms of improving the  
8 industrial production. But what I would see my role as  
9 making very clear that revamping and restoring a really  
10 healthy and robust defense industrial base is absolutely a  
11 national priority.

12 And what I have said as a private commentator, but I  
13 believe as a public official, if confirmed, is that we kind  
14 of need a national mobilization of our defense industrial  
15 base. We need to be able to get better results, and it  
16 seems to me that is something that could get wide  
17 agreement.

18 Senator Fischer: Do you have in mind any acquisition  
19 policies that you would revamp at this point in time, that  
20 you would recommend changing or even eliminating?

21 Mr. Colby: Senator, at this point, I wouldn't have  
22 any specific ones. I know a lot of those would be under  
23 the purview of the Under Secretary of Defense for  
24 Acquisition and other, you know, the Service Secretaries  
25 and so forth. I would be delighted to dive into that issue

1 further and give you a more concrete answer, but, again, I  
2 would see my role, if confirmed as the USDP, to kind of  
3 drive the overall strategic direction that we need to get  
4 better results out of our defense industrial base.

5 Senator Fischer: Should we utilize the Defense  
6 Production Act --

7 Mr. Colby: I think that --

8 Senator Fischer: -- in order to move forward?

9 Mr. Colby: -- absolutely would make -- and  
10 deregulation in general at that level, I think all options  
11 should be on the table, including things that seem pretty  
12 dramatic because I think, as the Chairman rightly said, we  
13 live in a very dramatic situation and world.

14 Senator Fischer: The Department is also modernizing  
15 our NC3, which the Strategic Forces Subcommittee calls the  
16 fourth leg of our triad. If confirmed, will you ensure  
17 that this effort receives the necessary attention and the  
18 resources that it needs?

19 Mr. Colby: Yes, I will.

20 Senator Fischer: Thank you. Would you prioritize it,  
21 along with our triad, as the top priority of the  
22 Department?

23 Mr. Colby: Certainly. I mean, I think command and  
24 control is absolutely essential, and when we are living in  
25 a world of much more capable cyber capabilities, not to



1 mention missile threats, not just the traditional strategic  
2 strike threats, but also a range of different threats that  
3 are evolving very quickly, we have to absolutely pay really  
4 critical attention to NC3.

5 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Colby.

6 Mr. Colby: Thank you.

7 Senator Fischer: [Presiding.] Senator Gillibrand,  
8 you are recognized.

9 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

10 Thank you for appearing here. Thank you for bringing  
11 your family. This is a very significant role you are  
12 undertaking that takes enormous amounts of responsibility  
13 and thoughtful judgment.

14 I want to talk about the threats we are facing from  
15 around the globe. We have continued to see cyber threats  
16 from Russia. We had solar winds. We had the Colonial  
17 Pipeline compromise. We had the 2016 effort to undermine  
18 our electoral infrastructure. It was reported last week  
19 that Secretary Hegseth ordered a halt on Cyber Comm's  
20 offensive operations against Russia. We have not heard  
21 anything from Russia that they are similarly disarming.  
22 What advice will you give to President Trump with regard to  
23 how to keep the United States safe from Russian attacks  
24 through cyber and other means?

25 Mr. Colby: Senator, I haven't seen the actual

1 document, so I only have what I am going on based on public  
2 reporting, but my recommendation would be that we should  
3 maintain the highest level of cyber vigilance and  
4 capability vis-à-vis Russia, as well as others like China.

5 Senator Gillibrand: Would you unilaterally disarm and  
6 not use offensive operations?

7 Mr. Colby: Senator, I don't know exactly what is  
8 going on. I couldn't comment about what is going on, but  
9 generally, I think these reciprocal steps in the sort of  
10 logic of arms control -- or, excuse me, steps should be  
11 reciprocated credibly.

12 Senator Gillibrand: Correct. Would you consider  
13 Russia to be postured as an adversary or as an ally?

14 Mr. Colby: From a military point of view, from a  
15 defense point of view, Senator, as I put it in my responses  
16 to the advanced policy questions, Russia presents a  
17 significant military threat to Europe, and they are a  
18 significant military threat to the homeland as well. And I  
19 think from a defense point of view, we need to regard that  
20 in a very clear-eyed way.

21 At the same time, as an overall strategy, I think that  
22 can support and be compatible with an effort to diminish,  
23 you know, the potential for direct confrontation with  
24 Russia in the same way with China as well.

25 Senator Gillibrand: Who started the war in Ukraine?

1           Mr. Colby:   Senator, as I said earlier, I think this  
2 is a very delicate diplomatic time. I have spoken about  
3 this in the past. I would hate to be in a situation of  
4 disrupting or inhibiting progress on peace. I think the  
5 President and the Vice President have been very clear that  
6 words matter, and I don't think it is appropriate for me to  
7 be commenting on these delicate topics.

8           Senator Gillibrand:   Given that you won't make a  
9 public statement with regard to it, will you tell this  
10 Committee that you will advise President Trump on the truth  
11 of all matters?

12          Mr. Colby:   Well, Senator, I absolutely would commit  
13 to you that I would tell the truth in the conduct of my  
14 duties, if confirmed.

15          Senator Gillibrand:   With regard to China, you are  
16 aware of Volt Typhoon, you are aware of Salt Typhoon, you  
17 are aware of Flax Typhoon. Do you agree that China poses a  
18 cyber threat to the United States and has prepositioned  
19 cyber threats around the United States to be able to use  
20 them, should and when it needs to, in any conflict with  
21 regard to Taiwan?

22          Mr. Colby:   Senator, I should say that my information  
23 is based on public reporting, but based on what you are  
24 saying, that is consistent with my understanding, and so I  
25 would agree with your assessment.

1           Senator Gillibrand:  What advice will you give to  
2 President Trump with regard to how to posture appropriately  
3 to protect against incursions by China to the United  
4 States' national security?

5           Mr. Colby:  Well, Senator, this is something that I  
6 would want to dive much more deeply in.  Cyber is obviously  
7 an area where a lot of the information is classified, and I  
8 have not had access to that in some time, certainly not on  
9 the cyber issue.  What I would say, Senator -- and I talked  
10 about this in my responses to the advanced policy  
11 questions, is I would bring my background in the area of  
12 deterrence and these kinds of areas, denial and so forth,  
13 to bring an integrated approach that includes things like  
14 resilience, defenses, but also cyber offensive operations  
15 and capabilities, intelligence gathering, and so forth.  
16 And my understanding is there has been good work on this in  
17 previous years that can be built on, but there could be  
18 some sensible policy changes that are on the table that  
19 could be worth taking.  Again, I don't know enough to say  
20 specifically, though, Senator.

21           Senator Gillibrand:  I would be interested in what  
22 sensible policy changes you are interested in.  I am highly  
23 concerned that, should China decide to invade Taiwan, that  
24 we haven't done enough cyber defense domestically to  
25 prevent the type of chaos that these types of attacks have

1 already created, whether it is Salt Typhoon or Volt Typhoon  
2 or Flax Typhoon. Every single one of them is designed to  
3 create enormous chaos, instability, and would create  
4 decision making that would be, at a minimum, challenging  
5 and chaotic.

6 Mr. Colby: Senator, I fully share your concerns based  
7 on what I am seeing. Not only would it cause chaos, but it  
8 could specifically inhibit or, you know, break down U.S.  
9 military operations, so I share your alarm. I just have  
10 not, you know, read into a lot of the real specifics.

11 Senator Gillibrand: So I would like to work with you  
12 on what your plan will be for cybersecurity for both  
13 incursions from Russia, from China going forward.

14 And then my last statement is, can you just speak  
15 briefly about your view with regard to Iran and the threat  
16 they pose to the United States and our allies?

17 Mr. Colby: I would welcome working with you on cyber.  
18 Just briefly, I will say that Iran does pose a very severe  
19 threat to the United States and our allies, especially our  
20 key ally, Israel. I think I will have a chance to  
21 elaborate on that, given the time situation.

22 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Senator  
24 Cotton.

25 Senator Cotton: Mr. Colby, welcome. Let's talk about

1 the threat of a nuclear Iran. I have some concerns about  
2 what you have said in the past, namely, that if we had to  
3 choose between hoping to contain a nuclear Iran and  
4 preventing Iran with military force from getting nukes that  
5 we should tolerate a nuclear Iran and try to contain it.  
6 For instance, you have written that, quote, "Containing a  
7 nuclear Iran is an eminently plausible and practical  
8 objective." You have approvingly cited the view that,  
9 quote, "The only thing worse than the prospect of an Iran  
10 armed with nuclear weapons would be the consequences of  
11 using force to try to stop them."

12 That is certainly not my view, but more importantly,  
13 it is not President Trump's policy. He has said for more  
14 than a decade that Iran cannot be allowed to get new  
15 nuclear weapons. He declared in a national security  
16 presidential memorandum last month that a nuclear Iran,  
17 quote, "poses an existential danger" to the United States  
18 and can never be allowed to acquire or develop nuclear  
19 weapons. In your written answers to the Committee's  
20 advanced questions, you now seem to echo President Trump's  
21 policy. You wrote, for example, "The United States should  
22 deny Iran from gaining a nuclear weapon." So it seems that  
23 we all agree that Iran cannot be allowed to get nukes. The  
24 question is how to stop them.

25 Let me be clear up front on a couple points. First, I

1 think everyone would welcome a diplomatic deal in which  
2 Iran completely turns over its nuclear program, as Libya  
3 did in 2003; and second, I don't think anyone here  
4 advocates for invading and occupying Iran for a decade to  
5 stop its nuclear program. I certainly don't. But here is  
6 the question. Diplomacy fails, Iran is racing to a bomb.  
7 We have a choice. Tolerate a nuclear Iran and hope to  
8 contain it; use military force to stop Iran from going  
9 nuclear. In that case, will you commit to providing the  
10 President with credible, realistic military options to stop  
11 Iran from going nuclear?

12 Mr. Colby: I do commit to that, Senator.

13 Senator Cotton: And to be more precise, those  
14 credible and realistic options are more than simply saying  
15 we can give Israel some bombs, and they can take care of  
16 it.

17 Mr. Colby: Yes, I agree with you, Senator.

18 Senator Cotton: It is well known that Israel lacks  
19 certain military capabilities that we have such as aerial  
20 refueling tankers and heavy bombers with deep penetrating  
21 ordinance. Do you believe that at least one option for the  
22 President to consider how to stop Iran from going nuclear  
23 should be to use our tankers and our bombers, whether in  
24 tandem with Israel or in the lead?

25 Mr. Colby: Senator, I wouldn't want to get ahead of

1 the President on specific decisions, but I think those are  
2 the kinds of things that should be absolutely part of the  
3 discussion. And if I were confirmed, those would certainly  
4 be the kinds of things that I would raise for the  
5 consideration of the Secretary and ultimately the  
6 President.

7 Senator Cotton: Thank you. And to be clear about why  
8 this is so important to us, to the United States, not just  
9 to Israel or our Arab friends, why President Trump says a  
10 nuclear Iran is an existential danger to us, you agree that  
11 it is an existential danger, not just a severe danger, as  
12 you said in response to Senator Gillibrand, or a  
13 significant one, as you said in your written answers?

14 Mr. Colby: Yes, a nuclear-armed Iran, especially,  
15 Senator, given, as we have discussed, that they have looked  
16 into or we know they have worked on ICBM range capabilities  
17 and other kinds of capabilities that would pose an  
18 existential threat to --

19 Senator Cotton: Correct.

20 Mr. Colby: -- the United States.

21 Senator Cotton: So they have a space launch program,  
22 which is flimsy cover for an intercontinental missile  
23 program, that could be used to hit us here in Washington,  
24 in Little Rock, or elsewhere in the continental United  
25 States. It is an immediate threat to Israel and our Arab



1 friends, but it is a threat in the not-too-distant future,  
2 probably in just a couple of years, to the United States.

3 Mr. Colby: Senator, I don't have access to the  
4 intelligence information, but that sounds very consistent  
5 to me.

6 Senator Cotton: And do you agree that providing  
7 President Trump with those credible military options is  
8 actually one way to increase leverage to have an airtight  
9 diplomatic deal and --

10 Mr. Colby: Yes, I do agree.

11 Senator Cotton: -- that a lack of military options  
12 would make it harder to get a deal?

13 Mr. Colby: I do. I agree with that.

14 Senator Cotton: Thank you. I want to turn briefly to  
15 Taiwan. You have said here today and in your past writings  
16 that Taiwan is a critical matter for us. You wrote in 2016  
17 that you thought we should give explicit security  
18 guarantees to Taiwan, reversing a decades-old policy of  
19 strategic ambiguity. You opined in the same way in 2020 in  
20 response to a hearing in the House of Representatives.  
21 Over the past couple years, you have started to say, as  
22 Senator Wicker pointed out earlier, that Taiwan is a vital  
23 interest, but it is not an existential interest to us, or  
24 it is not essential to us. It seems that you have changed  
25 your thoughts somewhat in the last couple years. That is

1 not, I suspect, because of Taiwan's defense spending,  
2 which, though still inadequate, I agree has been trending  
3 upward for 7 straight years. So could you explain to us  
4 why in the last few years your views seem to have softened  
5 somewhat about the defense of Taiwan?

6 Mr. Colby: Absolutely, Senator. I have always said  
7 that Taiwan is very important to the United States, but, as  
8 you said, it is not an existential interest. It is very  
9 important the core American interest is in denying China  
10 regional hegemony. What has changed, Senator, as we  
11 discussed, is the dramatic deterioration in the military  
12 balance. So if I could use the Churchill example again, it  
13 is different to engage in a futile and overly costly effort  
14 that would destroy our military. And I know you have  
15 written very eloquently about this danger in your recent  
16 book.

17 And the other point that I would say, Senator, is that  
18 I believe that we actually have implicitly -- our  
19 relationship and our commitment to Taiwan is largely  
20 implicit or indirect or customary. We actually have  
21 specified our commitment through things like the  
22 designation of Taiwan as the pacing scenario for the  
23 Department. So my view that the combination of the greater  
24 threat from China and the lack of preparedness on our part,  
25 I have a different assessment with respect, Senator, about

1 Taiwan's efforts. I think, actually, as a proportion of  
2 GDP, it is well below 3 percent. I agree with President  
3 Trump that they should be more like 10 percent or at least  
4 something in that ballpark, really focused on their  
5 defense, so we need to properly incentivize them. So  
6 together, that means that my focus has been, again, with  
7 the shooting-the-flare metaphor I used earlier, Senator, to  
8 get Taiwan motivated to avoid precipitating a conflict that  
9 is not necessary with Beijing and giving us time and space  
10 to be able to try to rectify this problem because that is  
11 my goal, Senator.

12 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

13 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Senator  
14 Hirono.

15 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 Welcome, Mr. Colby, to you and your family. I ask the  
17 following two initial questions with relevance to fitness  
18 to serve. So I will ask you, since you became a legal  
19 adult, have you ever made unwanted requests for sexual  
20 favors or committed any verbal or physical harassment or  
21 assault of a sexual nature?

22 Mr. Colby: I have not, Senator.

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

25 Mr. Colby: I have not, Senator.

1           Senator Hirono: I think it is interesting that you  
2 would not say whether Russia invaded Ukraine and saying  
3 that this is a complicated kind of a situation right now.  
4 But, you know, I think I also heard you say that you would  
5 give the President your best advice, regardless of what you  
6 think he might want to hear. So I am going to ask you a  
7 simple question relating to whether Russian military forces  
8 invaded Ukraine in February 2022. Did Russian forces cross  
9 the border and invade Ukraine, yes or no?

10          Mr. Colby: Well, Senator, you are describing a  
11 factual reality that is demonstrably true.

12          Senator Hirono: Yes, so that would mean that Ukraine  
13 invaded -- I am sorry, Russia invaded Ukraine, so that was  
14 a question that you would not answer. I think that is  
15 pretty important because we care about what Xi Jinping  
16 thinks about what this President does and thinks, and if Xi  
17 Jinping thinks that we have a President who does not  
18 separate fact from fiction such as who invaded Ukraine, I  
19 would think that maybe President Xi has some conclusions  
20 that he would draw maybe having to do with, as our Ranking  
21 Member said, U.S. fecklessness.

22          And I also think that one of the reasons that our NATO  
23 allies are increasing their spending on military is that  
24 they do not think that they have a particularly stable  
25 partner in the U.S., and therefore, they better look to

1 their own interests because they can no longer rely on the  
2 U.S. I think that is a very bad situation for the United  
3 States to be in, especially as we identify China as a  
4 pacing threat and also whatever Russia is thinking along  
5 these lines. Clearly, they think that they now have a  
6 friend in the President.

7 I don't think that helps us vis-à-vis our strength  
8 regarding Russia, regarding China. In fact, I think that  
9 we are placing ourselves in a very weakened position with  
10 regard to how we are viewed by our adversaries -- that  
11 would be China, as well as Russia -- and our allies, like  
12 not a good situation to be in. We need a President who can  
13 separate fact from fiction.

14 Let me move on. Since the Administration has  
15 identified China as a pacing threat and the importance of  
16 INDOPACOM to face that threat, would you agree with that?

17 Mr. Colby: Yes, I think the Department has identified  
18 China as the pacing threat, as I understand --

19 Senator Hirono: So --

20 Mr. Colby: -- from the previous Administration.

21 Senator Hirono: But INDOPACOM provided Congress with  
22 an \$11 billion unfunded priorities list, and this says to  
23 me that there is a misalignment of our funding decisions  
24 and strategy if we consider INDOPACOM to be a priority, and  
25 yet you have INDOPACOM putting forward an \$11 billion

1 unfunded priorities. What would you do to decrease the  
2 unfunded priorities and align our strategy and the  
3 importance of INDOPACOM with the resources that it gets?  
4 And would you agree that maybe we should provide INDOPACOM  
5 with more direct input into the Department's budgeting and  
6 resourcing priorities --

7 Mr. Colby: Well, Senator, what I would like to say  
8 is --

9 Senator Hirono: -- process?

10 Mr. Colby: -- if I may, and I think this is exactly  
11 the kind of baseline reality that I think so much of my  
12 strategic argumentation proceeds from. A lot of what I am  
13 saying is that, you know, many of us in the public debate  
14 and so forth are acting as if, you know, we can do  
15 everything, but the reality is that there is an \$11 billion  
16 unfunded priority list from INDOPACOM. And realistically,  
17 I bet the real deficit is even higher, given that that is  
18 just what came out.

19 So, Senator, if confirmed, I would make it an absolute  
20 priority, given the priority that China must get across  
21 Administrations. I think this is now a matter of strategic  
22 consensus to try to not only drive that down, but to, you  
23 know, reform the Department and reprioritize it to actually  
24 go through and carry out the strategic shift that has been  
25 talked about in some ways since probably Bob Work was

1 Deputy Secretary of Defense at the end of the Obama  
2 Administration.

3 Senator Hirono: So would you agree that INDOPACOM,  
4 that command should be provided with more direct input into  
5 the Department's budgeting and resourcing process?

6 Mr. Colby: Senator, I don't have enough information  
7 to say specifically, organizationally, where I would fall  
8 on that, but certainly, that perspective needs to get, I  
9 would say, an elevated perspective.

10 Senator Hirono: I hope so because an \$11 billion  
11 unfunded priority, that is the largest unfunded --

12 Mr. Colby: Indeed.

13 Senator Hirono: -- priority list of any of our  
14 combatant commands.

15 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 Chairman Wicker: And thank you. And let me observe,  
17 Mr. Colby, that I have been somewhat critical of the COCOMs  
18 that have not come forward with realistic unfunded  
19 requirements, and so I appreciate the exchange which you  
20 and Senator Hirono just had.

21 Our next member is Senator Rounds. You are  
22 recognized.

23 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Mr. Colby, first of all, I really appreciated the time  
25 that I spent with you in my office. I appreciated your

1 comments and thoughts. And to your family, thank you for  
2 allowing him to participate in this. It is going to mean a  
3 lot of time away, but it is the right thing to do.

4 Mr. Colby, there is always an opportunity to look  
5 ahead and to see long term what our needs are going to be  
6 in this country, particularly with the defense of our  
7 nation. And now that we recognize five different  
8 domains --- air, land, sea, space, and cyber space -- we  
9 also recognize that new ways of defending our country are  
10 needed as well. Space-based assets are one of those in  
11 which, as the President has indicated, he would love to  
12 have a Golden Dome over our country or over the communities  
13 within our country. I don't think that is farfetched, and  
14 in fact, I think it is something that we have really got to  
15 consider. Today, we have systems along our coastlines that  
16 protect many of our cities. Hawaii, as an example, is  
17 protected with destroyers that have radar capabilities and  
18 so forth.

19 If the President were to be successful in creating an  
20 Iron Dome or a Golden Dome, he not only needs space-based  
21 assets, but he also needs land-based assets as well that  
22 require the use of certain parts of the spectrum for radar  
23 purposes. This Committee would be shocked if I didn't  
24 bring this up with someone in front of us today that is  
25 going to have something to say about the use of this



1 spectrum in the future. We talked about this in my office.  
2 Forcing the Department of Defense, as some people have  
3 suggested, to vacate any portion of the 3.1 to 3.45  
4 gigahertz band of the spectrum would have severe  
5 consequences on our warfighting capabilities, including  
6 homeland defense missions, and force protection for our  
7 deployed forces. It is also that part of the spectrum that  
8 any land-based system would use to identify incoming  
9 weapons using radar.

10 If confirmed, will you advocate for protecting the  
11 Department of Defense's warfighting systems that require  
12 spectrum to function optimally, including the radars that  
13 will make President Trump's Golden Dome possible?

14 Mr. Colby: I will, Senator.

15 Senator Rounds: And, if confirmed, will you speak  
16 candidly with Congress on the effects of any spectrum-  
17 related policies entertained by the interagency that may  
18 have an effect on the Department of Defense's capabilities  
19 to use those portions of the spectrum that they currently  
20 control?

21 Mr. Colby: I will, Senator.

22 Senator Rounds: Thank you, sir. Sir, also, in my  
23 office, you have -- and I considered very courageously --  
24 you have called for the genuine focus on countering China  
25 as the principal threat to the United States and providing

1 the commensurate resources to INDOPACOM. In my office, we  
2 discussed the fact that in the event the U.S. and China  
3 engage in hostilities, adversaries like Russia and Iran  
4 will seek to press their own advantage in Europe, the  
5 Middle East, and elsewhere.

6 It is for that purpose of the NDAA currently requires  
7 a review to see whether or not we are actually capable and  
8 what our needs are to actually be able to sustain a war on  
9 more than one front. I am convinced that if we have a war  
10 on one front, we are going to have a war on two fronts.  
11 Can you talk about what your thoughts are on that and  
12 whether or not, in your role as a planner, you have to be  
13 able to respond to adversaries on more than one front?

14 Mr. Colby: Well, thank you, Senator. I really  
15 appreciate that, and I fully agree with your fear. And I  
16 know the Chairman and others have made this a real concern,  
17 and I applaud the Committee's focus on this point. We have  
18 to have a multifront or multi-war strategy, even though the  
19 reality is that the force planning construct of the 2022  
20 National Defense Strategy is not a 3-war military or  
21 something. I think it is a one-and-change if I could speak  
22 informally.

23 So that is a real problem because not only do I think  
24 that other hostile actors could act opportunistically, I  
25 think there is a very good chance that, for instance, if

1 China wanted to take the cosmic roll of the dice, as Harold  
2 Brown put it, that they would induce their other partners  
3 with whom they are now much more closely collaborating to  
4 also go at the same time, perhaps even before to draw us  
5 away, so we have to have a strategy for that.

6 I think our own strategy is to revamp our defense  
7 industrial base, the readiness, the President's very  
8 appropriate and justified desire to restore our military  
9 strength, more capable allies. So I have a different view  
10 than Senator Hirono. I think that what is happening in  
11 Europe is actually very positive that the Europeans are  
12 saying we need to do more for our own defense. I think  
13 people now, having dealt with the Europeans ad nauseam for  
14 many years on this kind of thing, I think there is finally  
15 an acceptance that there really needs --

16 Senator Rounds: But let me --

17 Mr. Colby: -- more to be done.

18 Senator Rounds: My time will run out, but I want to  
19 make something very clear on this.

20 Mr. Colby: Sure.

21 Senator Rounds: If we are expecting that our European  
22 allies are going to be able to defend us in the case of  
23 having a war on two fronts, I don't think we can do that.  
24 I think they can help us, but I think we have to be in a  
25 position to respond to that. Would you agree?

1 Mr. Colby: I think we have to be able to defend  
2 ourselves, obviously, without relying on anybody else,  
3 Senator, for sure.

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

5 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very, very much.

6 Senator Kaine.

7 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

8 Mr. Colby, who instigated the war in Gaza.

9 Mr. Colby: Well, the October 7, the barbaric attacks  
10 against, you know, Israel were the precipitating factor.

11 Senator Kaine: By Hamas?

12 Mr. Colby: By Hamas, yeah --

13 Senator Kaine: So --

14 Mr. Colby: -- backed by Iran.

15 Senator Kaine: -- there is a delicate ceasefire  
16 negotiation going on right now, but you didn't have any  
17 trouble saying who was the instigator of the attack.  
18 You --

19 Mr. Colby: I would look at that differently, Senator,  
20 but --

21 Senator Kaine: You equivocated about the Russian --

22 Chairman Wicker: If I could stop both of my friends.  
23 There has been some talking over, and our stenographer is  
24 having trouble. So --

25 Mr. Colby: Sorry, excuse me.

1 Chairman Wicker: -- if we could avoid that?

2 Mr. Colby: Pardon me, Senator.

3 Senator Kaine: Yeah. You were introduced as a truth  
4 teller by the Vice President. That is a really important  
5 thing. And my point is, if you are willing to say the  
6 truth about the Hamas invasion of Israel, I hope you  
7 wouldn't be equivocal about the Russian invasion of  
8 Ukraine.

9 Let me ask you about two particular topics. In your  
10 advanced policy questions on page 47 and 48 you were asked  
11 a question about transnational criminal organizations. And  
12 I am curious about this. TCOs, including those  
13 transporting fentanyl, pose a direct threat to Americans.  
14 I believe this is a very important matter for the U.S.  
15 Government to address. The United States should do so in  
16 ways that are practical, results-oriented, and sustainable.  
17 In light of this, the lead organizations are likely  
18 normally to be non-DOD. You then went on to say that DOD  
19 plays an important role. Talk a little bit about the way  
20 you see the effort against TCOs, the lead role of non-DOD,  
21 and the supporting role of DOD.

22 Mr. Colby: Well, thanks, Senator. And I know this is  
23 a special focus of yours, so this is something I would want  
24 to learn more about, but I am, you know, very conscious  
25 that -- and this gets to some of the sort of back-and-forth

1 in other contexts, that military force is not a panacea.  
2 It is critical. It needs to be part of the President's  
3 menu of options, and in certain cases, it is absolutely  
4 necessary and can solve a problem. But things like  
5 transnational criminal organizations that are -- you know,  
6 crime has been with us since we got out of the jungles or  
7 whatever. It is going to be there, but we can reduce it.

8 I think a big part of that is going to be, obviously,  
9 integration with the diplomatic arms, with capable partners  
10 who are willing and able to do more, for instance, in  
11 places like Latin America and other places as well. So I  
12 see DOD -- I think it is important for the Department to be  
13 more aware and active in those conversations. My  
14 impression somewhat from within the Department, but often  
15 from the outside, is that that is considered to be sort of  
16 out of the Department's purview. I think it is important  
17 that the Department be there, not necessarily always saying  
18 everything is to be solved with a hammer, but to be part of  
19 that conversation.

20 And I will say I think the kind of people who are  
21 being populated in the senior levels of the State  
22 Department and elsewhere, the National Security Council, I  
23 would believe I could have a very good conversation and  
24 integration and collaboration along those lines, as well as  
25 Congress on these issues.

1           Senator Kaine: And I think when you talk to the  
2           SOUTHCOM leadership, they are going to really emphasize  
3           that a lot of non-DOD assets are very important in this  
4           fight.

5           I want to ask you a question about AUKUS. Because I  
6           am on Foreign Relations and Armed Services, I have been  
7           pretty involved in the AUKUS framework. Pillar 1 also is  
8           pretty heavily invested in Virginia. You did a tweet in  
9           August where you said "AUKUS, in principle, it is a great  
10          idea, but I have been very skeptical in practice. I remain  
11          skeptical, agnostic, as I put it, but more inclined based  
12          on new information I have gleaned. It would be crazy to  
13          have fewer SSNs Virginia class in the right place and  
14          time." Talk a little bit about your perspective on AUKUS,  
15          you know, the promise of the concept, and if there is  
16          practical skepticism, what that is.

17          Mr. Colby: Yeah. Thank you very much, Senator. I  
18          appreciate that. And this is another area, as I mentioned  
19          my opening statement, where new facts arise. I mean, my  
20          perspective is fundamentally, I would say, realistic or  
21          pragmatic and kind of data-driven if you want, adaptive  
22          based on new facts. You know, the idea of empowering our  
23          Australian -- in some sense, perhaps our closest ally in  
24          the world. They have been with us even in our less  
25          advisable wars is the way I put it. It is a great idea for

1 them to have attack submarines.

2 But the problem is, is that we are, as, you know,  
3 Secretary Rubio has said and others, there is a very real  
4 threat of a conflict in the coming years, God forbid, you  
5 know, along the first island chain. And our attack  
6 submarines, as you know well, Senator, are absolutely  
7 essential for making the defense of Taiwan or otherwise a  
8 viable and practical option, to my conversation with  
9 Senator Cotton.

10 So if we can produce the attack submarines in  
11 sufficient number and sufficient speed, then great. But if  
12 we can't, that becomes a very difficult problem because we  
13 don't want our servicemen and women to be in a weaker  
14 position and more vulnerable, and, God forbid, worse  
15 because they are not in the right place in the right time.

16 So my perspective, and what I have told the  
17 Australians and also the Brits, is, if confirmed, you know,  
18 or before, I think it should be the policy of the United  
19 States Government to do everything we can to make this  
20 work. And again, as we talked about in your office,  
21 Senator, this is getting back to restoring our defense  
22 industrial capacity so that we don't have to face these  
23 awful choices but rather can be in a position where we can  
24 produce not only for ourselves, but for our allies.

25 Senator Kaine: So having more capacity, even if it is



1 a joint capacity, is a good thing. We just have to be  
2 careful as we try to produce an Australian capacity that we  
3 don't end up in a time period where we are sort of less  
4 than we would otherwise be. Is that --

5 Mr. Colby: Precisely, Senator.

6 Senator Kaine: Okay. Thank you. I yield back.

7 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Kaine.

8 Senator Ernst.

9 Senator Ernst: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair.

10 And good morning to you, Mr. Colby. And I want to  
11 welcome your family as well. Thank you for joining us  
12 today. I do appreciate your ongoing service and commitment  
13 to our Department of Defense.

14 So for years, I have been calling out the waste,  
15 fraud, and abuse that we have had at the Pentagon to ensure  
16 that our taxpayer dollars are used to support our  
17 warfighters and protecting our nation. And the Department  
18 of Defense, which controls the largest portion of our  
19 discretionary budget in the Federal Government, has never  
20 once passed a full financial audit. The failure erodes  
21 public trust and prevents efficient use of taxpayer dollars  
22 for critical defense priorities.

23 So, Mr. Colby, what policies will you put into place  
24 to ensure that the DOD passes an audit, as the law  
25 requires, by 2028?

1           Mr. Colby: Well, Senator, thank you very much, and  
2 thanks for your kind words for my family, as well as the  
3 other Senators.

4           I absolutely would regard it as a priority, if  
5 confirmed, to make sure that the policies are in place to  
6 encourage efficiency and compliance with a Federal audit.  
7 I agree with you, Senator. I mean, for the amount of money  
8 that we are spending, we should be getting better results,  
9 and I am confident -- and of course, your leadership in the  
10 DOGE Caucus and so forth, this is a real potential where we  
11 could get much better results and have a better defense  
12 industrial base kind of situation, better readiness for our  
13 forces.

14           So I would certainly commit -- I don't have a specific  
15 recommendation at this point, but I am most welcome hearing  
16 your thoughts and your team's thoughts about how to do  
17 that --

18           Senator Ernst: Well, thank you --

19           Mr. Colby: -- in consultation with --

20           Senator Ernst: -- and I truly look forward to working  
21 with you on that issue as well.

22           Let's go to the Middle East. I know there has been a  
23 lot of discussion already this morning about the Middle  
24 East and Central Command. The signing of the Abraham  
25 Accords during the first Trump Administration, significant

1 achievement. It was monumental. It was a strategic  
2 breakthrough for the region. I have worked to expand this  
3 agreement through legislation in previous defense bills.  
4 We have focused on enhanced integration with our partners,  
5 which could be -- the examples that we have had, air and  
6 missile defense, artificial intelligence capabilities, and  
7 maritime cooperation to counter Iran. So what are your  
8 thoughts in expanding the Abraham Accords, and how can we  
9 accomplish that?

10 Mr. Colby: Well, thanks, Senator. I think the  
11 Abraham Accords were a triumph of President Trump's first  
12 term, and I am very hopeful that they can be built on in  
13 this term. I think they are an example of where diplomacy  
14 that isn't expected and maybe kind of unorthodox in certain  
15 ways can nonetheless come about. And I think it offers  
16 part of the solution to dealing with Iran's, you know,  
17 regional hegemonic aspirations, its use of proxies, and so  
18 forth, although it is not exclusively so.

19 But I think, you know, if confirmed, from a defense  
20 point of view, this is an area where there is a lot that  
21 can be done to build up the capabilities of those like the  
22 Emiratis, the Saudis with their reforms, obviously  
23 consistent with Israel's qualitative military edge and so  
24 forth. But I am a really big fan of the Abraham Accords  
25 and the model, and, if confirmed, I would put a lot of sort

1 of shoulder into it.

2 Senator Ernst: Wonderful. And you mentioned the  
3 Emiratis, but also the Saudis as well. So thoughts on  
4 normalization, how we could assist with that with the  
5 kingdom?

6 Mr. Colby: Well, Senator, I am not fully briefed on  
7 exactly where things are. I think, you know, the more we  
8 can promote and encourage normalization -- I assume you  
9 mean between Riyadh and Jerusalem -- I think that would be  
10 a huge coup. I have seen reporting on that in the press.  
11 I don't know where things stand. Again, that is an area  
12 where quiet diplomacy is probably the most effective. But  
13 certainly, I think that would be an incredible thing. And  
14 if I were confirmed, I would support efforts in that  
15 direction.

16 Senator Ernst: I do too. I think that would lend to  
17 additional stability across the Middle East by the addition  
18 of that normalization between Jerusalem and Riyadh.

19 So as we discussed during our in-office meeting, I  
20 have been working a very long time to combat sexual assault  
21 in our military. Secretary Hegseth committed to appointing  
22 a senior official to ensure a focus on sexual assault  
23 prevention within the Department of Defense. So, Mr.  
24 Colby, if confirmed, will you work with me on this  
25 appointment to ensure focused leadership on this critical

1 issue? And will you commit to providing Congress with  
2 regular updates on the progress made in this area?

3 Mr. Colby: I will, Senator.

4 Senator Ernst: Okay. I appreciate just being  
5 straightforward on that. Thank you.

6 So, again, just in remaining time, and I know my dear  
7 friend from Alaska will talk a little bit more about NATO,  
8 but talking about how relationships matter around the globe  
9 just in the remaining time, just give me your stance on  
10 America remaining engaged on the world stage.

11 Mr. Colby: Yes, Senator, I think America should  
12 remain engaged on the world stage, and a lot of what I am  
13 trying to argue for is a way to do that, and I think it is  
14 sustainable with the threats that we face and the national  
15 resources we have and our long-term interests.

16 Senator Ernst: Thank you very much, Mr. Colby. Thank  
17 you, Mr. Chair.

18 Chairman Wicker: Mr. Colby, I think I am going to ask  
19 you to enlarge on that on the record. So at this point, I  
20 think that be helpful.

21 Senator King, Senator Warren beat you here, so she  
22 gets to go first. Senator Warren.

23 Senator Warren: No, Senator King.

24 Chairman Wicker: Okay. Senator King.

25 Senator King: Thank you. Mr. Colby, the Vice

1 President characterized you as a truth teller, someone who  
2 would tell the truth to power, and yet, today, you have not  
3 told truth of who started the war in Ukraine. I will give  
4 you one more chance. Who started the war in Ukraine?

5 Mr. Colby: Well, Senator, I would tell the truth. I  
6 don't think I am saying anything that is untrue, but I also  
7 think it is important to be discreet and say things at the  
8 appropriate time and place. I certainly can --

9 Senator King: The problem is, you tell us you are  
10 going to tell truth to power. The most obvious truth is  
11 that Russia invaded Ukraine. Everybody in the world knows  
12 that, and you won't say it here today because it appears  
13 that you don't want to offend the President. But that is  
14 the whole point of the Vice President's testimony, that you  
15 would say truth to power, but you won't do it here today on  
16 the record. This is an obvious truth. It reminds me of  
17 the old country song, who you are going to believe, me or  
18 your own lying eyes?

19 Mr. Colby: Well --

20 Senator King: We all saw it.

21 Mr. Colby: Well, Senator, the way I see it, sir, is  
22 that diplomacy, especially a very delicate period where I  
23 am personally hoping that things very much, get back on  
24 track and head towards peace --

25 Senator King: But shouldn't diplomacy be based on the

1 truth? Well, you have made your nonpoint, I suppose.

2 Let's talk about terrorism. Deterrence doesn't work  
3 with terrorism. That is one of the problems. And I am  
4 afraid this country has taken its eye off of terrorism.  
5 You talk about China, others have talked about the Middle  
6 East, but terrorism is a consistent threat. ISIS-K is  
7 trying to make a comeback in Syria. The al-Qaida is active  
8 in Afghanistan and other places. But deterrence doesn't  
9 work. They don't have a capital city to blow up. They  
10 don't care about dying. Intelligence is our best defense  
11 against terrorism, and yet we are seeing the greatest loss  
12 of jobs, of firings in the CIA in something like 50 years.  
13 Talk to me about how do we deal with the threat of  
14 terrorism when we are cutting our intelligence capacity?

15 Mr. Colby: Well, Senator, I very much agree with you  
16 about the enduring threat of terrorism. In fact, when I  
17 wrote my book, I did the defense strategy with others back  
18 in 2017, 2018. This is something I was very much thinking  
19 of. In fact, a little personal, I mean, I was walking with  
20 my two sons, who obviously don't remember this, but on the  
21 last 9/11 and conveying to them how vividly I remember  
22 that. So that is not something that I take for granted,  
23 and we do have, you know, transnational jihadi terrorism.

24 So I think this absolutely does -- and my argument  
25 would be -- and if confirmed, I would ensure, to the extent

1 it was in my power, that preventing terrorist attacks  
2 against Americans and our allies, where possible, should be  
3 an enduring role of the American military. Obviously, that  
4 is a critical --

5 Senator King: But isn't --

6 Mr. Colby: -- part of intelligence as well.

7 Senator King: But as I have thought about this for  
8 many years, intelligence is really the best defense.  
9 Deterrence doesn't work, as I said, and yet we are  
10 eviscerating our intelligence capability as we are sitting  
11 here today.

12 Mr. Colby: Well, Senator, I couldn't speak  
13 intelligently. I am just reading the news reports about  
14 what exactly is going on in terms of at the CIA and others,  
15 but I have confidence that, you know, Director Ratcliffe  
16 and others are making things more efficient, more focused,  
17 more lethal. I know they are trying to make -- in fact, as  
18 far as I understand, try to encourage case officers and  
19 others to go into more dangerous assignments precisely to  
20 prevent such an outcome.

21 Senator King: I hope you are right. Just a note on  
22 Taiwan, to me, one of the critical questions is, how much  
23 is Taiwan committed to its own defense? It is disturbing  
24 to me that in recent months the Parliament of Taiwan has  
25 moved to cut their defense budget. And how are we to be



1 expected to think about sending Americans into harm's way  
2 on behalf of an entity that doesn't seem all that  
3 interested in protecting itself? Are you disturbed by that  
4 move in the Taiwanese Parliament?

5 Mr. Colby: I am profoundly disturbed, Senator, and I  
6 think the question that you are raising is one that I have  
7 heard not only Democrats but Republicans raise, often in  
8 private. Secretary Mattis, who was mentioned earlier,  
9 said, we can't care more about your defense than you can.  
10 So this is where I think -- I have been trying in my  
11 communication and my recommendations for policy vis-à-vis  
12 Taiwan to try to induce them in whatever way possible to  
13 become, say, more like South Korea. So it is a very  
14 plausible model with a much more serious military because  
15 not only do I not think it is fair to Americans to ask  
16 Americans and our servicemen and women to suffer if our  
17 allies are not pulling their weight, but also that it won't  
18 even be viable.

19 Senator King: One more truth-to-power question. Last  
20 week, the United States ceased supporting the restoration  
21 and protection of the electric grid in Ukraine, which the  
22 Russians have continuously targeted. Yesterday, the  
23 Administration announced its cutoff of military aid to  
24 Ukraine. Do you believe that those two things together,  
25 undermining the security of Ukraine in this critical

1 moment, are good ideas?

2 Mr. Colby: Senator, as I said, I think the critical  
3 thing at this point is for advance in the peace process,  
4 and for us, including Kyiv, to cooperate. I think there is  
5 an opportunity --

6 Senator King: You are all about policy. I am asking,  
7 do you think the cutoff of aid to Ukraine yesterday is good  
8 policy?

9 Mr. Colby: Well, Senator, I am only seeing the  
10 reports recently, but I think we need to get -- I think the  
11 President has a plan for us to end this war and a  
12 sustainable model for a secure and sovereign Ukraine and a  
13 Europe that can, you know, be more defensible, and I think  
14 that is the route that we should all take.

15 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much.

17 And Senator Sullivan, you are next.

18 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 Mr. Colby, good to see you and your family. Thank you  
20 to your family for serving. I know your father has served  
21 his country very admirably as well, so thank you, all of  
22 you.

23 I want to just make a point. Four years ago, when the  
24 Under Secretary of Defense for Policy was testifying at his  
25 confirmation hearing, President Biden's Under Secretary, he

1 said that one of his top priorities was to, quote, "stamp  
2 out systemic racism within the ranks," unquote. My view is  
3 that began the woke assault on the military. Do you  
4 believe our military is systemically racist, Mr. Colby?

5 Mr. Colby: I do not, Senator.

6 Senator Sullivan: And will you work with this  
7 Committee and Secretary Hegseth to stamp out the remaining  
8 remnants of the woke assault that we spent 4 years dealing  
9 with under Biden and his Under Secretary of Policy and  
10 everybody else?

11 Mr. Colby: Senator, I commit to you to work and  
12 support Secretary Hegseth, if confirmed, to restore a focus  
13 on lethality, readiness, and meritocracy, and these kinds  
14 of values that --

15 Senator Sullivan: Good. I think --

16 Mr. Colby: -- you advocate.

17 Senator Sullivan: -- that is the right focus. And  
18 our military is not systemically racist, despite what the  
19 last Administration told everybody.

20 Alliances, I am glad to see in your short, brief, but  
21 powerful opening statement you talked about the power of  
22 alliances. Do you agree that our alliances throughout the  
23 world are a source of American power and strength?

24 Mr. Colby: I do, Senator. I think they need to be,  
25 as I said, adapted and made more sustainable, and that is

1 the approach that I would take, fixing rather than dumping  
2 is my approach.

3 Senator Sullivan: The Ambassador for NATO is having  
4 his confirmation hearing right now as we speak downstairs  
5 and upstairs or somewhere in the Foreign Relations  
6 Committee. That is Matt Whitaker. He has testified  
7 already this morning. He is a strong supporter of the NATO  
8 alliance. Are you a strong supporter of the NATO alliance  
9 and getting them to get to 2 percent or 3 percent  
10 certainly, but you still think that is a useful, important  
11 alliance for the United States?

12 Mr. Colby: I do. Again, Senator, I very much believe  
13 in NATO, but I believe it has to -- I think the phrase is  
14 it has to adapt to -- things must change to stay the same,  
15 basically, the logic being, they have got to be able to --  
16 it has got to actually go back, in my view, to something  
17 closer to what it was in the Cold War. I like to point out  
18 the West German military in 1988, 2/3 the size of current  
19 Germany, had 12 active divisions. The Germans --

20 Senator Sullivan: Yeah.

21 Mr. Colby: -- can't put a single division together  
22 now. It is not tenable. And so I think we are seeing  
23 progress. Now the question is how do we manage this  
24 dangerous period of transition?

25 Senator Sullivan: I agree with all that, but it is

1 worth reforming because it does provide power --

2 Mr. Colby: Yes.

3 Senator Sullivan: -- and strength to United States.

4 Mr. Colby: Yeah, I think the NATO alliance is  
5 important and have a great interest --

6 Senator Sullivan: Let me reinforce Senator Cotton's  
7 important line of questions this morning, and I appreciate  
8 those. Just to be clear, your suggestions in previous  
9 writings, you had a Wall Street Journal editorial that was  
10 highlighting those today that we could tolerate Iran with a  
11 nuclear weapon, a suggestion, is no longer your view,  
12 correct?

13 Mr. Colby: Well, Senator, if I could elaborate on  
14 this --

15 Senator Sullivan: I would just be real quick on this.

16 Mr. Colby: Yeah, but I believe we should not allow  
17 Iran to have a nuclear weapon. And if confirmed, I would  
18 believe that it is my responsibility to provide credible,  
19 good military --

20 Senator Sullivan: And that is your personal view  
21 because a lot of times you can say, well, the President --

22 Mr. Colby: That is my view.

23 Senator Sullivan: -- said it --

24 Mr. Colby: That is my own view.

25 Senator Sullivan: -- so that is kind of my --

1 Mr. Colby: But --

2 Senator Sullivan: -- but you don't really believe it,  
3 but you --

4 Mr. Colby: If I could --

5 Senator Sullivan: But you believe that, right --

6 Mr. Colby: I believe that.

7 Senator Sullivan: -- personally?

8 Mr. Colby: Yes. And, Senator, if I could --

9 Senator Sullivan: It is important, by the way, that  
10 it is your personal --

11 Mr. Colby: I agree.

12 Senator Sullivan: -- view.

13 Mr. Colby: No, I -- and what I was saying -- first of  
14 all, I have been in the policy debate a long time. Not  
15 everything I said I would say. The --

16 Senator Sullivan: I get that. You are a public  
17 intellectual. You can't be held to --

18 Mr. Colby: But not anymore. Obviously, I am up for a  
19 public job of great public responsibility, so I understand  
20 that. But also, I would say a lot of what I was arguing  
21 against at the time of these conversations 15 years ago, a  
22 lot of the opponents I felt had a casual or in some cases  
23 even flippant attitude towards the employment of military  
24 force --

25 Senator Sullivan: Yeah.

1 Mr. Colby: -- and that is a lot of what I was arguing  
2 against. Was my wording always appropriate? Was my  
3 precise framing always appropriate? No, but I think the  
4 throughput --

5 Senator Sullivan: But Iran with a nuclear weapon  
6 is --

7 Mr. Colby: Is not --

8 Senator Sullivan: -- is an existential threat --

9 Mr. Colby: Yes.

10 Senator Sullivan: -- to the United States.

11 Mr. Colby: And I think that we now have the  
12 leadership, with the Vice President, Secretary of Defense,  
13 and ultimately, the President, who understand that we need  
14 to be militarily strong, but also understand the downside  
15 risks of the employment and military force --

16 Senator Sullivan: And do you --

17 Mr. Colby: -- needs to be rational.

18 Senator Sullivan: Do you fully support the  
19 President's return to maximum pressure?

20 Mr. Colby: I do, Senator, yeah.

21 Senator Sullivan: Let me talk on -- real quick. I  
22 only got 40 seconds left. Your 2018 National Security  
23 Strategy I thought was excellent. Well done. The  
24 rebalance to focus on great power competition, very  
25 important, but also there is an element of deterrence in

1 that that is still important. And you have written in your  
2 excellent book, Strategy of Denial, that we need to provide  
3 a credible deterrent in the Taiwan Strait to prevent China  
4 from achieving regional hegemony.

5 But on deterrence itself, here is my question, is  
6 deterrence divisible for the United States? And what I  
7 mean by that is, you know, when people say, well, we can  
8 let bad guys, Putin, roll in Europe, Iran roll in the  
9 Middle East, but we are going to be strong in the Taiwan  
10 Strait. Is deterrence divisible in that way? I think it  
11 is not. Just look at Joe Biden, Afghanistan, holy cow,  
12 that was a disaster. And guess what happened? And I  
13 predicted this. Every bad guy in the world was like, hey,  
14 I am making my move. Putin probably would not have even  
15 invaded Ukraine had it not been for Afghanistan, same with  
16 Hamas and Iran with Israel. So we have got to rebalance,  
17 but is deterrence divisible? Because I think that is where  
18 you and I might have a little disagreement and get into the  
19 danger zone there.

20 Mr. Colby: I think --

21 Senator Sullivan: Because I don't think it is, but  
22 what do you think?

23 Mr. Colby: I think, Senator, that things are  
24 definitely interconnected. But what I will say -- and I  
25 recognize I am over time -- is that it is really important



1 -- I can't remember who said it, but you have got to have  
2 this right stuff in the right place at the right time, and  
3 we need to make sure that we have got that. So we have got  
4 to do both of these things. We have to pay attention to  
5 the political credibility issues and how we are perceived.  
6 But at the end of the day, as you know well, given your  
7 distinguished military service, Senator, we need to have  
8 the right stuff in the right place at the right time to  
9 have the right effect. As I think Douglas MacArthur  
10 famously said, the two, you know, most infamous words in  
11 military history are "too late," right? And I think that  
12 that side of the equation is what I am driving towards,  
13 Senator.

14 Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

15 Chairman Wicker: Thank you --

16 Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

17 Chairman Wicker: -- very much, Mr. Colby. Now, a  
18 vote has begun. This hearing will continue, and members,  
19 if they will, may just run to vote and then come back. The  
20 Ranking Member has gone to vote now.

21 And Senator Kelly, you are recognized.

22 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Colby,  
23 great seeing you and your family here.

24 In introducing you, Vice President Vance said the  
25 following, and this is a quote. "You need good people in

1 government. You need people who are going to tell the  
2 truth, who are going to look you in the eye, who are going  
3 to disagree, sometimes amicably, but actually be willing to  
4 look you in the eye and have an important conversation, who  
5 you can trust to tell you what they actually think, agree  
6 or disagree, and that is the kind of person that Bridge  
7 is."

8 On his larger point, I agree strongly. In any  
9 business or organization or team, you need people willing  
10 to speak their mind. It is especially important in this  
11 role, where you would be setting the policy of the  
12 Department of Defense at a very dangerous time. So I have  
13 got a couple simple questions for you. Are there Russian  
14 troops fighting in Ukraine?

15 Mr. Colby: Yes, Senator.

16 Senator Kelly: Thank you. I really appreciate your  
17 being straightforward. Is it easier or harder for the  
18 United States to shift its focus more towards the Pacific  
19 if Putin is successful in Ukraine?

20 Mr. Colby: Well, I think it is certainly a critical  
21 factor. I mean, there are other factors that we talked  
22 about, but I think it would be better if there is a peace  
23 and a secure and sovereign Ukraine and a NATO that is more  
24 capable of defending itself. That would make things  
25 easier, for sure, Senator.

1           Senator Kelly:  If Putin is perceived as being  
2 successful, and if he comes out of this feeling that this  
3 worked out in his favor, do you think that puts other  
4 European countries at risk?

5           Mr. Colby:  Well, I think it is clear that European  
6 countries need to take more responsibility for their own  
7 security, and I think that is already happening, and we  
8 actually want to encourage that.  I mean, this is, again,  
9 where I have a somewhat different view than Senator Hirono.  
10 I think the dynamics that are going on where European  
11 leaders are now saying, hey, we are going to actually do a  
12 lot more, that is actually something that we should  
13 encourage and enable.  And I would say a new approach that  
14 I would advocate for and that I have been advocating for,  
15 if confirmed, would be to enable work with Europeans and  
16 work with the positive trajectory that they are on now to  
17 give them more capability to do so.

18           Senator Kelly:  That is one side of the risk  
19 calculation.  That is just one side.  The other side is  
20 Putin and how he feels.  And my concern is if we set the  
21 conditions here where he feels a year, 3, 5 years from now  
22 that this was worthwhile for him, he gained territory,  
23 maybe Ukraine is not a member of NATO, that that puts our  
24 European allies at risk, regardless of the steps that they  
25 take now.  And I have spoken to leadership in Baltic

1 nations, in Poland, in Finland, and this is a concern of  
2 theirs as well.

3 Mr. Colby: Well, Senator, what I would say, and I  
4 think consistent with what the President, Secretary of  
5 State, and others have said, is that we should, you know,  
6 really emphasis on the verify. It can trust, but  
7 definitely verify. I don't think we should take anything  
8 for granted. And I think the Europeans and our own  
9 military reforms going forward should make sure that  
10 President Putin or whoever's in charge in the Kremlin  
11 doesn't see it as advantageous to test the boundaries, you  
12 know, of our security perimeter.

13 Senator Kelly: Do you view Putin as a war criminal?

14 Mr. Colby: Senator, that is the kind of thing that I  
15 just don't want to -- I don't think it is appropriate for  
16 me, and, as I said, these words are very important as the  
17 President -- I don't think I am the right person to be  
18 commenting on this one way or the other. There are factual  
19 matters, obviously, I can comment on that are not -- but I  
20 think at this point, my, honestly, personal interest is in  
21 making sure that I don't do anything that would disrupt the  
22 resumption of a move towards peace --

23 Senator Kelly: Yeah.

24 Mr. Colby: -- that I think would benefit Ukraine.

25 Senator Kelly: Do you believe there were war crimes

1 committed in Ukraine?

2 Mr. Colby: Senator, again, I mean, others from -- you  
3 know, certainly, I don't think it is appropriate for me to  
4 be commenting on these more delicate issues.

5 Senator Kelly: Can you explain how negotiations are  
6 harmed if we state something that is self-evident? How  
7 does that harm negotiations?

8 Mr. Colby: Well, Senator, I think in all  
9 negotiations, there is often time and place you can have  
10 something in a private conversation that is much different.  
11 I think we should be clear-eyed and understanding about  
12 what is going on and be frank with the Russians and others.  
13 But I think having that in public is a very different -- I  
14 mean, for instance, the One China policy, I think we have  
15 touched on it. There are certain things that we understand  
16 that are delicate --

17 Senator Kelly: You mentioned in public, so --

18 Mr. Colby: Yeah.

19 Senator Kelly: -- you don't think it is a good idea  
20 to negotiate things in public?

21 Mr. Colby: I generally think that these things should  
22 be, you know, conducted behind closed doors in the  
23 appropriate forum. Sometimes it might be in public, but I  
24 think that is not something that I am driving the train on,  
25 nor would I -- I am being considered for a job then --

1           Senator Kelly: I agree with you. I don't think we  
2 should negotiate in public. That did not happen last week.

3           Mr. Colby: Well, my understanding is that was that  
4 the President and the Vice President's point was that,  
5 exactly that, so --

6           Senator Kelly: Well, on another subject here, where  
7 at DOD -- DOD is focused on providing -- and I know I am  
8 out of time, Mr. Chairman, but we talked about asymmetric  
9 advantage in my office in the INDOPACOM AOR. It is  
10 important we maintain, in my view, an asymmetric advantage.  
11 I hope you take a very close look at NGAD as we move  
12 forward, assuming you are confirmed for this role.

13           Mr. Colby: Thank you, Senator. I would welcome that.  
14 I would certainly commit to taking a closer look at that.

15           Senator Kelly: Thank you.

16           Senator Cotton: [Presiding.] Welcome back and  
17 recognize the fast-recovering and apparently hard-headed  
18 Senator Cramer.

19           Senator Cramer: I haven't recovered fully, but thank  
20 you. And thank you, Mr. Colby, for being here. To your  
21 family, congratulations. Thank you for stepping in the gap  
22 again.

23           And, by the way, just to prove that I get along well  
24 with my Democratic friends, I agree with Senator Kelly and  
25 his point about NGAD. I think it needs to be a high

1 priority. Air dominance needs to be a high priority for  
2 our Air Force.

3 However, I also sense and understand your frustration,  
4 although I must say you have done marvelously in answering  
5 their attempts to get you to say something that may upset  
6 the delicate balance right now going on between the various  
7 players in this hopefully -- hopefully -- negotiation to  
8 peace in Ukraine.

9 You are so much younger than me, but at least you are  
10 a student of history. Ronald Reagan was the first  
11 President I was able to vote for, and I believe he referred  
12 to communism in very negative terms, and in fact, called  
13 the Soviet Union an evil empire. I also sort of recall  
14 that he once referred to Mikhail Gorbachev as his friend.  
15 It must be easier to negotiate with a friend than it is  
16 with an evil empire, just a point I am trying to make,  
17 historically. Granted, not every situation is the same.  
18 These are not identical. The human beings in this matter  
19 are not the same, but I think the process is similar. And  
20 so I applaud your diplomacy in this room today.

21 Speaking of age, literally the year I was born, the  
22 first intercontinental ballistic missile was invented, and  
23 2 years later, the first one was installed at Minot, North  
24 Dakota, the Minuteman I. The Minuteman III came along  
25 after some time, and, of course, we also have 70-year-old

1 B-52 bombers. Both of those vehicles, of course, carry  
2 nuclear warheads. And Minot Air Force Base contains and  
3 protects the large majority of nuclear material in our  
4 arsenal.

5 So I have literally watched nuclear deterrence work up  
6 close and personal and have very much appreciated in my  
7 career in Congress, in the United States Senate, getting to  
8 know not just the processes, not just the systems, the very  
9 old systems every bit as old as I am, but also the airmen  
10 that protect them, that fly them, that operate them, really  
11 rather remarkable.

12 I want to drill down with that a little bit with what  
13 you were visiting with, of course, Senator Fischer about  
14 and maybe even get even more specific in the sense that  
15 particularly the land-based deterrent, the Sentinel, has  
16 had some challenges. We don't do this very often,  
17 obviously, like every 60 or 70 years, and so we find  
18 ourselves in a crunch financially with regard to Sentinel.  
19 Will you commit -- I mean, just commit today that you will  
20 advise the President and Congress, but especially the  
21 President, that we really do need to have that deterrence  
22 that has worked so well, so well for so long that not a  
23 single ICBM with a nuclear warhead has had to be fired.

24 Mr. Colby: Yes, Senator. Thanks very much, and I do  
25 commit to advising the support for the ICBM and the triad



1 and the land-based leg and the Sentinel program as well.  
2 Obviously, there are concerns about the health of program,  
3 so, if confirmed, that would be a priority, working  
4 alongside, you know, A&S and other -- Secretary of the Air  
5 Force to try to get that thing back on track, but  
6 certainly, you have my commitment.

7       Senator Cramer: As long as we are on the issue of the  
8 Air Force, many Administrations, recent Administrations,  
9 have been shedding, it seems, the responsibility of the Air  
10 Force to provide good ISR, airborne ISR. Lately, of  
11 course, the advent of Space Force, which I strongly  
12 support, has provided another layer of ISR. However,  
13 airborne ISR remains, in my view, very important. COCOMs  
14 tell us all the time how important it is, and yet we are  
15 seeing what I believe is an escalation of shedding ISR by  
16 the United States Air Force, particularly modern ISR. And  
17 I would just ask what your level of commitment is to  
18 provide -- and first of all, how important you feel  
19 airborne ISR is to the Air Force and to the COCOMs and your  
20 level of commitment is overseen.

21       Mr. Colby: Well, thanks, Senator. Thanks very much.  
22 And as we discussed in your office, Senator, I think that  
23 airborne ISR is very important, especially, you know, for  
24 its own reasons, but also because we cannot solely rely on  
25 the space-based layer.

1 I would also just say, Senator, if I could -- and it  
2 is really nice to see you, and I hope your recovery goes  
3 very well; thank you for being here today -- is, I believe,  
4 President Reagan, when he went to Moscow and he was asked  
5 about the evil empire during the period when he was  
6 engaging with President Gorbachev, and he kind of demurred.  
7 You know, he said something like, well, I wouldn't put it  
8 that way at this time. So I think that shows, actually,  
9 President Reagan is a great example of having a clear  
10 moral, you know, vision, but also understanding that there  
11 is a place and time for everything and being able to move  
12 and adapt to take advantage of new circumstances.

13 Senator Cotton: Senator Peters.

14 Senator Peters: Thank you, Senator Cotton.

15 Mr. Colby, good to see you, and congratulations on  
16 your nomination. It was good spending time with you in my  
17 office discussing a variety of issues. And one of the  
18 things we talked about was how Detroit is a major  
19 contributor to the Allied war effort now, but famously back  
20 in World War II, producing tanks, antiaircraft guns, and  
21 other weapons, nicknamed the "Arsenal of Democracy" by  
22 President Franklin Roosevelt. And I think you described it  
23 as the "Detroit deterrent," so I liked that saying.

24 Your previous work on the National Defense Strategy  
25 emphasized shipbuilding dominance, and you stated improving

1 the industrial base was going to be one of your top  
2 priorities, if confirmed. We both share the same goal, to  
3 expand the industrial base, not just in Michigan, but  
4 around the country, although my focus, of course, is in  
5 Michigan. So my question for you, sir is, if confirmed,  
6 what policies or initiatives would you lead to mobilize the  
7 national military industrial base? We have to outproduce  
8 our adversaries, and this is going to be critical. But how  
9 would you prioritize that and specifically how?

10 Mr. Colby: Well, thank you very much, Senator, and I  
11 really appreciated our discussion as well, so appreciate  
12 the kind words. And I absolutely share your conviction on  
13 this in an attempt to move it forward. Obviously, a lot of  
14 the responsibility for these issues would be in places like  
15 the service secretaries and acquisition and sustainment and  
16 so forth.

17 I would see my role -- and I would really welcome  
18 hearing more from you and your staff, Senator, on this  
19 topic -- is really driving at a national level from the  
20 Department on down. Obviously, if you look at the  
21 statutory responsibilities of the Under Secretary of  
22 Defense for Policy, it is things like the National Defense  
23 Strategy, which should be the primary guidance for the  
24 Department, as well as dealing with the interagency. I  
25 think that is a very important platform and basis to engage

1 both within and outside the Department to drive what I  
2 would think of as really a national mobilization of our  
3 defense industrial base as part of a broader  
4 reindustrialization effort because it is not going to work  
5 if it is just the defense industrial base and try to  
6 restore some of that Detroit deterrent.

7       Senator Peters: Great. Wonderful. Mr. Colby, there  
8 are proposals for a space-based Iron Dome for America, and  
9 that has gained certainly traction in some political  
10 circles, despite what are known technical challenges,  
11 certainly cost concerns as well. As you know, NORTHCOM and  
12 SOUTHCOM both face some real operational challenges now,  
13 including domain awareness gaps, critical infrastructure  
14 protection, and a whole host of challenges. So my question  
15 for you is, how do you evaluate the feasibility of such an  
16 Iron Dome concept for defending the entire U.S. homeland,  
17 given the competing operational challenges that both  
18 NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM currently face?

19       Mr. Colby: Well, thanks, Senator. I understand where  
20 you are coming from. I believe and, you know, having spent  
21 a lot of time studying the history of kind of missile  
22 defense capabilities, I think those are very valid  
23 questions. I fully support the President's EO and the  
24 Golden Dome approach in large part because I think the  
25 range and scale and type and sophistication of missile and

1 other unmanned threats to the homeland is growing, and so  
2 we need to keep pace with that.

3 One of the reasons, again, we are sort of -- you know,  
4 the Keynes line "facts change," so, you know, my  
5 recommendations change -- is I think some of the technology  
6 breakthroughs that we have seen in things like drones and  
7 unmanned systems, as well as in artificial intelligence,  
8 you know, and related fields could really drive down the  
9 cost curve and offer up technology capabilities or  
10 technology solutions and results that would give us a much  
11 better bang for our buck if you will. Now, a lot of that  
12 would be in places like R&E and other places. But I think  
13 that is a very reasonable, you know, basis to move forward  
14 and not just kind of pie-in-the-sky thinking.

15 Senator Peters: As you know, the Air Force has  
16 requested billions of dollars to research and build a  
17 collaborative combat aircraft, which, as you know, are the  
18 unmanned powered aircraft controlled by very advanced AI  
19 systems that can complete missions on their own or be  
20 deployed in combination with human-piloted fighters. These  
21 autonomous aircraft are probably particularly crucial when  
22 we think about the Indo-Pacific and the vast range that  
23 that encompasses. My question for you is, if confirmed,  
24 how do you see CCAs being utilized and integrated into  
25 INDOPACOM? And is that the place where they would have

1 probably the most use?

2 Mr. Colby: Well, thanks, Senator. I mean,  
3 unfortunately, my knowledge of this is really from reading  
4 the defense press and on the outside, so I don't feel I  
5 have the basis to give you a really informed answer. But I  
6 would say that I think we do need to see unmanned systems  
7 operating alongside manned systems in an integrated fashion  
8 with other unmanned systems as part of the operational  
9 concepts for the future, especially in places like the  
10 Pacific, given not only the long ranges but the scale and  
11 density and sophistication of Chinese integrated air  
12 defenses.

13 Senator Peters: Great. Thank you.

14 Mr. Colby: Thanks, Senator.

15 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very, very much. Senator  
16 Scott.

17 Senator Rick Scott: Sure. Mr. Colby, congratulations  
18 first on your nomination and thanks for being here. Thank  
19 you for taking the opportunity to meet with me. And, you  
20 know, you made a commitment when we met that you are going  
21 to do everything you can to enact President Trump's agenda,  
22 standing with our allies, including Israel, and bringing  
23 peace back through strength. So as we talked about -- and  
24 I represent Florida. I have got a big Jewish population,  
25 very pro-Israel population in my state. After 4 years of

1 President Biden's complete abandonment of Israel and  
2 appeasement of dangerous regimes in Iran, China, and more,  
3 I thank God we have President Trump back in the White  
4 House, the most pro-Israel President in our nation's  
5 history. President Trump has already made clear that, as  
6 long as he is President, Iran will never be allowed to have  
7 a nuclear weapon. And I have been encouraged by the  
8 decisive actions he has taken so far to restore maximum  
9 pressure on Iran.

10 I have heard concerns, as you know, from my  
11 constituents, so can you talk about your previous comments  
12 on Iran and your commitment to supporting Israel and  
13 supporting the President's agenda?

14 Mr. Colby: Sure. Thank you very much, Senator. As  
15 you said, I am honored to be nominated by President Trump.  
16 I would be honored to serve in his Administration, if  
17 confirmed. I believe he has the right "America first,  
18 peace through strength" perspective. He is an excellent  
19 negotiator, and I think he is putting together a great  
20 team, and if confirmed, I would be honored to serve among  
21 them.

22 I believe I have a very strong record, more than  
23 strong, airtight, you know, record on support for Israel,  
24 which I have referred to as a model ally. I think it is a  
25 key interest of the United States, and its security has

1 obviously taken a huge body blow as a result of the Hamas  
2 attacks and the, you know, concurrent attacks or subsequent  
3 attacks from Iran and its proxies and so forth. And I have  
4 publicly stood with Israel. You know, I believe it is  
5 important to have the memorandum of understanding and so  
6 forth that we stand behind Israel, not only politically,  
7 but financially and, you know, wherever possible and as  
8 part of our overall strategy, militarily and so forth.

9       On the issue of Iran, I have made clear that my  
10 position -- personal position, as Senator Sullivan rightly  
11 underlines -- is that Iran should not have a nuclear  
12 weapon. We should deny Iran to have a nuclear weapon, and  
13 that if confirmed, it would be my personal responsibility,  
14 which in my duty to present the President with very good,  
15 plausible options that are credible options that are  
16 consistent -- and I should stress with the President's  
17 overall approach, of course, which is to try to have a  
18 trust-but-verify negotiated agreement or something like it.  
19 But you have got to have the hammer there available.

20       What I would say, Senator -- and I was discussing with  
21 Senator Sullivan a little bit -- is the way that I would  
22 look at the overall kind of arc of my thinking, if you will  
23 permit me, is to say really the thrust of my thinking and  
24 advocacy over the years and my strategic approach has been  
25 we have got to get the ends, ways, and means together. We



1 got to have something close to I think what President Trump  
2 was talking about, very similar, we were talking about  
3 President Reagan, to the Weinberger Doctrine. You need to  
4 be strong to get peace, but if we are going to put American  
5 forces into action, we are going to have a clear goal. It  
6 is going to have an exit strategy that is plausible. That  
7 doesn't mean inaction, but that is the kind of thing.

8 And a lot of my advocacy and commentary, especially as  
9 a kind of public intellectual if you will, was pushing back  
10 against a lot of people who, frankly, I would say, were  
11 quite cavalier about the employment of military force. And  
12 I think, to your point, Senator, with President Trump's  
13 leadership, with the Vice President, with Secretary of  
14 Defense Hegseth, we have a team that understands strength  
15 for sure, that understands the role of negotiation, but  
16 also understands that it is important -- the downside risks  
17 of the use of military force and the importance of not  
18 being cavalier about employing our men and women in  
19 uniform.

20 Senator Rick Scott: Thank you.

21 Mr. Colby: Thank you, Senator.

22 Senator Rick Scott: The prior Administration withheld  
23 and slowed down the delivery of bombs to Israel and the  
24 joint direct attack munition kits to convert those bombs  
25 into precision-guided munitions. In this role, I think,

1 would you just go on and commit that you agree that we  
2 should reverse the former Administration's anti-Israel  
3 policies and correct any bureaucratic holdups that are  
4 delaying any U.S. arms to Israel?

5 Mr. Colby: I agree, Senator, and what I have said,  
6 and what I would say here again, is, if confirmed, I would  
7 advocate removing kind of the bear hug, which is to say  
8 Israel is a model ally in the sense that it is a capable  
9 and willing ally that isn't asking us to fight all its own  
10 fights. It basically wants the ability and capability and  
11 backing to go out and take care of business.

12 And I think a very effective example of that  
13 ends/ways/means model is exactly Israel's actions against  
14 Hezbollah and Iran itself a few months ago, which I think  
15 were very, very effective, and they left us in a better  
16 position. Obviously, they didn't solve the problem of  
17 Hezbollah in Iran. I think the Israelis are realists like  
18 we should be, which is to say, the threat doesn't just go  
19 away, but they put themselves and us in a better position  
20 by the intelligent and robust application of military force  
21 in a politically smart way.

22 Senator Rick Scott: The last one is a real easy  
23 question. Do you agree that the government of China has  
24 made the decision to become our adversary?

25 Mr. Colby: Yes, absolutely. I think that is correct,

1 Senator.

2 Senator Rick Scott: Thanks.

3 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Scott. Mr.  
4 Colby, in the context of your answer, what is the bear hug?

5 Mr. Colby: My understanding of the bear hug, from  
6 what I have been reading, is like a hovering kind of  
7 control over Israel's decisions that some people advocate,  
8 which is saying, you know, we are going to pick and choose  
9 exactly what you can and can't do.

10 My view that I think is consistent with the  
11 President's view, if I may say, Senator, is that we should  
12 be looking for allies who are able, but also willing to do  
13 things more autonomously and take action. I think, in the  
14 case of, for instance, Hezbollah, again, just relying on  
15 public reporting, I am not sure how much, you know, we in  
16 the United States even really knew about it, but it was  
17 very effective, and I think it ended up being more in our  
18 interests.

19 Chairman Wicker: Thank you for that explanation.

20 Senator Warren.

21 Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and  
22 congratulations on your nomination, Mr. Colby.

23 So U.S. does not target innocent civilians, and not  
24 only because that is what is right, it is also that is what  
25 is effective. General Stanley McChrystal coined the term

1 "insurgent math" -- you may remember hearing about this --  
2 meaning that for every civilian you kill, you create 10 new  
3 enemies. U.S. Air strikes killed as many as 48,000  
4 civilians between 2001 and 2021. You can do the math on  
5 that.

6 Now, most people know that killing civilians is wrong  
7 and should be rare, and when it has happened, our troops  
8 file reports. But too often, those reports don't actually  
9 receive a response from anyone, and we don't learn how to  
10 avoid future accidents that result in civilian deaths. And  
11 that is why Congress passed several reforms into law to  
12 reduce civilian harm and to improve our guidance for our  
13 servicemembers, including establishing the Civilian  
14 Protection Center of Excellence. This center helps make  
15 military operations more effective, and it also supports  
16 troops in preventing and responding to civilian harm.

17 So let me ask you, Mr. Colby, if confirmed, will you  
18 oversee implementation of these reforms? Do you agree that  
19 preventing civilian deaths enhances U.S. national security,  
20 including reducing risks to our own troops?

21 Mr. Colby: I do agree with that, Senator.

22 Senator Warren: Good. I am glad to hear that. It is  
23 very important.

24 This isn't a partisan issue. During the first Trump  
25 Administration, the Pentagon grew concerned about the

1 number of civilian deaths resulting from operations that  
2 were in place to try to defeat ISIS, and it launched a  
3 study. And Secretaries of Defense Mattis and Esper and  
4 Austin all took steps to reduce civilian harm across the  
5 Administrations. So today, the Center of Excellence helps  
6 commanders sharpen their campaign plans so they can make  
7 smarter decisions about strikes that they need to deploy.

8 So, Mr. Colby, do you agree that commanders can make  
9 better decisions in the field when they are equipped with  
10 training on how to avoid civilian casualties?

11 Mr. Colby: I do, Senator.

12 Senator Warren: Good. I am glad to hear that.

13 Following the laws of war helps set us apart from  
14 terrorists and from adversaries like Russia, which has  
15 targeted civilians in Ukraine. American troops also rely  
16 on Judge Advocate General's Corps for legal advice.

17 Senator Graham, who himself was a JAG rightly called the  
18 JAGs the conscience of the military. Mr. Colby, do you  
19 think it is important that commanders have legal advice  
20 that they can count on and trust?

21 Mr. Colby: I do, Senator.

22 Senator Warren: Secretary Hegseth's outspoken  
23 disregard for the rules of war endangers U.S. troops, and  
24 his firing of the top military lawyers in the Army, the  
25 Navy, and the Air Force last month, and his plans to reduce

1 the rank of JAG leadership from a 3-star role to a 2-star  
2 role are deeply concerning. If confirmed as Under  
3 Secretary of Defense for Policy, your views will send a  
4 message from the top about whether the laws of war matter.  
5 I urge you to take this seriously. I appreciate your  
6 answers today. If you want to expand on any of them, you  
7 are welcome to do so.

8 Mr. Colby: Thank you, Senator. I have seen the  
9 reports in the press, so I can't speak about it  
10 authoritatively. I trust Secretary Hegseth's judgment.  
11 What I would say is that, if confirmed, I certainly would  
12 take the laws of war very seriously. It is something I  
13 have studied in the past, I have thought about a great  
14 deal. It is part of the overall ends/ways/means and the  
15 rational use of military power. Again, not to be sanguine  
16 about it or blasé, but to say that, you know, observing the  
17 laws of war, understanding them in a reasonable way that is  
18 consistent with combat effectiveness and military  
19 effectiveness and achieving our goals and deterrence, I  
20 think that is a very important part of the picture that I  
21 think is part of the role of the USCP, if confirmed.

22 Senator Warren: I appreciate that, Mr. Colby. I  
23 think that helps keep our warfighters safer, and I also  
24 think it helps keep our nation safer. Thank you. Thank  
25 you, Mr. Chairman.

1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator.

2 Now, we have Senator Tuberville, followed by Senator  
3 Duckworth.

4 Senator Tuberville: Good morning, Mr. Colby, good to  
5 see you and your family, and thank you for wanting to take  
6 on this job. It is going to be very difficult, but we  
7 think you can handle it.

8 Mr. Colby, you advocate for a strategy of denial in  
9 military and geopolitical contexts. How does this concept  
10 translate to Central and South American places like Panama  
11 and the troubling amount of influence that China is  
12 starting to have and has had in that area? And by the way,  
13 they just announced that one of our major corporations is  
14 purchasing both ports at the Panama Canal, which is very  
15 good news.

16 Mr. Colby: Well, thanks very much, Senator. And I  
17 think the President's early initiatives on our hemisphere  
18 in places like Panama are very encouraging. I think this  
19 is part of an overall strategy both to secure our own  
20 interests directly, secure the territorial integrity of our  
21 homeland from unchecked migration and lethal fentanyl flows  
22 that are killing hundreds of thousands of Americans, but  
23 also, as you said, Senator, to ensure that China does not  
24 gain a foothold or beyond, a dominant position in critical  
25 areas of Latin America, which I think was happening. I

1 think that is a big part of the strategy now.

2 I think part of that is up to the military, but a lot  
3 of it is part of the other agencies of government, the  
4 State Department. I know former Ambassador to Mexico,  
5 Chris Landau, Ambassador Chris Landau is going through his  
6 hearing downstairs, I believe. He is up for the Deputy  
7 Secretary of State. You know, I think that is the kind of  
8 relationship between DOD and State Department where you  
9 have a clear picture that we have got to have a handle on  
10 our hemisphere. We are pursuing our own strategies, and we  
11 are also empowering countries in the hemisphere and in the  
12 region to contribute more, you know, through development,  
13 through better governance themselves, through alignment  
14 with the kind of commonsense approaches that I think that  
15 we are following here that can result in better outcomes  
16 for all of us.

17 Senator Tuberville: Yeah, I think you will find the  
18 new Administration, Panama is very receptive to us too.  
19 Once you get in your position, you will find that out. I  
20 have been down there several times, and they need help, as  
21 we need more access to the canal, so thank you for that.

22 You know, in 2023 President Biden overrode President  
23 Trump. The Department of Air Force and the findings of  
24 multiple studies, including an Inspector General review and  
25 directed that the headquarters of Space Command remain in



1 Colorado instead of moving to its selective location at  
2 Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama, my state. Mr.  
3 Colby, if confirmed, you will be the senior DOD official in  
4 charge of space policy, as well as strategy, plans, and  
5 capabilities for the entire Department. Do you agree with  
6 me that, as a matter of policy, it is in our nation's best  
7 interest to make basing decisions on merit and not on  
8 political agendas?

9 Mr. Colby: I do, Senator.

10 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. Mr. Colby, much of  
11 your work is about prioritizing our defense policy towards  
12 deterring aggression with China or pacing challenge. What  
13 do you make of the progress made over the past few years by  
14 our adversaries toward integrating with their militaries?  
15 I am talking about since Ukraine, Russia have had their  
16 conflict, all the people in the East basically are running  
17 to China. What are your thoughts on that?

18 Mr. Colby: Well, I think it is really, really  
19 disturbing, Senator. I think there has been this kind  
20 of -- I think of it as like a countercoalition, China,  
21 Russia, Iran, North Korea. China is kind of the  
22 cornerstone of that coalition. It is by far the largest  
23 economy. Their support has made the Russian war effort in  
24 Ukraine sustainable. They are helping the Iranians. The  
25 Iranians are helping them. The Russians are helping the

1 North Koreans.

2       So I think there is a couple of things to be done  
3 about that. On the defense side, I think it is important  
4 for us to work with our allies to kind of plug the gaps in  
5 our perimeter. A lot of that is getting our forces in a  
6 better state of readiness, putting them in the right place,  
7 getting our defense industrial base back into good shape,  
8 robust defense funding, and then getting our allies to step  
9 up. I think a big part of this is we have some allies --  
10 Israel, I have mentioned -- India, South Korea, Poland.  
11 They are really pulling their weight. You could add  
12 Finland up there is doing a pretty good job. But a lot of  
13 the biggest economies in our Alliance Network really aren't  
14 pulling their weight. They are starting now, so I think  
15 there is a real opportunity to capitalize on that, because  
16 together, we are much wealthier than this countercoalition,  
17 but we have got to turn that into real military capability.

18       Senator Tuberville: Your quick thoughts on BRICS?

19       Mr. Colby: I think, you know, BRICS are sort of a  
20 representation of the changing world dynamic. I think  
21 Secretary Rubio put it very well. We are no longer in  
22 Charles Krauthammer's unipolar world. We are in a world  
23 the United States is still, I think, the strongest country  
24 out there, but China's the biggest, most powerful rival we  
25 have faced in probably 150 years, and other countries are

1 making their decisions. Obviously, Indians, who I think  
2 our relationship there is golden going forward, and we  
3 should really deepen that, and if confirmed, I would make a  
4 big priority of that. They are part of it, so it is  
5 complicated, but people are going to be moving around  
6 talking to -- you know, the Saudis are talking the  
7 Russians, and they are talking to us. That is very common.  
8 That is how the world's going to be. That is the reality  
9 of the world system as it is now, I think.

10 Senator Tuberville: Thank you.

11 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator  
12 Tuberville.

13 Senator Duckworth.

14 Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr.  
15 Colby, welcome.

16 While I do not agree with many of your policy  
17 positions, I do recognize that you are one of the most  
18 experienced and knowledgeable nominees from this  
19 Administration to come before this Committee, and I  
20 appreciated our conversation in my office very much. It is  
21 clear to me that, unlike most Trump national security  
22 nominees, you actually have been putting in the work to  
23 become an expert in your field.

24 That said, expertise alone is not enough. Integrity,  
25 adherence to the rule of law, and unwavering commitment to

1 uphold our democratic institutions are just as essential.  
2 So as I do with every Trump Administration candidate to  
3 come before this Committee, I must ask, Mr. Colby, if  
4 President Trump or Secretary Hegseth asked you to do  
5 something illegal, unethical, or in direct violation of  
6 your oath to defend the Constitution, would you refuse to  
7 obey?

8 Mr. Colby: Well, thank you very much, Senator, for  
9 the kind words. I would say I contest the premise of the  
10 question. I don't think the President or the Secretary  
11 would ask such a question, but I am committed, I would  
12 absolutely not follow an unconstitutional or unlawful  
13 order.

14 Senator Duckworth: Thank you. Mr. Colby -- that was  
15 so easy. Why can't the others do that? Thank you for  
16 saying that.

17 Mr. Colby, the global threat environment is more  
18 volatile than it has been in decades. Russia's aggression,  
19 China's growing assertiveness and challenges in the Indo-  
20 Pacific demand clear-eyed leadership and a commitment to  
21 our alliances. Yet rather than reaffirming America's  
22 leadership, this Administration has actively undermined our  
23 allies, cast doubt on our commitments to NATO, and, most  
24 disturbingly, cozied up to the authoritarian adversaries  
25 like Russia. The credibility of the United States as a

1 reliable partner has been called into question by our very  
2 own actions. Our President has refused to acknowledge the  
3 reality that Russia's unprovoked war of aggression in  
4 Ukraine has shattered global security norms, and our recent  
5 gesture of support towards Russia are emboldening our  
6 adversaries.

7 Mr. Colby, can you tell me if Russia invaded Ukraine?

8 Mr. Colby: Senator, as I said earlier, I don't want  
9 to disrupt anything going on with commentary on a fraught  
10 matter at a very delicate time. I am really committed to  
11 making sure whatever I can do to -- or not do anything that  
12 would hinder the ability to get a peace process on track.

13 Senator Duckworth: Why does acknowledging whether or  
14 not Russia invaded Ukraine, which is a known fact, affect  
15 the peace process?

16 Mr. Colby: I think the President and the Vice  
17 President have made clear that words matter in these times  
18 of delicate diplomatic negotiations, along the lines, I  
19 think, of what Senator Cramer was saying. It is not my  
20 place. I am here as a nominee. I am not part of the  
21 conversation. I wouldn't want to do anything to weigh in  
22 on this, especially at this very sensitive time where,  
23 Senator, I hope things do get back on track where we can  
24 have a move towards peace. And I don't think it is my  
25 place. I am not authorized to speak on this matter, as a

1 representative of the government. I am a nominee here.

2 Senator Duckworth: It is astounding to me that you  
3 can't answer the question of whether or not Russia invaded  
4 Ukraine when it is a known fact. That would be as if  
5 saying you don't know whether or not Hitler invaded Poland.  
6 It is astounding to me that you cannot answer that  
7 question.

8 After last Friday's shameful display in the Oval  
9 Office, it is clear that Trump is in the middle of a  
10 capitulation, not a negotiation. The wholesale refusal of  
11 this Administration's officials and nominees to acknowledge  
12 the established fact of Russia's illegal and immoral full-  
13 scale invasion of Ukraine out of fealty to Trump and,  
14 ultimately, Vladimir Putin is one of the most shocking and  
15 disturbing things I have seen in my life.

16 Let's move on. Mr. Colby, you have been a vocal  
17 advocate for prioritizing the PRC as our greatest  
18 geopolitical challenge, and we had a very good conversation  
19 about this. I look forward to working with you on opposing  
20 our near-peer adversary, often arguing that our strategic  
21 focus should shift away from other regions, and you have  
22 said, you know, sometimes we need to shift from Europe and  
23 the Middle East and really focus on the Indo-Pacific.

24 Under this Administration, we have seen a surge in  
25 deployment of active-duty U.S. military personnel to the

1 southern border and Guantanamo Bay, not to counter an  
2 active military threat, but instead to perform law  
3 enforcement and accomplish logistical tasks that are  
4 typically handled by civilian agencies. Mr. Colby, given  
5 your stated concerns about the need to strengthen  
6 deterrence against the communist Republic of China, do you  
7 believe diverting military assets to perform domestic  
8 political theater at the border is an effective use of our  
9 limited defense resources, or is it a distraction from the  
10 real threats that we face?

11 Mr. Colby: Well, Senator, I wouldn't regard it as  
12 domestic political theater to secure our border and to make  
13 sure that we have territorial integrity, but, if confirmed,  
14 I would certainly make it a real priority to make sure that  
15 those rightful efforts to ensure our territorial integrity  
16 and secure our border don't detract from our prioritizing  
17 the China threat, which is the biggest kind of external,  
18 you know, state threat that we face as a country.

19 Senator Duckworth: It is good to hear that. Thank  
20 you, Mr. Colby.

21 Mr. Colby: Thank you.

22 Senator Duckworth: Mr. Chairman?

23 Chairman Wicker: I think that was a very helpful  
24 answer, Mr. Colby.

25 Senator Budd.

1           Senator Budd: Thank you, Chairman. Bridge, great to  
2 see you. Congrats on your nomination. Great to see your  
3 family here as well.

4           So, if confirmed, your influence on the National  
5 Defense Strategy and planning guidance will shape the  
6 Department for years to come. So in the past, I have  
7 highlighted through section 908 of the 2025 NDAA the  
8 importance of special operations forces and the need for  
9 those strategic documents to better reflect how the unique  
10 size, structure, and posture of special operations forces  
11 enables them to both serve as a preventer of conflict and  
12 if, God forbid, there is a conflict, an enabler of it.

13           So how does SOF, or how does special operations forces  
14 fit into your vision for our National Defense Strategy?

15           Mr. Colby: Thank you very much, Senator Budd. I do  
16 think the special operations forces play a very important  
17 role not only in the prevention of conflict -- obviously,  
18 there are a lot of things that can do, building partner  
19 capacity, counterterrorism and so forth -- but also, God  
20 forbid, in the event of a major power war, SOF has multiple  
21 roles. It also is a way, apropos of the discussion with  
22 Senator King, to keep an eye on, you know, the ongoing  
23 terrorism threat. So I think SOF plays a very important  
24 role in our overall military posture.

25           Senator Budd: Thank you for that. So how does



1 regular warfare fit into the strategy of denial in the  
2 context of China or other adversaries?

3 Mr. Colby: Thanks, Senator. As discussed in my  
4 responses to the advanced policy questions, that is  
5 something I have some sort of broad thoughts about, about  
6 the ability to, you know, create dilemmas for China in the  
7 event of conflict or before conflict to deter it along,  
8 say, some of the secondary angles for China, as well as  
9 building partner capacity and the potential, again, God  
10 forbid, in the event of conflict, to create difficulties  
11 and dilemmas for China directly in a military sense as  
12 well. So I think those are some of the areas. That is an  
13 area I would want to dive deeper into to give you a more  
14 informed answer, if confirmed.

15 Senator Budd: In Strategy of Denial -- I know that  
16 has come up a lot today, and thanks again for the copy. It  
17 was one of the first meetings I had in that early basement  
18 office in the Senate when you came and saw me a few years  
19 ago. But you talk about the importance of coalitions and  
20 maintaining a regional balance of power. So if a coalition  
21 is too small, it lacks influence. If it is too big, it may  
22 lack commitment from the members. So what does an optimal  
23 coalition look like to maintain the balance of power in the  
24 Indo-Pacific in particular?

25 Mr. Colby: Well, thank you very much, Senator. You

1 are very kind. And that is something, as you may recall, I  
2 discuss in my book a lot. I think we actually are in  
3 pretty good shape in terms of the formal security  
4 commitments. I mean, this is apropos of my discussion with  
5 Senator Cotton, I think, and the Chairman as well. You  
6 know, we have very strong alliances with Japan, South  
7 Korea, the Philippines. I think we have effectively a very  
8 strong security relationship with Taiwan. Of course,  
9 Australia is very strong. And then I think we have a very  
10 deepening and important relationship with India that is  
11 directly proximate. I think we also could build  
12 effectively on a partnership with Vietnam. Obviously, we  
13 have a long and kind of fraught history of Vietnam. But  
14 the Vietnamese, say what you will, they are committed to  
15 defending themselves, and they see, I think, the challenge  
16 from China.

17 So I think those are some of the places where we can  
18 work. I think if we can kind of hold the line at that way  
19 that, say, would be an effective model going forward. And  
20 then, of course, there are ways at the diplomatic level and  
21 political level to use mechanisms like the Quad to, you  
22 know, build on that. But from a defense point of view, I  
23 think the defense perimeter along the first island chain is  
24 the one that makes the most sense.

25 Senator Budd: Thank you. So given China's coercive

1 activities in the Indo-Pacific, do you see any states  
2 hedging, and what can we do to minimize those states'  
3 concern about the U.S. commitment to regional stability and  
4 security?

5 Mr. Colby: Well, I think that is a really important  
6 question. I think, in a sense, you see hedging behavior  
7 all the time. You see balancing behavior by countries.  
8 You know, take Taiwan or Japan, for instance. Japan is,  
9 albeit far too slowly, increasing its defense level of  
10 effort. It needs to go a lot farther, a lot faster. But  
11 you also see some hedging behavior. You see, you know,  
12 engagement with Beijing. And I think all of the countries  
13 are kind of, you know, sort of continually reevaluating.

14 I think the most important thing that we can do is  
15 have credible, capable military forces that are in the  
16 right place at the right time, to my discussion with  
17 Senator Sullivan, to be able to defeat a sustained and  
18 effective Chinese aggression against a country within our  
19 security perimeter.

20 Senator Budd: So what are your thoughts on a NATO-  
21 like alliance in the Indo-Pacific?

22 Mr. Colby: I am not theologically opposed to it,  
23 Senator, but I have been skeptical. I was in Korea earlier  
24 last year, and, you know, there is the trilateral with the  
25 United States, Japan, and Korea. I think that is

1 encouraging in some ways, but, you know, if we look at  
2 South Korean political dynamics over the last 6 to 8  
3 months, it is not clear that that is going to be enduring.

4 And so I think there is a lot of spade work and  
5 political capital that is put into a multilateral  
6 organization, whereas I think something may be building up  
7 to have more multilateralization in the region, but not the  
8 huge ambition of an Asia NATO, especially because you have  
9 got Japan over here, India over here, Australia down here.  
10 Their circumstances are quite distinct.

11 Senator Budd: Thank you very much, Chairman.

12 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator Budd.

13 Senator Rosen.

14 Senator Rosen: Well, thank you, Chairman Wicker,  
15 Ranking Member Reed, for holding this hearing. Thank you,  
16 Mr. Colby, for meeting with me earlier and for your  
17 willingness to serve.

18 Before I begin my questions, I want to add my voice to  
19 those of my colleagues to express my deep frustration with  
20 Friday's shameful Oval Office performance, followed by the  
21 President's decision last night to halt the delivery of  
22 U.S. military assistance to Ukraine and their fight for  
23 their country against a brutal dictator's invasion. I  
24 cannot believe that the United States would side with  
25 dictators over democracies, over our democratic partners

1 and allies. We must stand with Ukraine.

2 With that, I am going to move on to a different part  
3 of the world, Iran, because we have to combat Iranian  
4 aggression. Iran is the world's leading state sponsor of  
5 terrorism. It remains the primary source of instability in  
6 the Middle East. It endangers the world through its  
7 support of proxies and its pursuit of developing a nuclear  
8 weapon. We know Hamas would not have been able to carry  
9 out the October 7 terrorist attack in Israel without  
10 Iranian support. We know this to be true. Across the  
11 region, Iran also continues to work against American  
12 interests and poses one of the greatest threats to U.S.  
13 military personnel and those of our allies and partners.

14 So, Mr. Colby, like many of my colleagues, I worry  
15 that limiting U.S. military involvement in the Middle East,  
16 which you have advocated for in the past, could only allow  
17 Iran to further grow its influence in the region. And so  
18 what are the risks to U.S. national security and the  
19 security of the broader region if Iran continues, as you  
20 may have advocated in the past, to expand its reach  
21 unchecked? If we take our eye off Iran, what happens?

22 Mr. Colby: Well, thanks, Senator. Just to be clear,  
23 I have always opposed Iran's hegemonic ambitions. And I  
24 think, to the contrary, my view has been how can we handle  
25 this situation, again, if I could stress from the realistic

1 predicate of where our military is now. And if you look at  
2 the 2022 National --

3 Senator Rosen: Okay. So let me take you at that  
4 because, over the last year, Iran has escalated targeting  
5 U.S. vessels, personnel in the Gulf of Aden via the  
6 Houthis, Iran's proxies. They have targeted U.S. forces in  
7 Iraq and Syria via its proxies for many years. So how are  
8 we going to address the ongoing threat?

9 Mr. Colby: Well, I don't contest that Iran is a  
10 threat or a malign regime in the slightest. I fully agree  
11 with you about that. I think the intelligent application  
12 of our own capabilities in the region, but also using and  
13 bolstering the capabilities of our allies, especially our  
14 key ally Israel, but also others in the region -- I spoke  
15 with Senator Ernst about the Abraham Accords model, the  
16 ability to bolster some of the Arab states and other  
17 European partners that may have an important interest, that  
18 this can be a broader thing. And of course, Israel, to its  
19 credit, has significantly degraded Hezbollah's capability,  
20 of course, Hamas' capability, but also Iran's capability  
21 directly.

22 So my view, Senator, just to be very clear, is not  
23 that we should ignore the Middle East or that we should  
24 totally get out of the Middle East. I am baselining off  
25 the reality that I think all of us, candidly, must baseline

1 off of, which is that we don't have a multi-war military.  
2 And you mentioned some of the things that the Iranians have  
3 been doing. Well, Admiral Paparo said the other day that  
4 the Chinese are, you know, now basically in the business of  
5 conducting rehearsals, not even exercises. And Frank  
6 Kendall, the Secretary of the Air Force, said a couple  
7 months ago -- the Biden Administration, Secretary of the  
8 Air Force -- he said, not only are the Chinese on track to  
9 get ready by 2027 --

10 Senator Rosen: Well --

11 Mr. Colby: -- but the PLA will say it is ready by  
12 2027.

13 Senator Rosen: Let's talk about China because I want  
14 to learn about China's lessons from Ukraine. China has  
15 been identified, of course, as you say, the pacing  
16 challenge for Department of Defense across both the Trump  
17 and the Biden Administrations. As Ranking Member Reed has  
18 quoted former CIA Director Burns, "No one is watching U.S.  
19 support for Ukraine more closely than Chinese leaders," and  
20 that abandoning Ukraine, I am going to quote again, would  
21 be one of the "surest ways to rekindle Chinese perceptions  
22 of America's fecklessness and stoke Chinese  
23 aggressiveness."

24 So, Mr. Colby, after Friday's shameful performance in  
25 the Oval Office, what message did President Trump and Vice

1 President Vance send to China regarding American resolve to  
2 back democracies against brutal dictators? And how does  
3 taking our eye off the ball anywhere make us any less safe?

4 Mr. Colby: Well, Senator Rosen, I would point out  
5 that Director Burns, who is a distinguished foreign policy  
6 professional, has also said repeatedly that China was  
7 continuing to plan to move towards the 2027 and that Xi  
8 Jinping did have the intent to ultimately resolve the  
9 issue. So, you know, Director Burns is obviously a foreign  
10 policy expert of great distinction, but if you look at what  
11 he himself has said --

12 Senator Rosen: Can I ask you a quick question?

13 Mr. Colby: Sure, yeah.

14 Senator Rosen: Do you think that China, Russia, Iran,  
15 and North Korea are working in concert against us to  
16 present this multilateral challenge against us so that  
17 we --

18 Mr. Colby: Yes.

19 Senator Rosen: -- won't fight back? So how do you  
20 justify us taking our eye --

21 Mr. Colby: Senator, if we --

22 Senator Rosen: -- off the ball anywhere?

23 Mr. Colby: It is arithmetic, with respect, Senator.  
24 We have --

25 Chairman Wicker: Right, first of all, your answer to



1 that question was yes, and now you are elaborating on that  
2 answer?

3 Mr. Colby: Yes, Senator.

4 Chairman Wicker: Again, I hear much slower than you  
5 two talk. Okay.

6 Mr. Colby: My apologies. Would you like me to  
7 continue, Senator?

8 Chairman Wicker: Yes, if you would elaborate on your  
9 affirmative answer to that question.

10 Mr. Colby: Yes, Senator, I do believe there is a  
11 countercoalition that is working active. And I know the  
12 Chairman, you talked about this extensively. But again,  
13 the factual predicate that I think we all must proceed from  
14 is that, as the 2022 National Defense Strategy said, we  
15 have a one-war military and change. We don't have a  
16 military that is capable of fighting four adversaries at  
17 the same time. I would like, in theory, in principle, to  
18 have such a -- but that is not the reality. I believe,  
19 especially because the threat is so acute and so realistic,  
20 and because of the very real possibility of multifront war,  
21 we must have a realistic plan.

22 And I feel a special obligation that, if confirmed, I  
23 must deliver a strategy that actually deals with that.  
24 That is not neglecting the Iran threat. That is not  
25 neglecting the military threat that Russia poses, but it is

1 a realistic plan to deal with that. And part of that, of  
2 course, is greater defense investment and revitalization of  
3 our defense industrial base, but it is also making  
4 intelligent use of our allies, and in particular in the  
5 case of Europe and countries like Japan and Taiwan,  
6 pressing them to take greater responsibility, which they  
7 can and must do.

8 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, and thank you  
9 for that elaboration which required us to take a little  
10 extra time. And, Mr. Colby, I think you will acknowledge  
11 that is precisely the situation that my Peace Through  
12 Strength plan attempts to address and address beginning  
13 right now.

14 Mr. Colby: Senator, absolutely. I have had the  
15 pleasure of reviewing it, and I think we are keying off  
16 exactly. And I, you know, am a big supporter of that kind  
17 of perspective of restoring American strength, defense  
18 industrial might, and getting our allies to do more, which  
19 it seems to me is also the perspective of the President and  
20 the Secretary of Defense.

21 Chairman Wicker: Thank you. And Senator Schmitt.

22 Senator Schmitt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I am  
23 going to give you more of an opportunity to elaborate as a  
24 fellow realist. I think that there are a lot of hard  
25 truths that need to be told. The fact is, we can't be

1 everywhere all at once all the time. That is the truth.  
2 And so whether it is this Jacksonian or Jeffersonian or  
3 prioritizer or realist, whatever you want to call it, I  
4 think that this town has been in denial for a very long  
5 time about a very fundamental issue of scarcity, right?  
6 And so we have to make decisions. And protecting the  
7 homeland, focusing on China, those are our top two  
8 priorities.

9 That isn't to say there aren't other things that are  
10 of concern, but our industrial base has been strained to a  
11 point that it has not been, which is why there is really no  
12 daylight on this Committee about sort of trying to  
13 reinvigorate that industrial base. But I think this  
14 Wilsonian adventurism that has defined post-Cold War  
15 foreign policy has been a huge distraction about what our  
16 core national interests are. And so you have been really a  
17 leading advocate on that. But I want to give you an  
18 opportunity to sort of expound on that.

19 In your hopefully new role here, could you elaborate  
20 on what that prioritization, how that would play out, how  
21 you think about these things? Because the truth is, if you  
22 have a strained industrial base, if you are building things  
23 for a land war in Europe, you might be neglecting long-  
24 range fires in the Indo-Pacific, right? So how do you view  
25 all this?

1           Mr. Colby: Well, thanks very much, Senator. And  
2 obviously, really an honor and a very similar perspective  
3 as yours. And I would say that I think -- you know, and I  
4 talked about this in my responses to my advanced policy  
5 questions, this so-called Lippmann gap, named after the  
6 famous journalist Walter Lippmann, who talked about, you  
7 know, the danger of a gap between what you are aspiring to  
8 do and what you actually can do. And if you get that bluff  
9 called, that is catastrophe. And I feel -- again, and I --  
10 forgive me for getting a little emotional about it, but I  
11 feel we are at the precipice. I think the President is  
12 exactly right, and Mr. Chairman, I think you are absolutely  
13 right that we could be at the precipice, not only of a  
14 major war, God forbid, with China itself, but by deduction  
15 of a multi-front war, and we do not have the capacity.

16           And I don't luxuriate in that limitation. I would  
17 like to get, as you say, Senator, to a position -- and we  
18 have spent a lot of time in this hearing, and I spent a lot  
19 of time saying let's do the things necessary, Mr. Chairman,  
20 as you have talked about, to get us out of this situation  
21 not only for our own forces but to supply our allies. And,  
22 you know, what I have found a difficult challenge is I feel  
23 there is a kind of recognition in one part of the  
24 collective brain of the American system that this is a  
25 reality, but the behavior hasn't actually adapted yet.

1           And what I fear is if we don't have a realistic plan,  
2 the worst could happen, and we could find ourselves in the  
3 worst possible outcome like losing a war. And that is why  
4 I mentioned it in my opening statement because I think, God  
5 forbid, that is actually plausible, and I want to avoid  
6 that at all costs.

7           And, by the way, I also don't want to abandon the  
8 Middle East. I don't want a nuclear Iran. I don't want  
9 Russia to run roughshod over Europe. I don't want North  
10 Korea to take over South Korea. But if we know, as a  
11 factual, empirical matter, that we can't do all those  
12 things in even remotely concurrent timelines, don't we need  
13 to have a credible plan for how to do so? And I think part  
14 of that is greater resources, Mr. Chairman, as you have  
15 advocated for and I think that, you know, in the  
16 reconciliation, hopefully, that will be part of that  
17 reindustrialization.

18           But also the secret sauce, I think, Senator Sullivan,  
19 as you were saying, is our allies, and they can do more,  
20 and they have done more. I mean, Japan is an incredibly  
21 wealthy economy. I mean, Taiwan, look at the investments  
22 the President got for TSMC yesterday. These are incredibly  
23 wealthy societies. Why are they not spending at levels  
24 commensurate with the threat? I don't understand.

25           Senator Schmitt: Well, and that level and the type of

1 spending matters too, right? When our European allies talk  
2 about --

3 Mr. Colby: Exactly.

4 Senator Schmitt: -- stepping up, it can't be for  
5 pensions.

6 Mr. Colby: Right, exactly.

7 Senator Schmitt: You know, and tough talk and  
8 percentages of increase for GDP don't win wars, weapons do.

9 Mr. Colby: Precisely.

10 Senator Schmitt: And the deindustrialization that has  
11 happened in Europe -- and most recently in Germany -- has  
12 completely kneecapped their ability to be a serious player  
13 on this, which is concerning to me. I know it is  
14 concerning to you, right?

15 And so as it relates to the industrial base then --  
16 and we had Mr. Feinberg here last week -- I think that is a  
17 really important confirmation. I think yours is as well.  
18 How do you see working together --

19 Mr. Colby: Yeah.

20 Senator Schmitt: -- with him? Because I agree, I am  
21 fully supportive of the Chairman's initiative for the  
22 plussing up and Peace through Strength, but practically  
23 speaking, then, how do we get to a place where we are more  
24 nimble? How do we get to a place?

25 Mr. Colby: Yeah.

1           Senator Schmitt: What are your views on this as far  
2 as procurement goes? I know that is not specifically your  
3 job, but it is related. It undergirds all of this,  
4 right --

5           Mr. Colby: Correct.

6           Senator Schmitt: -- for us to be able to do it.

7           Mr. Colby: Well, thank you, Senator. And I think  
8 actually the complementarity -- I have spent some time with  
9 Mr. Feinberg, and I think we have a very natural  
10 complementarity. As I understand it, he has really  
11 presented himself more as kind of the COO of the Department  
12 to get better results, and I am more the policy and  
13 strategy guy. And I think that is a very natural  
14 complementarity where there is obviously different  
15 expertise, different experiences, so I would really welcome  
16 working with him. And then, of course, the Secretary has  
17 his own set of extraordinary -- I would not say that mine  
18 are extraordinary, but his set of extraordinary background  
19 and experiences and expertise. So I think to me, if  
20 confirmed, I would be very excited to work as part of that  
21 team that I think has a natural complementarity.

22           Senator Schmitt: Thank you. Thank you.

23           Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Schmitt.

24           Senator Banks.

25           Senator Banks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1           Mr. Colby, since we have started this hearing, a lot  
2 of things have happened. I don't know if you are -- you  
3 are not in a position to follow the news. It is laughable  
4 to me to hear the Democrats call the meeting in the Oval  
5 Office on Friday shameful. And I know I had to step out  
6 and go to a Veterans Committee hearing. I had to go vote.  
7 But I am sure I missed a lot of the rhetoric from my  
8 Democrat colleagues about the terrible, shameful meeting in  
9 the Oval Office on Friday.

10           You might not be aware that one hour ago, President  
11 Zelensky tweeted. He called the meeting on Friday  
12 "regrettable." He said, "Ukraine wants peace, not forever  
13 wars." He thanked President Trump and America for our  
14 support, even for the Javelins that President Trump  
15 provided in the first Trump term that kept Ukraine on its  
16 feet. But here is the kicker. President Zelensky now said  
17 one hour ago, he is ready to come back to America and sign  
18 the minerals deal. Is it possible here that President  
19 Trump's unconventional approach is actually very effective?

20           Mr. Colby: Yes, absolutely. I think the proof is in  
21 the pudding, and I think that is a really encouraging thing  
22 to say. I am delighted to hear the news that we are making  
23 progress. Obviously, knock on wood. I also think it shows  
24 that, you know, trusting President Trump and his kind of  
25 particular deputies with this kind of high-level diplomacy



1 is really important, and it is not for me as a nominee to  
2 be spouting off and, you know, potentially interrupting  
3 this kind of progress. It is very encouraging. I know I  
4 speak for myself, but I am pretty confident, you -- I know,  
5 very confident, you too. You want peace there. You want  
6 Europe and Ukraine to be in as good a position as they  
7 possibly can be. So that is very encouraging.

8 Senator Banks: It seems like a pattern, though, with  
9 President Trump.

10 Mr. Colby: Yeah. Yeah, I think so.

11 Senator Banks: It is Zelensky --

12 Mr. Colby: I mean, I think he is in --

13 Senator Banks: -- it is Iran, it is --

14 Mr. Colby: Yeah.

15 Senator Banks: -- our other enemies abroad. It is  
16 the tariff approach. It seems like President Trump's  
17 unconventional approach is actually very effective.

18 Mr. Colby: I think it is very effective, and I think  
19 there is a degree -- I mean, he is a master negotiator. He  
20 is a dealmaker. He understands leverage, and he is not  
21 going to be calculable. I think one of the main critiques  
22 I think we probably all have of the last Administration was  
23 that they were highly calculable, and you could kind of  
24 measure it, and so the Russians could kind of precisely  
25 calibrate it. And after almost 3 years of conflict, things

1 were going worse. And I think with President Trump, you  
2 have a very different dynamic. You don't know what he is  
3 going to do, but you can get a deal with him. And this is,  
4 I think, the point about not, you know, having ad hominem  
5 is an important part of this.

6 I don't think he misunderstands who Vladimir Putin is,  
7 to the contrary, but I think he understands as part of a  
8 deal, a good deal, a verifiable deal, a positive deal, and  
9 the same logic would go with Iran and, God willing, he is  
10 able to achieve that as well or make progress in that  
11 direction as well. That would be the same approach I think  
12 he would take.

13 Senator Banks: I totally agree. I want to move on.  
14 Last year, INDOPACOM admitted to Congress that it had the  
15 most unfunded priorities in its history, \$11 billion. One  
16 of INDOPACOM's biggest shortfalls was missile defense. At  
17 the same time, we have been giving Patriot missile defense  
18 systems to Ukraine. We fired off hundreds of million-  
19 dollar missiles shooting down \$1,000 Houthi drones. How  
20 wise is it to burn through our missile defense stocks in  
21 less important parts of the world when INDOPACOM is so  
22 desperately short of those weapons?

23 Mr. Colby: Well, I think -- Senator, thanks -- this  
24 is exactly the problem I am pointing to. That is not to  
25 say that we shouldn't be doing anything in Europe or the

1 Middle East, to the contrary, but it is to say if we all  
2 agree that China is the top challenge and China is the most  
3 formidable threat, we need to act like it because,  
4 especially given what Admiral Paparo and others are saying  
5 and Bill Burns has been saying, that we need to act like  
6 this could actually happen. I agree with Secretary Rubio.  
7 There is a very real threat under President Trump's -- in  
8 the term that he has been elected to, given the 2027 date,  
9 that, God forbid, a war could happen. And I agree that  
10 President Trump has said that China would not attack Taiwan  
11 under his watch, and if confirmed, I would make it my  
12 business, my particular business, to give him the military  
13 strength to back that up, coupled with the negotiating  
14 ability, Senator, that you just referred to.

15 Senator Banks: Yeah. On that note, our Navy is not  
16 as big as it needs to be. We especially don't have enough  
17 Navy ships in the Pacific to counter China's rapidly  
18 growing fleet. Despite that, President Biden decided to  
19 permanently deploy more Navy ships in Europe to counter  
20 Russia, a nation which lost most of its Black Sea fleet to  
21 a country without a navy. Mr. Colby, should we be putting  
22 more vessels in Europe when we already don't have enough in  
23 the Pacific?

24 Mr. Colby: Senator, I think we should be putting the  
25 military capabilities, especially that are relevant in the

1 priority area -- ships, submarines, missile defense assets  
2 have to be focused on deterring a conflict over Taiwan, and  
3 if, God forbid, it happens, giving our soldiers and sailors  
4 and airmen and defenders and Marines the best shot. I  
5 mean, that is something I feel very deeply is I am not in  
6 uniform, but if confirmed, it would be my job to make sure  
7 those who are in uniform or who do stand in harm's way the  
8 best shot at winning because the American military  
9 shouldn't get an unfair fight.

10 Senator Banks: Thank you. I yield back.

11 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. And thank you,  
12 Senator Banks, for mentioning the really encouraging  
13 developments that have taken place since this hearing  
14 began. I am going to take the liberty of reading into the  
15 record the exact statement of President Zelensky today.  
16 And I quote, "I would like to reiterate Ukraine's  
17 commitment to peace. None of us wants an endless war.  
18 Ukraine is ready to come to the negotiating table as soon  
19 as possible to bring lasting peace closer. Nobody wants  
20 peace more than Ukrainians. My team and I stand ready to  
21 work under President Trump's strong leadership to get a  
22 peace that lasts. We are ready to work fast to end the  
23 war, and the first stages could be the release of prisoners  
24 and truce in the sky" -- could be -- "ban on missiles,  
25 long-ranged drones, bombs on energy and other civilian

1 infrastructure, and truce in the sea immediately, if Russia  
2 will do the same.

3 "Then we want to move very fast through all the stages  
4 and to work with the U.S. to agree on a strong final deal.  
5 We really do value how much America has done to help  
6 Ukraine maintain its sovereignty and independence, and we  
7 remember the moment when things changed when President  
8 Trump provided Ukraine with Javelins. We are grateful for  
9 this.

10 "Our meeting in Washington at the White House on  
11 Friday did not go the way it was supposed to be. It is  
12 regrettable that it happened this way. It is time to make  
13 things right. We would like future cooperation and  
14 communication to be constructive.

15 "Regarding the agreement on minerals and security,  
16 Ukraine is ready to sign it at any time in any convenient  
17 format. We see this agreement as a step toward greater  
18 security and solid security guarantees, and I truly hope it  
19 will work effectively," end of quote.

20 And I would then remind those within the sound of my  
21 voice and those reading the record that our President,  
22 President Trump, has said, "The Government of the United  
23 States of America supports Ukraine's efforts to obtain  
24 security guarantees needed to establish lasting peace," to  
25 end the quote.

1           And so let me just say this. I probably will not have  
2 an opportunity to take to the Floor today, but I hope this  
3 is a day when we can refrain from some of the rhetoric that  
4 it is tempting to make. I hope this is a day when Senators  
5 and Members of the House of Representatives can take a deep  
6 breath and hope that the excellent, hopeful signs that come  
7 from this statement by President Zelensky come to fruition  
8 and come to fruition quickly.

9           I have had fights with my roommates over time. We got  
10 over it. I am even told sometimes there are family fights.  
11 It is regrettable when they spill out into the front yard.  
12 But friends get over it, friends decide to move on, and I  
13 think we are seeing that process today. I hope to heaven  
14 that that is the case. And since Senator Banks mentioned  
15 it, I took the liberty of bringing it to the attention and  
16 to the record.

17           Now, Mr. Colby, Senator Sullivan wants to question you  
18 for another half an hour. No, Senator Sullivan has a  
19 question or two to tie down if you don't mind. And I  
20 realize this has been a long hearing for you and your  
21 family. Senator Sullivan.

22           Senator Sullivan: Mr. Colby, I wanted to make sure  
23 when you tell your kids that you went through this  
24 confirmation hearing, that you said that it went through  
25 two rounds of tough questioning, so this is the second

1 round. So thank you for, Mr. Chairman, indulging me.

2 I think you are doing a great job right now. You are  
3 answering a lot of questions. Very quickly, the Wicker  
4 plan that you have reviewed is outstanding. And I am not  
5 just saying that because that is our Chairman. You are  
6 hearing Senator Banks and Senator Schmitt, many of us,  
7 Democrats as well like that. Can you commit to work with  
8 this Committee on getting to those kind of levels, the 3 to  
9 5 percent of GDP that he puts forward? It is an excellent  
10 plan on shipbuilding, on industrial base, all the things we  
11 have talked about. I know that you have got to go through  
12 the process, but just to fight for that. You might lose,  
13 but, you know, we hear about 8 percent cuts. I have talked  
14 to Secretary Hegseth. That is not what he is planning.

15 But we want to hear from the Pentagon officials that  
16 they will fight for this because a lot of these choices  
17 that we are having to make that you are eloquently talking  
18 about, they become less difficult if we have a stronger  
19 industrial base and stronger military.

20 Mr. Colby: Yes, Senator, I commit to advocating for  
21 the higher defense levels that I think are consistent with,  
22 you know, what our security dictates. Of course, what  
23 exactly that would be, I can't say both because I don't  
24 know, but also it wouldn't ultimately be up to me. But I  
25 think we are in a situation where more robust levels of

1 defense spending are clearly in order.

2 Senator Sullivan: Okay. Good. Let me go back to  
3 Taiwan very briefly. I would agree -- and you talked about  
4 it earlier -- it is the KMT -- and it is the KMT, by the  
5 way. They control the legislature. It is different from  
6 the President's party. They are playing a dangerous game  
7 on their defense budget. And if anyone from Taiwan is  
8 watching this hearing, they need to realize they are  
9 playing a dangerous game, okay? Cutting defense spending  
10 right now is not the right signal. We all agree with that.

11 As you know, the Taiwan Relations Act requires the  
12 U.S. to make weapons available to Taiwan for its defense.  
13 Every Administration since 1979 has pledged to abide by  
14 that and has. The Trump Administration did a great job its  
15 first term. If confirmed, will you work with us to make  
16 sure we are going to turn the Taiwanese around, but that we  
17 will commit to work with Taiwan and us to comply with the  
18 Taiwan Relations Act?

19 Mr. Colby: Yes, certainly, Senator. And even more  
20 than that, I would make it a special focus to accelerate  
21 and revamp and focus those capabilities and expand those  
22 weapons transfers and sales and so forth to assist Taiwan  
23 in its ability to defend itself. So I have mentioned the  
24 pressure that we need to put on Taiwan. I think you are  
25 absolutely right, Senator. But we also need to do our part



1 on the U.S. side to make --

2 Senator Sullivan: Yeah.

3 Mr. Colby: -- real capabilities available in a timely  
4 fashion, which we --

5 Senator Sullivan: Get those --

6 Mr. Colby: -- have not done a good job on.

7 Senator Sullivan: Get those weapons out there. I met  
8 with the previous President. She had a great statement to  
9 me when I talked about will, and she said, will is often a  
10 function of training and capability. If you are  
11 stronger --

12 Mr. Colby: I agree with that.

13 Senator Sullivan: -- and you have weapons, we have  
14 this giant backlog, for example, of harpoons --

15 Mr. Colby: Right.

16 Senator Sullivan: -- that we should be getting to the  
17 Taiwanese. So I think that is an important point that she  
18 made. Will is a function --

19 Chairman Wicker: Do you have a final question?

20 Senator Sullivan: The final question is the most  
21 important of the whole hearing. We are talking about  
22 protecting the homeland, a lot of focus on the southern  
23 border, not always a ton of focus on the northern border,  
24 my part of the world, Alaska, the Arctic, the North  
25 Pacific. But I am sure you have noticed, Mr. Colby, in the

1 last couple years, we have had a huge increase in the  
2 incursions of Russian ships, Russian Bear bombers, Chinese  
3 strategic bombers doing joint patrols with Russians, joint  
4 naval task force, all in the ADIZ and the EEZ of America in  
5 the Arctic, in the North Pacific.

6 President Trump, after he got elected, said, we will,  
7 quote, "ensure Alaska gets even more defense investment as  
8 we fully rebuild our military, especially as Russia and  
9 China are making menacing moves in the Pacific." This is  
10 just an example of how many -- the NORTHCOM commander, the  
11 INDOPACOM commander recently testified that they think they  
12 are going to see even more of that. We had two Bear bomber  
13 incursions in 48 hours 2 weeks ago. Both NORTHCOM and  
14 INDOPACOM commander said it is time to look at -- not look  
15 at. They committed to reopening the Navy base here at  
16 Adak, which is a very strategic base.

17 I would like your commitment to come to Alaska, come  
18 up there with me, see all our great military up there, and  
19 work with me on strengthening our northern border, in  
20 particular, issues like infrastructure at Adak, which will  
21 provide our forces the ability to respond to the attack on  
22 the northern border, which doesn't get a lot of press.

23 Mr. Colby: Well, Senator, you are preaching to the  
24 choir on this, and I would be privileged to come visit  
25 Alaska with you, and I would be honored to do it --

1 Senator Sullivan: Great.

2 Mr. Colby: -- if confirmed.

3 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank  
4 you, Mr. Colby. Good job.

5 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

6 And I would point out, Mr. Colby, that it is cold up  
7 there even in the summertime, so bring your long johns.

8 This is one of the papers that I have produced. It is  
9 the second one, "Restoring Freedom's Forge." I hope you  
10 will agree that the best way to begin immediately getting  
11 enough submarines to have in the Pacific and doing so  
12 efficiently and using more modern techniques is to explore  
13 this very type of innovation.

14 Mr. Colby: I do agree, Senator, yeah.

15 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. This concludes  
16 today's hearing. I would like to thank our witness for his  
17 testimony, and thanks to the family. The restrooms are  
18 right down the hall.

19 For the information of members, questions for the  
20 record will be due to the Committee within 2 business days  
21 at the conclusion of the hearing. We are adjourned.

22 [Whereupon, at 12:17 p.m., the Committee was  
23 adjourned.]