

Stenographic Transcript  
Before the

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

## **UNITED STATES SENATE**

NOMINATION: WILSON

Thursday, March 30, 2017

Washington, D.C.

ALDERSON COURT REPORTING  
1155 CONNECTICUT AVENUE, N.W.  
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(202) 289-2260  
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U.S. Senate  
Committee on Armed Services  
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:29 a.m. in Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John McCain, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators McCain [presiding], Inhofe, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Sullivan, Perdue, Graham, Sasse, Strange, Reed, McCaskill, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Donnelly, Hirono, Kaine, King, Heinrich, Warren, and Peters.

1           OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN McCAIN, U.S. SENATOR  
2 FROM ARIZONA

3           Chairman McCain: Good morning. The Senate Armed  
4 Services Committee meets today to consider the nomination of  
5 Heather Wilson to be the 24th Secretary of the Air Force.

6           Dr. Wilson, we thank you for joining us this morning.  
7 We are grateful for your years of distinguished service to  
8 our Nation and for your willingness to serve once more.

9           We also welcome your family and friends here with you  
10 today. As is our tradition at the beginning of your  
11 testimony, we invite you to introduce those who are joining  
12 you today.

13           It is the standard for this committee to ask certain  
14 questions in order to exercise its legislative and oversight  
15 responsibility. These are the standard questions that we  
16 ask every nominee.

17           It is important this committee and other appropriate  
18 committees of Congress be able to receive testimony,  
19 briefings, and other communications of information. Have  
20 you adhered to applicable laws and regulations governing  
21 conflicts of interest?

22           Dr. Wilson: Yes.

23           Chairman McCain: Will you ensure that your staff  
24 complies with deadlines established for requested  
25 communications, including questions for the record in

1 hearings?

2 Dr. Wilson: Yes.

3 Chairman McCain: Will you cooperate in providing  
4 witnesses and briefers in response to congressional  
5 requests?

6 Dr. Wilson: Yes.

7 Chairman McCain: Will those witnesses be protected  
8 from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

9 Dr. Wilson: Yes.

10 Chairman McCain: Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear  
11 to testify upon request before this committee?

12 Dr. Wilson: Yes.

13 Chairman McCain: Do you agree to provide documents,  
14 including copies of electronic forms of communications, in a  
15 timely manner when requested by a duly constituted committee  
16 or to consult with the committee regarding the basis for any  
17 good-faith delay or denial in providing such documents?

18 Dr. Wilson: Yes.

19 Chairman McCain: Have you assumed any duties or  
20 undertaken any actions which would appear to presume the  
21 outcome of the confirmation process?

22 Dr. Wilson: No.

23 Chairman McCain: I would like to mention to our  
24 members that we are going to have a 10 o'clock vote, so we  
25 will not stop the committee. Senator Reed and I will bounce

1 back and forth in order to make the votes. We have two  
2 votes at 10, so we will bounce back and forth, and continue  
3 the hearing to make sure that all members have appropriate  
4 time to ask questions.

5 The next Secretary will lead America's Air Force in  
6 confronting the most diverse and complex array of global  
7 crises since the end of World War II -- the threat of  
8 terrorism and instability emanating from North Africa to the  
9 Middle East to South Asia, advanced potential adversaries  
10 like Russia and China, and rogue states such as North Korea  
11 and Iran.

12 The world is on fire, and now, more than ever, our  
13 Nation is counting on the global vigilance, global reach,  
14 and global power that are the hallmarks of Air Force  
15 capabilities. However, in recent years, your predecessor  
16 has informed this committee that America's Air Force is now  
17 the oldest, smallest, and least ready in its history. I  
18 repeat: America's Air Force is now the oldest, smallest,  
19 and least ready in its history.

20 Dr. Wilson, if confirmed, it will be your mission, in  
21 partnership with Secretary Mattis and the Congress, to  
22 change that fact. That starts by recognizing how we got  
23 here. Twenty-five years of continuous deployments, troubled  
24 acquisition programs, and frequent aircraft divestments have  
25 aged and shrunk the Air Force inventory. The combination of

1 relentless operational tempo and the self-inflicted wounds  
2 of the Budget Control Act and sequestration have depleted  
3 readiness.

4         Meanwhile, potential adversaries are developing and  
5 fielding fifth generation fighters, advanced air defense  
6 systems, and sophisticated space, cyber, and electronic  
7 warfare capabilities that are rapidly shrinking America's  
8 military technological advantage and holding our aircraft at  
9 greater risk over greater distances.

10         In short, we have asked a lot of our Air Force over the  
11 last 25 years, and the demands placed on the service  
12 continue to grow, but we have not met our responsibility to  
13 give our Air Force the resources, the personnel, and the  
14 equipment and training it needs to succeed. We are placing  
15 an unnecessary and dangerous burden on the backs of our  
16 airmen, and we cannot change course soon enough.

17         Restoring readiness, recapitalizing our combat aircraft  
18 fleet, and modernizing to sustain our overmatch will require  
19 the strong personal leadership of the next Air Force  
20 Secretary.

21         Dr. Wilson, I look forward to discussing the challenges  
22 you will face, if confirmed, and how you plan to tackle  
23 them.

24         For example, the Air Force is facing a massive bow wave  
25 of modernization investment programs, and the bills will all

1 come due over the next 10 years. Just consider the list of  
2 Air Force modernization priorities: F-35A fighters, KC-46A  
3 tankers, B-21 bombers, JSTARS, Compass Call, AWACS, and a  
4 new trainer aircraft, not to mention a modernized nuclear  
5 force, including the ground-based strategic deterrent B-61  
6 gravity bomb and the long-range standoff weapon.

7       There is simply no way all of these important yet  
8 expensive modernization programs will fit into the Air Force  
9 budget as constrained by the Budget Control Act. It will be  
10 your task to develop and make the case for a path through  
11 this tremendous budget crunch.

12       As you do, you also will have to be willing to  
13 challenge conventional wisdom and reevaluate how the Air  
14 Force is shaped. You will need to take an informed look at  
15 an optimal mix of the long-range and short-range combat  
16 aircraft, manned and unmanned systems, ISR, space and cyber  
17 capabilities, and key joint enablers, and you must also  
18 closely examine how the Air Force provides ready and capable  
19 forces to our combatant commanders.

20       Furthermore, as this committee has emphasized over the  
21 last 2 years, no matter how many dollars we spend, we will  
22 not be able to provide our airmen the equipment they need  
23 with a lethargic defense acquisition system that takes too  
24 long and costs too much.

25       Like all the services, the Air Force has a troubled

1 history with major acquisition programs. That is why you  
2 can expect this committee will exercise close and rigorous  
3 oversight of Air Force acquisition, particularly on programs  
4 like the B-21 bomber.

5 Today, I will be keenly interested in hearing how you  
6 will streamline and accelerate Air Force acquisitions,  
7 deliver needed capabilities on time and at cost, and meet  
8 our commitments to both our warfighters and the American  
9 taxpayers.

10 Finally, this committee honors the service and  
11 sacrifice of the outstanding men and women of the United  
12 States Air Force. At the same time, we recognize that high  
13 operational tempo, manning shortfalls, reduced readiness,  
14 and lucrative opportunities outside the Air Force continue  
15 to drive some of our best and brightest to leave the  
16 service. This is only exacerbating problems such as the 800  
17 fighter pilot shortfall you noted in your response to  
18 advanced policy questions.

19 I am interested in hearing your plans on how to  
20 mitigate such manpower shortfalls, improve quality-of-life  
21 and quality-of-service of all airmen, and incentivize them  
22 to remain in the service of their Nation.

23 Dr. Wilson, we look forward to hearing your testimony  
24 and how you intend to lead the Air Force to a stronger  
25 future.

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

3           Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

4           I appreciate Dr. Wilson's willingness to serve the  
5 Nation and appear before the committee as the nominee for  
6 the Secretary of the Air Force, and there is no doubt that  
7 Dr. Wilson has many of the necessary qualifications to serve  
8 in this position. She is a graduate of the United States  
9 Air Force Academy, a Rhodes scholar, a former member of the  
10 national security staff for President George Herbert Walker  
11 Bush, and a former Member of the House of Representatives  
12 who served on the House Armed Services and Intelligence  
13 Committees.

14           However, I believe it is incumbent upon this committee  
15 to ask some questions that have been raised regarding Dr.  
16 Wilson's nomination. Failure to do so could be an  
17 abdication of our oversight responsibilities and a  
18 disservice to the airmen and civilians that Dr. Wilson will  
19 lead, if she is confirmed.

20           First, Heather Wilson and Company LLC, founded by Dr.  
21 Wilson following her tenure in Congress, had contracts with  
22 four National Nuclear Security Administration laboratories,  
23 Sandia National Laboratories, Los Alamos National  
24 Laboratory, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and a Nevada  
25 national security site. From January 2009 through part of

1 2011, Dr. Wilson's company received \$464,000 in payments  
2 from these laboratories for consulting services.

3       However, due to claims of contracting irregularities  
4 involving her company, the Department of Energy inspector  
5 general conducted two investigations into this matter. As a  
6 result, the contractors who operate the laboratories on  
7 behalf of the government paid back at least \$442,877 to the  
8 Department of Energy with respect to payments made to Dr.  
9 Wilson's company. The rationale for the repayments was the  
10 absence of any appreciable evidence of work product.

11       Furthermore, Lockheed Martin, which operated Sandia  
12 National Laboratories, agreed to an overall settlement of  
13 \$4.7 million for the management failures.

14       Let me be clear. Dr. Wilson was not found culpable of  
15 wrongdoing. Nevertheless, the allegations that were levied  
16 are serious and directly involve her company. And I do  
17 think that the situation merits closer scrutiny.

18       Second, in October 2006, Dr. Wilson contacted a sitting  
19 United States attorney, David C. Iglesias, regarding the  
20 status of Federal corruption cases in New Mexico while she  
21 was serving as a member of the House of Representatives. As  
22 a former Member of the House myself, I have concerns about  
23 this action in terms of House ethics rules and the  
24 possibility a Federal prosecutor may have felt pressured by  
25 Congress in an ongoing investigation.

1           Mr. Chairman, I raise these issues today because we  
2           have been asked to confirm Dr. Wilson to a high-level  
3           position in the Department of Defense, and that has  
4           implications for our national security. But equally  
5           important, we are confirming her to a position of public  
6           trust, and we hold all of our servicemembers to the highest  
7           standards of conduct, and I believe the individual confirmed  
8           to lead these brave men and women must be held to the same  
9           standards.

10           Thank you.

11           Chairman McCain: Thank you.

12           I note that we have two undistinguished Members of the  
13           United States Senate here this morning who would like to  
14           make brief comments. You are certainly welcome, Senator  
15           Thune and Senator Rounds. I take it because of your  
16           advanced age, you would want to begin, Senator Thune.

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1           STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN THUNE, U.S. SENATOR FROM SOUTH  
2 DAKOTA

3           Senator Thune: Thank you, Chairman McCain, Senator  
4 Reed, and members of the committee, for the honor of  
5 introducing to the committee Dr. Heather Wilson to be the  
6 next Secretary of the United States Air Force.

7           I have known Heather for nearly 20 years and submit  
8 that President Trump could not have selected a more  
9 qualified candidate to lead the Air Force in these  
10 challenging times.

11          I first worked with Heather in the House of  
12 Representatives when she was elected in 1998. But most  
13 recently, I have had the pleasure of working with her as she  
14 leads an exceptional engineering and science university in  
15 our State, the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology.

16          Throughout her pathway to this nomination, Heather has  
17 repeatedly demonstrated her leadership abilities and her  
18 commitment to duty. Not only is she a distinguished  
19 graduate of the Air Force Academy, but she continued to earn  
20 her master's and doctorate degrees as a Rhodes scholar at  
21 Oxford University in England.

22          If confirmed, she will become the first Air Force  
23 Academy graduate in history to serve as Secretary of the Air  
24 Force. Heather served as an Air Force officer in Europe  
25 during the Cold War, in the United Kingdom, and at the U.S.

1 Mission to NATO in Brussels.

2       Upon leaving the Air Force, she served on the National  
3 Security Council staff for President George H.W. Bush,  
4 working on NATO and conventional arms control.

5       She later moved west to marry her husband, Jay Hone.  
6 Within a few years, she started her own company working with  
7 the national labs and large defense and scientific  
8 companies. However, she was soon called back to public  
9 service, and she headed the Child Welfare Department for the  
10 State of New Mexico.

11       After her election to Congress, where she served for a  
12 decade, she quickly became one of the go-to Members on  
13 national security issues. Heather was not afraid to take on  
14 tough issues, ranging from oversight of the President's  
15 terrorist surveillance program that led to the reform of the  
16 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act or sexual assault at  
17 the Air Force Academy.

18       And in a town where whoever speaks the loudest often  
19 gets heard, people would get quiet when Heather spoke  
20 because they knew that she had ideas that were worth  
21 listening to.

22       And now, as president of the South Dakota School of  
23 Mines and Technology, Heather has ushered in a new era of  
24 excellence, and the school is well-positioned to remain a  
25 foremost engineering, science, and research institution.

1           She is also a dedicated parent, adopting a son and  
2 raising two children. I can remember her son, Josh, coming  
3 to the floor of the House with his mom when he was about  
4 knee-high. Her daughter, Caitlin, is in college, and I  
5 understand has about five tests and a project due this week.  
6 Her husband, Jay, an Air Force veteran himself, is in South  
7 Dakota today recovering from shoulder surgery. We wish him  
8 a quick recovery. They are a great, supportive family, and  
9 they will be good for the Air Force.

10           Mr. Chairman, Heather has been a proven leader since  
11 her days as a cadet. She is well-versed in national  
12 security policy and nuclear deterrence. She understands the  
13 Air Force's key capabilities of air and space superiority,  
14 global presence, rapid global mobility, precision  
15 engagement, information superiority, and agile combat  
16 support.

17           She understands the Air Force's tremendous  
18 responsibility and role in our national security will be  
19 guided by the core values of the Air Force: integrity first,  
20 service before self, and excellence in all the Air Force  
21 does. And she understands the importance of not only rising  
22 to meet the challenges of the day but to look ahead to  
23 defeat the threats of tomorrow.

24           Mr. Chairman, I am honored to be with you today and  
25 honored to be able to highly recommend Heather Wilson to you

1 and your committee. Thank you.

2 Chairman McCain: Thank you very much, Senator Thune.

3 Senator Rounds?

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1           STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE ROUNDS, U.S. SENATOR FROM SOUTH  
2           DAKOTA

3           Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking  
4           Member Reed. It is my honor to join Senator Thune in  
5           supporting Dr. Heather Wilson's nomination to be the next  
6           Secretary of the Air Force.

7           Senator Thune talked about her record of achievement  
8           throughout her life. I have known Dr. Wilson as a leader in  
9           South Dakota during the most recent segment of her long and  
10          distinguished professional life. She served in an  
11          outstanding fashion as president of one of the most highly  
12          rated engineering and science universities in the country  
13          for the quality of its education and the success of its  
14          graduates, the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology.

15          This school's success is exemplified by the average  
16          starting salaries of its graduates, which is higher than the  
17          corresponding figures for graduates of Harvard University,  
18          Yale University, or the Massachusetts Institute of  
19          Technology. At a time when our Nation faces the  
20          skyrocketing cost of college degrees, tuition and fees for  
21          an out-of-state student at the South Dakota School of Mines  
22          and Technology is less than \$15,000 a year, making it one of  
23          the best returns on investment for college education in  
24          America.

25          Dr. Wilson became president of the School of Mines in

1 the summer of 2013. She has been a great leader and, if  
2 confirmed to be the next Secretary of Air Force, she will  
3 leave some very big shoes to be filled by her next  
4 successor. Under her leadership, the School of Mines added  
5 new programs, expanded research, raised funds to build and  
6 refurbish buildings, started an honors program, and deepened  
7 the connections between the school and the community.

8 People who work with her in South Dakota describe her  
9 as a great manager and an inspiring leader, and a tireless  
10 advocate for the school and her students.

11 A few years ago, Forbes magazine had a story on the  
12 toughest leadership roles in America. They indicated, "We  
13 revere the skills of prominent CEOs, perhaps more than we  
14 should," said one of the Forbes articles.

15 "But there's an underappreciated form of leadership  
16 that requires far more skill than being a CEO does. It is  
17 the job of a university president."

18 Mr. Chairman, Dr. Wilson brought such leadership and  
19 skill to her position as president of one of the finest  
20 science and engineering schools in the Nation.

21 General Mattis knows her quality. This explains the  
22 multiple requests he made to her to leave her position which  
23 she today finds deeply rewarding and at which she excelled,  
24 this to accept the President's nomination to be the  
25 Secretary of the Air Force.

1           South Dakota's loss will be our Nation's gain.

2           I look forward to this hearing today and to the prompt  
3 confirmation of Dr. Wilson as the next Secretary of the Air  
4 Force.

5           I thank her for the honor of introducing her today.

6           Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7           Chairman McCain: I want to thank both of you. I know,  
8 Senator Thune, you have other responsibilities. And,  
9 Senator Rounds, thank you for joining us.

10          We welcome Dr. Wilson. Please, Dr. Wilson, if you  
11 would like to introduce your family members who are here,  
12 your son here, we would be glad for you to, and proceed with  
13 your statement.

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1           STATEMENT OF HON. HEATHER A. WILSON, TO BE SECRETARY  
2   OF THE AIR FORCE

3           Dr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My son, Joshua,  
4   is here with me today, as is my brother-in-law, Mike Hone.  
5   As Senator Thune said, my daughter is otherwise detained,  
6   and my husband is recovering from surgery in South Dakota.

7           Chairman McCain: Terrible place to recover.

8           Dr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member  
9   Reed, and members of this committee, for so graciously  
10  welcoming me.

11          And thank you also to Senator Thune and Senator Rounds.  
12  The people of South Dakota are known for being hardworking  
13  and humble and kind, and I think they are well-led in both  
14  of you.

15          Mr. Chairman, without objection, I would like to put my  
16  whole statement in the record and then just summarize for  
17  you.

18          My nomination was unexpected. I did not anticipate  
19  returning to Federal service. I really enjoy being a  
20  university president, being the president of the South  
21  Dakota School of Mines and educating the next generation of  
22  young engineers and scientists, and making a contribution to  
23  the community in which I live.

24          I live a blessed life. We all do. And we enjoy the  
25  blessings of our liberty because volunteers step forward to

1 protect the rest of us. If confirmed, it would be my honor  
2 to lead and serve them.

3 As Senators in this committee, you know well that  
4 America's vital interests continue to be threatened, and I  
5 will not belabor the list of threats that we face, but I  
6 think we sometimes take for granted American dominance in  
7 air and space power.

8 The last time that an American ground troop was killed  
9 by enemy aircraft was April 15, 1953, during the Korean War.

10 Two legs of the triad have deterred our enemies and helped  
11 to keep the peace for over 70 years. And for 26 straight  
12 years, the United States Air Force has been involved in  
13 combat operations.

14 But dominating the high ground is not a sure thing, and  
15 there is cause for concern. We have a mismatch between our  
16 strategic objectives and the military means we have  
17 available to deter and confront threats. The Air Force is  
18 too small for what the Nation expects of it.

19 Since the Budget Control Act of 2011, the number of  
20 airmen has declined, but the demand for air and space power  
21 has increased. Leaders of the United States Air Force have  
22 testified that less than 50 percent of the conventional Air  
23 Force is ready for all of the missions assigned to them, and  
24 I have no reason to doubt that estimate.

25 We are short over 900 fighter pilots -- 900 fighter

1 pilots short of the missions that we need to fly and fight.

2 The Air Force is not currently ready to fight against a  
3 near-peer competitor, and that should concern all of us.

4 And our equipment is aging in the Air Force. The  
5 average airplane today in the Air Force is 27 years old, and  
6 the next Secretary of the Air Force will modernize fighters,  
7 tankers, bombers, intelligence platforms, the nuclear  
8 deterrent, ammunitions, space capabilities. If confirmed, I  
9 will work with the Secretary of Defense and the United  
10 States Congress to restore the readiness of the force.

11 I will also work with the Congress to address  
12 constraints imposed by the Budget Control Act so that the  
13 Air Force can be cost-effectively modernized.

14 As a leader, I tend to be values-driven and mission-  
15 focused, but I am also people-oriented. The quality of our  
16 leaders, particularly at the squadron level and the wing  
17 level, really sets the culture of the United States Air  
18 Force. I look forward to working with the Chief of Staff to  
19 bring renewed focus to training and educating airmen,  
20 particularly focused on the quality of command.

21 While our airmen of today have to face the fight of  
22 today, this committee and the other defense committees in  
23 Congress, and the Secretary in particular, really have to  
24 prepare for the future. I hope to review and further  
25 develop the research and development priorities for the Air

1 Force to be able to look to the long term so that we are not  
2 only able to dominate today, we are able to face our  
3 adversaries for tomorrow.

4 In sum, if confirmed, I intend to focus on readiness,  
5 modernization, the quality of command, and research and  
6 development for the future.

7 On a personal note, several of you know that my roots  
8 in aviation are quite deep. My grandfather lied about his  
9 age and joined the Royal Flying Corps in the First World  
10 War, the predecessor to the RAF. He flew sub search over  
11 the Irish Sea, and he helped to integrate propeller arcs  
12 with machine guns and synchronize them, which sounds like a  
13 good idea to me.

14 After the war, there was no work in Scotland, so he  
15 came to America, and he was a barnstormer, and he opened  
16 little airports all around New England. And in the Second  
17 World War, he flew for his new country. He flew for the  
18 United States of America.

19 My father started flying when he was 13 years old, and  
20 he enlisted in Air Force after high school, and he became a  
21 mechanic and a crew chief. He was a crew chief on the  
22 hottest jet in America at the time, the F-84 Thunderjet, and  
23 he was stationed at Walker Air Force Base in Roswell, New  
24 Mexico, and Otis Air Force Base in Massachusetts, and  
25 Selfridge Air Force Base in Michigan.

1           When he got out of the Air Force, he went home. And in  
2 the 1950s, when a lot of women did not even drive, he taught  
3 my mom how to fly. They rebuilt an airplane together. And  
4 then he was a commercial pilot and built experimental  
5 airplanes, including inside our 1,600 square-foot house. My  
6 mother was a very tolerant woman.

7           We live in a remarkable country, and when I, at the age  
8 of 17, went into the United States Air Force Academy, I  
9 became the third generation in my family to serve. My  
10 husband is also a 30-year retired Air Force, Guard, and  
11 Reserve Judge Advocate General.

12           We are served by innovators and intrepid airmen who  
13 take great risks on our behalf. I have been called back to  
14 service in a role that I did not seek and did not expect.  
15 If confirmed, I will do my best to do my duty.

16           Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17           [The prepared statement of Dr. Wilson follows:]

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1 Chairman McCain: Thank you, Dr. Wilson.

2 Senator, if I could ask the indulgence of committee  
3 members, Senator Tillis has to attend the funeral of a dear  
4 friend, and I would ask the indulgence of the committee to  
5 allow him to go first, and then we will go through regular  
6 order.

7 Senator Tillis?

8 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chair. He is actually  
9 a highly decorated marine who died just shortly after he  
10 retired, and we are going to be over at Arlington, so thank  
11 you for your indulgence. I will try to be brief.

12 Dr. Wilson, I look forward to voting for your  
13 confirmation, and I fully expect that you are going to be  
14 confirmed. We need strong leadership at a time when -- we  
15 were in a committee hearing yesterday where we had three  
16 lieutenant generals tell us that we only have four out of  
17 over 50 squadrons that are at their highest level of  
18 qualifications. We are more than 1,000 pilots short, about  
19 800 of them are fighter pilots. I could go down the list.  
20 We have already talked about the smallest Air Force in our  
21 history.

22 So when you think about those deficits, they are  
23 deficits in what is the smallest Air Force in history, and  
24 the oldest.

25 So I appreciate your courage and willingness to take on

1 this task. We need to hurry up and get you confirmed so  
2 that people can hear the chairman's concerns about a CR that  
3 does not give you the certainty to start fixing some of the  
4 structural problems in the Air Force and all the lines of  
5 service.

6 So I appreciate your courage in taking on the task. I  
7 think you are eminently qualified.

8 I am going to briefly touch on a parochial issue, but I  
9 am not going to ask you to respond to it.

10 Last year, and I have to agree with the chair,  
11 something that I was trying to do at Pope Army Airfield, a  
12 place where Senator Reed has a lot of fond memories of the  
13 Green Ramp, has a unique mission in the global response  
14 force. And I was trying to do something that I do not think  
15 the chair liked, and he is probably right, and that was to  
16 really fix the 440th down there, because I do feel like a  
17 physical presence down there is important to account for all  
18 the other kinds of things, weather, illnesses, mechanical  
19 problems, the way that they are trying to help fulfill the  
20 training mission down there for the 82nd Airborne.

21 But I think, on reflection, I realize that I almost  
22 became a part of the problem because what I was doing was a  
23 legislative fix. What I was doing was constraining what you  
24 all need to do to optimize the resources and complete the  
25 missions and support, in this case, the mission down at Fort

1 Bragg.

2 But we really need feedback from you in terms of the  
3 things that we have done in the past that would take the  
4 440th and put it on the top of the list of six other places  
5 that the Air Force deemed were more appropriate reductions  
6 that they could do to meet their cost-cutting goals -- in  
7 other words, BRAC and a couple other legislative actions  
8 that would have been similar to the one that I was trying to  
9 take. Those sorts of barriers need to be removed.

10 Can I get your commitment to go back and look at things  
11 that Congress has mandated on the department that you think  
12 are not helpful and are actually hindering you to be able to  
13 achieve the other mandate that we gave to you, which is  
14 reducing costs and optimizing? Can I get your commitment  
15 to, fairly early in year tenure, to go after these things  
16 and tell Congress they need to act so that we can help you  
17 achieve these efficiencies that we are also expecting you to  
18 achieve?

19 Dr. Wilson: Senator, I am very happy to work with you  
20 on those kind of mandates.

21 Senator Tillis: There are a lot. And you know, Dr.  
22 Wilson, we can absolutely give you the specific use case of  
23 what resulted in the 440th decision as an example of things  
24 that we have to change, if we are really going to put you in  
25 a position to succeed in your mission.

1           This is the last thing I am going to talk about. That  
2 right there is actually something that started in the Air  
3 Force about 10 years ago. It is a 680-page RFP for the next  
4 generation handgun. It started in the Air Force. It then  
5 went to the Army. It took 10 years to complete. And just  
6 over the last year -- 39 pages, incidentally, are all the  
7 pages that are specifications.

8           But almost a 700-page RFP to define a handgun. That  
9 does not make sense to me. In fact, we should probably  
10 already be iterating through the next handgun.

11           Can I also get your commitment on acquisition reform,  
12 that we start figuring out why in the hell we spent 10 years  
13 and 700 pages for the next generation handgun, and go look  
14 at that and maybe work with me to figure out how we can  
15 streamline and to what extent Congress has to get involved  
16 to do that?

17           Dr. Wilson: Yes, sir.

18           Senator Tillis: Thank you. I look forward to your  
19 confirmation.

20           Chairman McCain: I thank you, Senator Tillis. It  
21 brings to mind the incredible injection of enthusiasm,  
22 reform, and intellect that the newer members on both sides  
23 of the aisle have brought to this committee.

24           Dr. Wilson, I understand that after you left Congress  
25 in 2009, your consulting company did work for Sandia

1 National Laboratories, SNL. Later, SNL and Sandia  
2 Corporation, which operates the labs, were the subject of  
3 two Department of Energy inspector general investigations.  
4 Sandia Corporation then reached a settlement with the  
5 Justice Department to resolve allegations related to  
6 lobbying activities.

7 What was the nature of your work for Sandia National  
8 Laboratories?

9 Dr. Wilson: Senator, I worked for the laboratories  
10 after, on a consulting basis, after -- actually, before I  
11 was elected to public service and elected to Congress, based  
12 on my background in the military and national security  
13 policy.

14 When leaving the Congress, the president of Sandia  
15 talked to me about working full time and joining Sandia. It  
16 did not seem to me that there was the right fit there, that  
17 there was a position that was a good fit, and I was not  
18 ready to make that commitment. But what we did agree  
19 instead was that I would work for them about a quarter time,  
20 about 50 hours a month for the president and vice presidents  
21 of the labs.

22 After working that way for about 18 months, a position  
23 opened, and they interviewed a number of people for it. And  
24 in February 2011, Sandia offered me the position of vice  
25 president over all of the nonnuclear defense and

1 intelligence programs, about 1,400 employees and about 30  
2 percent of the labs' work. I declined that offer in order  
3 to run for the U.S. Senate.

4 With respect to the things that I did for the lab, I  
5 served -- well, I did work for four laboratories.

6 At the Nevada test site, I served on the president's  
7 advisory panel. I also was asked to review some special  
8 classified programs.

9 At Oak Ridge National Lab, I served on their Global  
10 Security division advisory board with respect to  
11 intelligence programs.

12 At Los Alamos, I did most of my work there, again, with  
13 the intelligence directorate and looking at field  
14 intelligence element operations and alignment, special  
15 program reviews, cognizance of national security policy, and  
16 matters related to the decline of thought leadership on the  
17 nuclear weapons program, as well as advice and support to a  
18 new vice president for intelligence matters.

19 At Sandia, I served also on their intelligence advisory  
20 board. I helped them I think a great deal with respect to  
21 strategic planning, on nonproliferation and their  
22 nonproliferation advisory board with respect to nuclear  
23 materials. I did numerous program reviews, helped with  
24 cybersecurity in their new cyber program. There were some  
25 special satellite programs at Sandia I also assisted in.

1 Chairman McCain: You will have to summarize your  
2 answer, Dr. Wilson. I have other questions.

3 Dr. Wilson: Senator, there was a wide variety of  
4 national security things that I did.

5 I also served, although not directly, with the  
6 congressional affairs office. I was always available to  
7 them to answer the vice president's and president's  
8 questions concerning the general operation of the United  
9 States Congress and the Federal bureaucracy.

10 Chairman McCain: Did you contact any Member of  
11 Congress or Federal official concerning a contract extension  
12 for Sandia Corporation?

13 Dr. Wilson: No.

14 Chairman McCain: Did you recommend that Sandia  
15 Corporation take the position that competition of its  
16 contract was not in the best interest of the government?

17 Dr. Wilson: Yes.

18 Chairman McCain: Why?

19 Dr. Wilson: Because it was not. It is my view that  
20 the national laboratories are special assets. They are  
21 government-owned assets, and we have had very long tenure  
22 and stability in those national laboratories. MIT Lincoln  
23 Lab, for example, has had MIT as its operator since 1963.

24 These are nonprofit government laboratories that have a  
25 management and operating contractor, and they are of very

1 long tenure.

2 Chairman McCain: If confirmed, will you advocate for  
3 the competition of Air Force contracts?

4 Dr. Wilson: Yes, when it is in the best interest of  
5 the government.

6 Chairman McCain: Were you disciplined or cited for a  
7 breach of ethics in connection with your consulting work for  
8 Sandia?

9 Dr. Wilson: No.

10 Chairman McCain: Were you investigated or charged with  
11 violating any law in connection with your consulting work  
12 for Sandia?

13 Dr. Wilson: No.

14 Chairman McCain: Do you view that your work for Sandia  
15 in any way would pose a conflict of interest as far as the  
16 assumption of your duties as Secretary of the Air Force?

17 Dr. Wilson: No.

18 Chairman McCain: Thank you, Dr. Wilson.

19 Senator Reed?

20 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

21 Let me just continue.

22 As I indicated in my opening statement, at the request  
23 of the National Nuclear Security Administration, the  
24 Department of Energy IG reviewed certain consulting  
25 agreements awarded to Heather Wilson and Company LLC,

1 whether they were appropriately administered and managed.  
2 Essentially, that was a sole proprietorship, as I understand  
3 it.

4 Two significant issues were identified in this review.  
5 It appears that you may have charged as many as four  
6 different government-owned and contractor-operated sites for  
7 the same consulting services for which you received  
8 approximately \$450,000.

9 The IG noted that, under the Federal Acquisition  
10 Regulation, fees for services rendered are allowable only  
11 when supported by evidence of the nature and scope of the  
12 service provided. The IG concluded that you did not comply  
13 with this requirement, nor was it enforced by the  
14 contracting officials involved.

15 While the contracting official did not enforce the  
16 Federal Acquisition Regulation to the contract, were you  
17 aware of the requirements to provide evidence supporting  
18 your 50 hours of work for \$10,000 a month for Sandia and Los  
19 Alamos?

20 Dr. Wilson: Senator, I did the work. I complied with  
21 the contract. The review found no fault with me. And the  
22 DOE auditors never even talked to me.

23 Senator Reed: But were you aware, my question is, of  
24 the need to maintain work product and evidence of your work  
25 for accounting purposes?

1           Dr. Wilson:  Senator, I submitted substantial work  
2 product and worked directly for the laboratories for no less  
3 than 50 hours a month.

4           Senator Reed:  Do you have records showing that you  
5 were spending 50 hours a month doing that?

6           Dr. Wilson:  Senator, if the DOE auditors had bothered  
7 to talk to me, I would have been able to help them with that  
8 when this matter occurred 7 years ago now.

9           Senator Reed:  So your position is that you had no  
10 knowledge of the requirement to maintain records, and that  
11 whatever records were required are no longer in your  
12 possession?

13          Dr. Wilson:  Senator, I complied with the contract and  
14 provided the work that Sandia National Laboratories and the  
15 other laboratories asked of me.

16          Senator Reed:  Did versions of those contracts contain  
17 language requiring recordkeeping?  And did you reject those  
18 versions of the contract before you signed it?

19          Dr. Wilson:  Senator, I do not believe so.  I do not  
20 recall anything like that.

21          Senator Reed:  So you do not recall drafts of contracts  
22 that were offered to you that required, according to FAR  
23 regulations, that you would maintain records of your work so  
24 that they could be validated?  You do not recall that?

25          Dr. Wilson:  Senator, the contracts that I signed were

1 pretty standard contracts provided by Sandia and Los Alamos  
2 and so forth.

3 Senator Reed: Did you review contracts before you  
4 signed the final contract and made comments?

5 Dr. Wilson: Yes, Senator.

6 Senator Reed: So there was a negotiation about what  
7 would be in the contract and what would not be in the  
8 contract?

9 Dr. Wilson: Senator, mostly with respect to the  
10 statement of work, yes.

11 Senator Reed: And in that negotiation, did you cause  
12 or agree to the deletion of the requirement to maintain  
13 records at all?

14 Dr. Wilson: I do not recall that at all, sir.

15 Senator Reed: Just let me ask a question which is much  
16 more pertinent today, which would be, if you, as Secretary  
17 of the Air Force, discovered an invoice paid by a laboratory  
18 under your management which simply said, "Consulting  
19 services, 8/1/2010 to 8/30/2010, \$10,000," would you accept  
20 that?

21 Dr. Wilson: Senator, I would expect the people who are  
22 managing that contract to manage it well. In this case, I  
23 was in very close contact with the people at Sandia. They  
24 knew exactly what I was doing. We worked every -- often  
25 several times a week together on things that they wanted me

1 to do. I fully complied with the contract, and I did the  
2 work.

3 Senator Reed: Why would Lockheed reimburse the  
4 government \$440,000 or more for work which the government  
5 could not find nor could Lockheed find evidence and not try  
6 to reimburse or ask you to reimburse monies?

7 Dr. Wilson: Senator, you would have to ask Sandia  
8 that.

9 Senator Reed: So if you were Secretary of the Air  
10 Force, you would not probe down to the actual contractor or  
11 subcontractor to determine what was done and see if they  
12 were culpable for anything?

13 Dr. Wilson: Senator, as I understand it, at least  
14 initially, Sandia rejected the conclusions of the Department  
15 of Energy audit as well.

16 Senator Reed: Let me shift quickly. In 2008, a report  
17 of the Department of Justice indicated that you contacted  
18 David Iglesias, the U.S. attorney for New Mexico, to inquire  
19 about the prosecution of certain public corruption cases.

20 The House ethics manual in effect at the time provided  
21 that a request for background information or a status report  
22 from a Federal attorney "may in effect be an indirect or  
23 subtle effort to influence the substantive outcome of a  
24 proceeding," and further states that the best way to  
25 communicate is in writing and make it part of the

1 proceedings.

2 Why did you call Mr. Iglesias about the public  
3 corruption cases?

4 Dr. Wilson: Senator, let me correct one of your  
5 assumptions there. I did not call him about particular  
6 cases or any particular person.

7 This matter was reviewed by two independent groups,  
8 both the Department of Justice and the House Ethics  
9 Committee. The House Ethics Committee interviewed Mr.  
10 Iglesias and chose not to even start an investigation of me.

11 With respect to why I called him, it is because public  
12 corruption was a serious problem in the State of New Mexico,  
13 and an individual, a constituent, with knowledge of ongoing  
14 investigations told me that the U.S. attorney was  
15 intentionally delaying corruption prosecutions, and I felt  
16 as though I had to address that allegation in some  
17 appropriate way.

18 Senator Reed: So you did not call about corruption  
19 cases specifically but you called him about corruption  
20 cases, which I think, logically, people would infer or he  
21 would infer were those cases that were pending before his  
22 Federal attorney's office. Is that a fair assumption?

23 Dr. Wilson: Senator, sadly, there, at the time, were a  
24 very large problem with public corruption in New Mexico and  
25 a large number of investigations underway.

1           Senator Reed: You said you called in response to an  
2 inquiry by someone. Who was that person?

3           Dr. Wilson: Senator, someone trusted me to do the  
4 right thing with information that concerned them, and I did  
5 not betray them then, and I am not going to betray them now.

6           Senator Reed: Well, I think it is important because it  
7 adds to sort of the motivation for the call. If this was a  
8 random constituent, that is one factor. If this was someone  
9 who had an issue or a motive to bring the cases or not bring  
10 the cases, that, I think, would cast this call in a much  
11 different light.

12           So I think it is very unhelpful to not be able to  
13 indicate. If this was an innocuous call about the general  
14 status of prosecutions in the State, of your home State,  
15 prompted by an innocuous contact by someone, I do not see  
16 why you would be reluctant to indicate who urged you to  
17 call.

18           Dr. Wilson: Senator, I did not betray them then, and I  
19 am not going to betray them now.

20           I do think that the issue here -- and you and I come  
21 from a very similar background; you came from West Point,  
22 and I came from the Air Force Academy -- that one of the  
23 appropriate ways to resolve an allegation of impropriety is  
24 to talk to someone about it. That is what I did with David  
25 Iglesias, who is a personal friend. He gave me his word,

1 and I took him at his word.

2 Senator Reed: So you called a Federal official in his  
3 Federal role to make an inquiry about pending cases, maybe  
4 not specifically, based on an anonymous contact that you  
5 received?

6 Dr. Wilson: It was not about -- Senator, I called him  
7 to resolve an allegation of impropriety made against him.  
8 You and I both know that, in some ways, ethically, the most  
9 difficult questions to ask yourself or to deal with are not  
10 about what you do as a person but whether you tolerate other  
11 behavior. And I had an allegation that the U.S. attorney  
12 was intentionally delaying corruption prosecutions. In some  
13 way, I had to resolve that, and I chose to resolve it by  
14 calling him and asking him about it. He denied it, and I  
15 took him at his word.

16 Senator Reed: [Presiding.] Well, I find it still very  
17 unsettling. Thank you.

18 Senator Inhofe?

19 Senator Inhofe: Dr. Wilson, I think we covered it  
20 pretty well in your opening statement and the questions that  
21 were asked previously, but it is worth restating. I think  
22 it is very important, because people out there do not know  
23 what our situation is. Now you stated, and you stated again  
24 in your opening statement, we have a mismatch between our  
25 strategic objectives and the military means that we have

1 available to deter and confront threats. That kind of says  
2 it all. It is a very good statement.

3 But then within that, we hear from others, General  
4 Goldfein, for example, said the most pressing, that was to  
5 this committee, challenge for the U.S. Air Force is the rise  
6 of peer competitors with advanced military capabilities  
7 rivaling our own.

8 Now, what he is saying is, it is not like it used to  
9 be, we are automatically better at everything. Those days  
10 are behind us.

11 Hopefully, that will change. But nonetheless, that is  
12 a problem that we have.

13 Now, we are faced now with looking at some new  
14 equipment coming in, and some of the problems that we  
15 learned from the past. I will quote General Carlisle. He  
16 said: We do not have enough of F-22s. It is a fact of  
17 life. We did not buy enough. That is because we were  
18 shortsighted. We curtailed the F-22 procurement to just 187  
19 when it started off to be 781.

20 Now some of the same arguments used to end that program  
21 are now used in reference to the F-35 and the B-21. I would  
22 hope, and I know that you have studied these causes and the  
23 problems that we had in the past, that you could use our  
24 past failures to avoid another problem coming up.

25 Does that make sense to you?

1 Dr. Wilson: Yes, Senator. It does.

2 Senator Inhofe: Last month, we had a Readiness  
3 Subcommittee. I chair the Readiness Subcommittee. We had  
4 all four Vices in there, including another Wilson, and he  
5 did a very good job. During that time, he talked about the  
6 problems that are facing us right now, and I know that you  
7 have already studied that.

8 The only thing I wanted to get to was this morning I  
9 saw that the Air Force Times had an article by Gina Grosso,  
10 who is the personnel chief of the Air Force. In here, she  
11 points out the very good case on the pilot problem.

12 I have been active and still am an active commercial  
13 pilot, so I talk to a lot of these guys and gals who are out  
14 there and are faced with a problem that she points out  
15 vividly, and that is that we have a high optempo on the ones  
16 that are actually flying out there, but the ones that are  
17 not flying, are not out in front, are not getting the hours.

18 And I will not quote all of the statistics that we have,  
19 but I know that you understand that is the case.

20 I would hope -- it seemed like she was stressing the  
21 idea that you can go from 25 to 35 on a reenlistment bonus  
22 and somehow solve the problems. I do not think that is  
23 going to be enough. I think we are going to have to do  
24 something about the training of these guys and allowing them  
25 to fly hours, because right now, they are flying about one-

1 fourth of the hours that they were prior to over the last 10  
2 years.

3 So I would like to ask that you get involved in that  
4 end of the argument, and that you and I can talk about this,  
5 because I see this as a pretty serious problem that we have.

6 Dr. Wilson: Senator, I look forward to that.

7 Senator Inhofe: That is good, and I look forward to  
8 supporting you.

9 Thank you.

10 Senator Reed: Senator Peters, please, on behalf of the  
11 chairman.

12 Senator Peters: Thank you, Senator Reed.

13 Thank you, Dr. Wilson, for being here. I enjoyed our  
14 conversation in the office and appreciated the opportunity  
15 to kind of dig deeply into a number of issues that are  
16 confronting the Air Force, and I appreciate your appearance  
17 here today.

18 I have kind of a broad question I want to start with,  
19 and then I want to drill down to some things more specific  
20 to my State of Michigan.

21 I want to talk a little, hear a little bit more about  
22 your thoughts on R&D. You mentioned that in your opening  
23 statement, that we have to think about the face of warfare  
24 years ahead, and those changes are happening a lot quicker  
25 than many of us anticipated.

1           As a Senator from Michigan and being intimately  
2 involved in self-driving vehicles, soon we are going to have  
3 self-driving vehicles here before us much sooner, and we  
4 expect the same thing when it comes to autonomous flying  
5 vehicles as well. UAVs will likely transform the face of  
6 warfare, as well as a lot of other areas.

7           It also may address things like pilot shortages,  
8 although we have to deal with that now. That does not  
9 relieve us of very significant challenges that we are facing  
10 right now.

11           But what do you see for the future of airpower going  
12 forward? What sort of R&D work do we need to do. I have  
13 had some folks tell me that we may have constructed the last  
14 fighter aircraft with a human pilot in it, that it is going  
15 to change dramatically. Just kind of generally your  
16 thoughts.

17           Dr. Wilson: Senator, I look forward to working with  
18 the scientists and engineers to help identify what are the  
19 most important vectors to pursue. But there is one thing  
20 that is very clear, and that is that the pace of change is  
21 going to accelerate. We are either going to have to rapidly  
22 accelerate ourselves and be able to spin on innovation into  
23 the service, or we are going to be left behind. But it is  
24 things like autonomous systems, network systems, advanced  
25 materials. I think there are a wide array of things.

1           But one of the things that concerns me is the low  
2 percentage of the Air Force budget that is actually spent on  
3 R&D. That concerns me because if you look at -- my  
4 grandfather started flying shortly after the Wright  
5 brothers. He lived to see a man walk on the moon.

6           The pace of innovation in this field is stunning, and  
7 we are either going to continue to innovate or we are going  
8 to get left behind.

9           Senator Peters: Right. That is accelerating as well,  
10 that pace, as you rightly portray.

11          Dr. Wilson, I would like to talk a little bit about  
12 Selfridge Air National Guard Base, a base that you know very  
13 well because of your father's service there. We are very  
14 proud that he served at our base in Michigan. As you know,  
15 they currently host the A-10 fighter aircraft and the KC-135  
16 tankers.

17          When the Air Force planned to retire the A-10 sooner  
18 than they are planning to do now, the mission of record for  
19 Selfridge listed removing the A-10s and doubling the tanker  
20 mission, adding additional KC-135s in fiscal year 2021. For  
21 the airmen that fly and maintain these platforms, more  
22 certainty and clarity about the future of that mission at  
23 installations like Selfridge is certainly very important to  
24 them.

25          Now that we know that the Air Force will not be

1 retiring the A-10 in the near term, will you review the  
2 mission of record of bases that have A-10s like Selfridge?  
3 And would we expect that kind of review coming forward?

4 Dr. Wilson: Senator, first, the Chief of Staff in the  
5 Air Force has committed to keep the A-10s. I think it is  
6 out through 2020.

7 The Air Force has a strategic basing process to look at  
8 basing and planning. What I will commit to you is it will  
9 be straight. There will not be any thumbs on the scale. We  
10 will have the Air Force do things based on the best  
11 interests of the country and the Air Force. That also often  
12 means that where one Senator may be, in the end, very happy,  
13 there are 49 who are not, or 49 States that are not.

14 But I will commit to you to be open and transparent and  
15 to be fair.

16 Senator Peters: And related to that is the strategic  
17 basing process for the F-35. We currently have five  
18 candidate bases that have been determined through that  
19 process. I would hope that we would continue to move that  
20 process forward without any type of modification and  
21 hopefully have your commitment to do that.

22 It has been a good process. It needs to continue as it  
23 has been spelled out, I believe.

24 Dr. Wilson: Senator, as I understand it, the Air Force  
25 is moving forward with that and -- they are obviously doing

1 a review directed by the Secretary of Defense with respect  
2 to the F-35, but I have heard nothing yet about any change  
3 to its strategic basing plan.

4 Senator Peters: Right. Thank you very much. I  
5 appreciate your answers.

6 Chairman McCain: [Presiding.] Dr. Wilson, I would  
7 hope that, as part of your new duties, you would call  
8 Colonel Graham back to Active Duty.

9 Colonel Graham?

10 Senator Graham: Thank you. We do not want to help the  
11 enemy, so I would recommend you do not do that. But I did  
12 enjoy my time.

13 So about basing of the F-35, would you agree with me  
14 that the strategic basing initiative was based on fewer F-  
15 35s with a declining budget, the idea that we are not going  
16 to have as many F-35s as we like because of sequestration?

17 Dr. Wilson: Senator, there is no question that  
18 sequestration is placing great constraints on the force, and  
19 we need to fix this.

20 Senator Graham: Would you agree with me that if we had  
21 more F-35s, we need to probably look at more bases in terms  
22 of where to deploy them, if the budget numbers change?

23 Dr. Wilson: Senator, if the budget number changed and  
24 there were more aircraft, you have to have a place to put  
25 them.

1           Senator Graham: Okay. I would urge you to do that,  
2 because I am not so sure the first product was that well  
3 thought out.

4           But the bottom line is, a continuing resolution from  
5 April of this year to September of this year would be a  
6 disaster for the Air Force. Do you agree with that?

7           Dr. Wilson: Yes, sir. I do.

8           Senator Graham: So if this body cares about the  
9 military at all, we would not pass a continuing resolution.

10          Dr. Wilson: That is correct.

11          Senator Graham: So we actually need a budget.

12          Do you agree with me that the amount of money we are  
13 spending on the Department of Defense in terms of GDP is a  
14 virtually historic low?

15          Dr. Wilson: Senator, I have not seen the most recent  
16 chart, but I will accept that.

17          Senator Graham: Do you agree with me that the threats  
18 to this Nation are growing, not lessening?

19          Dr. Wilson: Yes.

20          Senator Graham: When it comes to North Korea, I know  
21 you are new to the job, and you will be an excellent  
22 Secretary of the Air Force. I congratulate the President.  
23 It is stronger for choosing you because you understand the  
24 Air Force. You understand the challenges that we face.

25          Do you see, without some change, North Korea developing

1 a missile that can strike the American homeland with a  
2 nuclear weapon on top of it? Do you think that is  
3 inevitable without change?

4 Dr. Wilson: Senator, I have not had a classified  
5 briefing on North Korea for some time, but based on what we  
6 are seeing in the public press, there is serious cause for  
7 concern.

8 Senator Graham: Would you agree with me that that is a  
9 bad news day for America, when North Korea can reach our  
10 homeland with a nuclear-tipped missile, and we should avoid  
11 that, if at all possible?

12 Dr. Wilson: Yes, sir.

13 Senator Graham: And airpower may be necessary to avoid  
14 that. Is that correct?

15 Dr. Wilson: Sir, I have not seen any kinds of plans or  
16 had a classified briefing, but I think airpower and strong  
17 airpower is necessary for just about any operating --

18 Senator Graham: When you look over the arc of time,  
19 the next 10 or 20 years, it seems to me that Iran is  
20 marching toward nuclear capability. In terms of assets  
21 available to the President of the United States to deter  
22 Iran from going nuclear, to deal with an aggressive Russia  
23 and China, we need to modernize our force as quick as  
24 possible.

25 Dr. Wilson: Yes, sir.

1           Senator Graham: Okay. When it comes to the airmen who  
2     serve so well, do you agree with me that the war on terror  
3     is taking the Air Force in new directions never envisioned,  
4     where airmen are out there basically doing infantry jobs  
5     because of the shortage in the Army?

6           Dr. Wilson: Yes, sir.

7           Senator Graham: Driving trucks, doing things that --

8           Dr. Wilson: We drive trucks too.

9           Senator Graham: Yeah, but I mean, really combat --

10          Dr. Wilson: Yes, sir. We have battlefield airmen who  
11     have always been battlefield airmen doing Air Force jobs on  
12     the ground.

13          Senator Graham: I would say that there are more  
14     battlefield airmen today than any time since World War II.  
15     And I would urge you to capture that and preserve it,  
16     because as we talk about technology changing the Air Force,  
17     the one thing we will always need is brave young men and  
18     women. And the more versatile our Air Force, the more able  
19     it is to meet the threats of the future, I think the better  
20     off we are.

21          And when it comes to asymmetrical warfare, what role do  
22     you see the Air Force playing? And can you think of a  
23     better platform than the A-10 for the moment against the  
24     fight we have against ISIL and other asymmetrical threats?

25          Dr. Wilson: Senator, 40,000 munitions have been put on

1 the ISIS target since 2014. Ninety percent of them have  
2 been delivered by the United States Air Force. That is an  
3 air commander who has to decide at the moment what platform  
4 he needs to do a particular job at a particular place.  
5 Whether that is an F-16 or whether that is in F-18 or an A-  
6 10 just depends on the job. And we need to make sure that  
7 that air commander has all kinds of opportunities to defeat  
8 and kill the enemy.

9 Senator Graham: Final question. On the asymmetrical  
10 battlefield against radical Islam, we play an important role  
11 in the Air Force. But part of the Air Force's duties is to  
12 offer a nuclear deterrence and deter nation-states from ever  
13 getting in a fight with the United States.

14 Do you believe that our ability to deter war has  
15 suffered because of sequestration and that the best way to  
16 deter war is to make the enemy think they cannot win the  
17 war, and you are going to need more money and more people to  
18 do that?

19 Dr. Wilson: Yes.

20 Senator Graham: Thank you.

21 Chairman McCain: Senator Fischer?

22 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 Dr. Wilson, in your responses to the committee's  
24 advanced policy questions, you answered a question about the  
25 necessity of maintaining a nuclear triad and you stated

1 that, "We must maintain a safe, secure, and reliable nuclear  
2 deterrent. The deterrent has been effective for over 70  
3 years. The air and ground legs of the triad are a core  
4 mission of the Air Force and will continue to be a core  
5 mission." You also mentioned that briefly in your opening  
6 statement.

7 I appreciate your statement that the nuclear mission is  
8 a core mission of the Air Force, and I understand that, if  
9 confirmed, you will only be responsible for the air leg and  
10 the ICBMs. But is it your personal view that we need to  
11 maintain the entire triad?

12 Dr. Wilson: Senator, I do think we need to maintain  
13 the entire triad.

14 Senator Fischer: Where do you believe we are right now  
15 with regard to modernization for that triad, and  
16 specifically the two legs that, if confirmed, you will be  
17 responsible for?

18 Dr. Wilson: Senator, based on the publicly available  
19 information that I have had access to over the last 3  
20 months, it seems to me that the Minuteman is a 1970s  
21 missile. The Air Force does not believe they can extend the  
22 life of it any further. Likewise, we need to modernize the  
23 air-based deterrent, and the V-21 is being designed from the  
24 beginning to be nuclear-capable.

25 We also need to modernize the command, control, and

1 communications system for the control of our nuclear  
2 deterrent.

3 So modernization is needed across-the-board, and there  
4 is only so much you can do with 70-year-old materials, and I  
5 think it is time to say we have to replace them.

6 Senator Fischer: Have you had an opportunity yet to  
7 look into the debate that is going on about a possible third  
8 site for missile deployment? And if so, do you have an  
9 opinion on that?

10 Dr. Wilson: Senator, I have not had an opportunity to  
11 look at that.

12 Senator Fischer: Thank you.

13 Doctor, I also would like to ask you about the UH-1N  
14 Huey helicopters that are currently performing the nuclear  
15 security and the continuity of government missions.

16 Last year, we saw General Robin Rand, who commands the  
17 Air Force Global Strike Command, testify that, "We will not  
18 meet the emergency security response with the present  
19 helicopter."

20 Admiral Haney, who was then the STRATCOM Commander,  
21 went into greater detail before this committee, stating that  
22 the current helicopters "do not have the lift capability,  
23 speed capability, to meet the requirements that have been  
24 approved and validated through a number of studies, as well  
25 as Mighty Guardian exercises." He went on to describe the

1 need for a replacement as urgent, and that was a year ago.

2 Despite the clear need, the Air Force replacement  
3 program continues to be delayed time and time again. Just  
4 last month, the Air Force withdrew the draft RFP and changed  
5 the acquisitions strategy.

6 If confirmed, I would like your commitment to ensure  
7 that the Air Force moves forward as soon as possible to  
8 replace this aging fleet. Are you ready to give a  
9 commitment at this time?

10 Dr. Wilson: Senator, I will look at the UH-1N program.  
11 It is something that I have just looked at at the very top  
12 level at this point, but it is one of the many modernization  
13 programs that I am sure I will be looking at very closely.

14 Senator Fischer: But I know you do understand the  
15 importance of making sure that those fields are protected  
16 and there is limited capability of doing so.

17 Dr. Wilson: Absolutely.

18 Senator Fischer: Thank you.

19 When you and I met in my office, we discussed the Air  
20 Force's troubled history with its nuclear mission, and that  
21 was particularly stemming from a lack of senior leader  
22 interest in the area. To its credit, the Air Force has made  
23 this a high priority in recent years.

24 I hope that we would have your commitment to continue  
25 to make this area a high priority and that you will be an

1 advocate for the needs of our nuclear forces. And that  
2 includes space. It includes the command and control system  
3 that we depend upon.

4 Could we have that commitment at this time?

5 Dr. Wilson: Yes.

6 Senator Fischer: Thank you.

7 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 Chairman McCain: Senator Rounds?

9 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10 First of all, I am just very happy to have you here in  
11 front of us today, and I look forward to a very speedy  
12 confirmation process for you.

13 I am just curious, when you have the opportunity, and I  
14 would suspect that you are going to have lots of  
15 opportunities in the future, what is your elevator speech  
16 regarding the effects of the sequester, the BCA, on the  
17 United States Air Force?

18 Dr. Wilson: I think it needs to be repealed, and there  
19 are a variety of ways that Congress might do that, but it is  
20 hurting the Air Force and our ability to defend ourselves.  
21 More importantly, the most immediate issue that Congress is  
22 going to face is the possibility of a continuing resolution.

23 And if there is a continuing resolution for this year,  
24 we will make all of the problems that we are talking about  
25 here so much worse. We will have to stop noncombat flying

1 hours in the Air Force. The pilot exodus would increase.  
2 The aircraft will not be going to depots to be maintained.  
3 There will likely be a freeze on a civilian hiring.

4 We cannot operate this way. We need to get beyond the  
5 Budget Control Act and get back to normal operations for  
6 budgeting.

7 Senator Rounds: As you know, there is a dispute within  
8 our party regarding the right balance between increased  
9 defense spending and deficit reduction. Where do you come  
10 down on this issue?

11 Dr. Wilson: Senator, the debt is also an issue for our  
12 country, but I think this is a country that can afford to  
13 defend itself.

14 Senator Rounds: A matter of priorities, perhaps?

15 Dr. Wilson: Yes, Senator.

16 Senator Rounds: You are about probably a third of the  
17 way through your hearing today, I would suspect. I am just  
18 curious, with regard to the questions that have come up so  
19 far today, are there any questions that you perhaps have not  
20 had the time to answer fully? Anything that you would like  
21 to add to any of the questions, or clarifications on any of  
22 the questions that have been in front of you so far?

23 Dr. Wilson: No, sir. Not at this point.

24 Senator Rounds: Very good.

25 Let me talk a little bit about how we are going to move

1 forward in the Air Force with regard to technology and the  
2 need to upgrade the entire system.

3 We have peer competitors. I think everybody would  
4 recognize both China and Russia have been moving forward not  
5 only with the development of new aircraft but with new  
6 aircraft with large numbers.

7 How do we move forward in regard to fourth gen. We  
8 have some fifth gen, not enough. What is the right mix  
9 between our fourth generation aircraft, which are clearly  
10 mature, clearly can have some upgrades added to them? But  
11 with the changing environment, how do we add? What we do in  
12 terms of upgrading the technologies so that the men and  
13 women that we send into battle have absolutely no question  
14 the best equipment, and that every single fight they ever  
15 get into is not a fair fight, one in which they clearly have  
16 the technological advantages? How do we move forward?  
17 Where do we go? Do we keep fourth gen around? What we do?

18 Dr. Wilson: Senator, there will be fourth generation  
19 aircraft around for a long time. As to what is the right  
20 mix, I would have to defer to the uniform military as well  
21 as to the civilian folks in the Air Force, whom I have not  
22 yet really been fully briefed on what they are looking at  
23 for plans. And the Air Force is always planning.

24 But I would say this. I think it is really important  
25 to get capabilities from the drawing board to the flight

1 line faster. The cycle of innovation has to be faster. You  
2 have to fix requirements; move forward; get small, focused  
3 project management teams, and get things out the door,  
4 because unless you do, you will always be left behind.

5 Long procurements have changes in requirements, and  
6 costs escalate, and the people in the field do not get what  
7 they need to do the job. So I think those things -- I am  
8 very interested in becoming more familiar with the  
9 experimentation and prototyping authorities that the  
10 Congress has put in the last defense authorization act.

11 Of course, I think it needs to be easier to buy  
12 commercial products, particularly in the areas of very rapid  
13 -- where there is very rapid innovation, where we need to  
14 make sure that the military has access to high-quality  
15 services and capabilities that may have been developed for a  
16 nondefense purpose.

17 Senator Rounds: Prepared to take comments from  
18 individual organizations that contract with the government  
19 on how to provide a lot of these pieces of equipment, these  
20 new technologies in terms of what they see as the most  
21 efficient way to move forward with new acquisition plans and  
22 so forth, recognizing that they have to fit our need but  
23 also recognizing that sometimes the folks who are living  
24 within those fields are sometimes some of the best places to  
25 get good advice about ways to expedite and streamline a very

1 broken process today?

2 Dr. Wilson: Senator, I am very open to all kinds of  
3 ideas.

4 Senator Rounds: Thank you.

5 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 Senator Reed: [Presiding.] Thank you.

7 On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator Wicker, please?

8 Senator Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator Reed.

9 Dr. Wilson, it is wonderful to have you back here, and  
10 I look forward to you serving in government again. You were  
11 a terrific colleague in the House.

12 We talked about retention of pilots. We talked about  
13 the pilot shortage. And part and parcel to that is the  
14 retention problem we have. They are so well-trained, they  
15 are so talented, they are so marketable, that the private  
16 sector wants to hire them.

17 So speak to that, if you will. But also, do we have  
18 the same problem with the cyber work force in the Air Force?  
19 And what are we going to do about that, because these folks  
20 are so skilled and so smart and the demand for them is so  
21 keen out there?

22 Dr. Wilson: Senator, let me take those in reverse  
23 order. With respect to the cyber work force, you are right.

24 The demand is very high outside of the Air Force for folks  
25 with those capabilities.

1           One of the things that you put in the defense  
2 authorization act last year was to allow the services to  
3 explore some other direct commissioning programs, and I  
4 would like to kind of turn to the Air Force and kind of ask  
5 them whether that provision might be used in the area of  
6 cyber and particularly whether there are opportunities for  
7 National Guard and Reserve units in cyber that we could  
8 locate in places where there are concentrations of highly  
9 technical people. And I would be interested in turning to  
10 the Air Force and to ask them that and working with you all  
11 on it because it is going to be an issue. They are just too  
12 highly valuable to not be taken away.

13           With respect to the pilot issues, there are a couple  
14 things. I was very pleased yesterday to see General  
15 Grosklags' testimony concerning targeted bonuses, so it is  
16 not across-the-board. It is more of a negotiation to try to  
17 keep as many pilots as we can and a lot of flexibility there  
18 with respect to trying to retain a pilot.

19           But it is not just about the money, because we will  
20 never be able to compete with the commercial airline  
21 industry. It is going to be about the quality of service  
22 and being able to do the job, and that is readiness. If a  
23 pilot can go out and fly today, if the aircraft is ready  
24 today, it is maintained, they have enough jet fuel and  
25 enough flying hour time, you are much more likely to keep

1 them.

2 I think there are a lot of additional duties that get  
3 added in for people who are here to fly and fight. We need  
4 to try to make sure that their experience of flying in the  
5 Air Force is something no one in their right mind would ever  
6 give up.

7 Senator Wicker: Is it partially about bonuses though?  
8 And I wonder how much we are talking about spending.

9 Dr. Wilson: Senator, there are some bonuses that  
10 General Grosklags testified about that yesterday, and you  
11 all have authorized some additional pilot retention pay.

12 What I was pleased to see, and you all authorized, was  
13 the Air Force testified yesterday about using those dollars  
14 flexibly so that we do not just say, across-the-board, if  
15 you are a pilot, then you get this X bonus for Y number of  
16 years. But as private industry does, make this a bit of a  
17 negotiation and certainly try to keep pilots in the areas  
18 where we are most short, particularly we know we are having  
19 a problem with fighter pilots. Allowing the same amount of  
20 money as a bonus for somebody who is not a fighter pilot  
21 does not make a lot of sense to me.

22 Senator Wicker: So we can agree that it is a matter  
23 that needs attention both with the fighter pilots and the  
24 cyber force.

25 Dr. Wilson: Yes, sir.

1           Senator Wicker: Now you mentioned on page 2 of your  
2 testimony the quality of leaders at the squadron level and  
3 also education of airmen and the quality of command. And you  
4 talked about this in the answers to the questions that you  
5 answered in writing.

6           So what are the specific concerns about the quality of  
7 command at the squadron and wing level?

8           Dr. Wilson: Senator, I think it is that the squadron  
9 level where you really set the culture for the Air Force.  
10 And if an airman has confidence in their first sergeant and  
11 their squadron commander that they will do the right thing,  
12 they will treat them fairly, and that they care about them,  
13 you have a great, well-led Air Force.

14          Senator Wicker: We have been deficient there?

15          Dr. Wilson: Senator, it is not so much that we have  
16 been deficient, but we always have to be developing those  
17 young leaders. And the Air Force does it differently than  
18 the other services, and it is really driven by the way we do  
19 our mission.

20          Someone is put in a cockpit, and they are flying and  
21 mastering that weapons system with very little  
22 responsibility for people until they become a commander. As  
23 I understand it, there is about a 1-week training course,  
24 and then you are on the job. I think that perhaps we can  
25 learn something by taking a step back, looking at how the

1 other services develop their commanders or even other  
2 countries, the RAF, the Israelis, or whomever, to see what  
3 we could do better.

4 Because if we have well-trained, well-educated, well-  
5 prepared squadron and wing commanders who are first  
6 sergeants, we will set the culture in a positive way for the  
7 United States Air Force.

8 Senator Wicker: Put your thinking cap on. We look  
9 forward to having your thoughts.

10 Dr. Wilson: Thank you, sir.

11 Senator Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

12 Senator Reed: Thank you.

13 On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator Sullivan, please.

14 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 And, Dr. Wilson, welcome. Thank you for your great  
16 service to our Nation. Very, very impressive.

17 My State, the great State of Alaska, has been called by  
18 the father of the Air Force, Billy Mitchell, the most  
19 strategic place in the world. And, right now, we are the  
20 hub air combat power for the Asia-Pacific. With the F-35s  
21 coming, we will have over 100 fifth generation combat coded  
22 fighters. We have an entire strategic airlift and mobility  
23 command and control with C-17s, KC-135s, AWACS, a whole host  
24 of air assets. And, of course, we have JPARC, which General  
25 Welsh referred to as the crown jewel of air-to-air combat

1 training anywhere in the world, an airspace the size of  
2 Florida.

3 So can I get your commitment, if you are confirmed, to  
4 come to Alaska with me and see this critical State, critical  
5 strategic location for the U.S. Air Force?

6 Dr. Wilson: Senator, any day in the field is better  
7 than a day in the office. I look forward to coming out to  
8 Alaska and to a lot of other places and seeing where we are.

9 Yes, I would love to come to Alaska.

10 Senator Sullivan: Great.

11 With regard to last year's NDAA, there was a provision  
12 that talked about characteristics and principles that the  
13 Air Force should be looking at with regard to the OCONUS  
14 basing of the KC-46. A lot of those characteristics  
15 actually look like Alaska.

16 When General Goldfein was up for his nomination, he  
17 gave me his commitment that he would look at those  
18 characteristics hard and give Alaska a very, very hard look  
19 at the strategic basing of the KC-46s, which, when you are  
20 up there, I think you will see how much sense that makes.

21 Can I get your commitment as well to take a hard look  
22 at Alaska, following what the NDAA put in last year on the  
23 basing of the KC-46s?

24 Dr. Wilson: Senator, I will take a hard look, and I  
25 will take a look at those criteria in the NDAA.

1           Senator Sullivan: And then there has been a lot of  
2 talk -- actually, a number of us sat in on a Readiness  
3 Subcommittee hearing in Armed Services just yesterday with a  
4 number of the top generals in the Air Force testifying on  
5 the issue of readiness, on the issue of ranges.

6           When you are up in Alaska, I would like to get your  
7 commitment to take a look at JPARC and again at some of the  
8 upgrades. In the testimony yesterday, it was widely  
9 acknowledged that, given the size of that training area, it  
10 is what we are going to need with fifth-generation training  
11 because the stand-off of the fifth-generation aircraft are  
12 so dramatic.

13           Can I get your commitment to take a look at that as  
14 well?

15           Dr. Wilson: Senator, I look forward to that when I get  
16 up to Alaska.

17           Senator Sullivan: Great. Let me ask about the F-35.  
18 You know, there was a lot of discussion in the press.  
19 President Trump took a lot of interest in it. I think he  
20 actually, from what I can tell, just reading in the papers,  
21 I think done a good job helping drive down the cost. But at  
22 one point there was a discussion about, well, heck, maybe we  
23 can just replace the F-35 with a souped-up F-18.

24           Can you enlighten us on whether you think forgoing a  
25 fifth gen upgrade to our Air Force and Navy and Marine Corps

1 -- would it make sense to just rely on a souped-up F-18?  
2 How important is that aircraft to the future of the Air  
3 Force?

4 Dr. Wilson: Senator, the Secretary of Defense has  
5 directed a review of the F-35, and that is underway. But as  
6 a general matter, the real thing I do not think you could do  
7 with an F-18 or F-15 or F-16 is give it stealth capability  
8 retroactively.

9 Senator Sullivan: So from your perspective, would we  
10 be in a fair fight with our potential adversaries if we  
11 souped up F-18s versus move forward with F-35s with  
12 adversaries are developing their own fifth-generation  
13 aircraft capabilities?

14 Dr. Wilson: Senator, just what I have seen in the  
15 public press, the defense news kinds of things on Chinese  
16 capabilities, they are developing stealth capability. And I  
17 do not see how we can stop modernizing and expect to win a  
18 near-peer fight. And I would rather have that fight be  
19 unfair and on our side.

20 Senator Sullivan: Well, I think with the cost  
21 reductions and the increase in the number of aircraft being  
22 produced, that will also drive down to the cost. It is  
23 important to try to keep the F-35 deployments that are  
24 already laid out by the Air Force to different areas across  
25 the globe and across the country on time.

1           Can I get your commitment to focus on making sure we  
2   are trying to get these aircraft out, produced, in a cost-  
3   effective manner, but also in a manner that gets them  
4   fielded in a way that helps the national security of our  
5   Nation?

6           Dr. Wilson:  Senator, there is a review underway that  
7   General Mattis has directed with respect to the F-35.  But I  
8   do take your point that it is important to continue to get  
9   cost-effective equipment into the field on schedule.

10          Senator Sullivan:  Great.  Thank you.

11          Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  I will have additional  
12   questions for the record, Dr. Wilson.  Thank you.

13          Senator Reed:  Thank you, Senator.

14          On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator Warren, please.

15          Senator Warren:  Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

16          Thank you for being here, Dr. Wilson.

17          I would like to associate myself with the comments of  
18   the ranking member and the chairman, and echo some of their  
19   concerns around ethics issues.  I will be submitting some  
20   questions for the record on that.

21          But right now, I would like to focus on another issue,  
22   and that is, I know that the Air Force wants a lot of new F-  
23   35s, but whether you think we should spend more or less  
24   money on the overall military budget, it seems like we are  
25   going to need to use and maintain our current aircraft for a

1 long time to come. And that is why I was surprised to hear  
2 that the Air Force is considering retiring the F-15 C and D  
3 variants. And I was disappointed to learn that this  
4 decision is being considered even before a cost and  
5 capability analysis has been completed.

6 So, Dr. Wilson, I want to ask, if confirmed, will you  
7 defer this decision until the committee has been provided  
8 with an analysis that purchasing new F-16s instead of  
9 servicing existing F-15s will provide the same level of  
10 capability and actually save taxpayer money?

11 Dr. Wilson: Senator, I saw the article in the paper  
12 that you are referring to. It was either testimony here or  
13 over in the House. I have not been fully briefed on that  
14 particular program. But I can say that the Air Force, as it  
15 should, is always doing out-year planning and what-if kind  
16 of planning. I will also commit to you to be fully  
17 transparent about --

18 Senator Warren: Listen again to my question. I want  
19 to know that you are going to defer the decision until the  
20 committee has been provided with an analysis that purchasing  
21 new F-16s instead of servicing the current F-15s is going to  
22 give us the same capability and actually save taxpayer  
23 money. I want to make sure we get that analysis before you  
24 make that decision.

25 Dr. Wilson: Senator, my problem is that I am not sure

1 that it was an F-16 substitute, so I have not been briefed  
2 on what their actual planning excursion was that they were  
3 trying to evaluate and that came out in a hearing here. So  
4 I feel a little bit at a loss that I have not been briefed  
5 on what they are looking at for options or life extension  
6 versus something else. I do not know what the something  
7 else was, which is my problem. But what I will commit to is  
8 that I will be very transparent with you on what we are  
9 doing, whether it affects you or it affects anyone else.

10 And probably even more, I think it is important to  
11 gather ideas and share analysis as it is being done  
12 sometimes as hypotheticals, not just after a decision has  
13 been made.

14 Senator Warren: I appreciate that, Dr. Wilson, but I  
15 really do want to bear down on this point. So let me ask  
16 you another question.

17 Can you give me a commitment that the Air Force will  
18 consult with the Air Guard and specifically with the  
19 adjutants general in States with Air Guard F-15 wings before  
20 any decisions are made?

21 Dr. Wilson: Yes.

22 Senator Warren: Good.

23 So I would like to move to another topic, if I can,  
24 that is very important to me, and that is science.

25 The Air Force has requested \$28 billion for research,

1 development, test, and evaluation, RTDE, in fiscal year  
2 2017. I am concerned, however, that too much of this  
3 funding is going to the development and testing part, the  
4 later stages of scientific progress, and not enough to basic  
5 research. As you know, basic research is the science that  
6 provides the building blocks of our most important  
7 technological developments, like stealth and precision  
8 weapons and GPS and even the Internet.

9       The Air Force has asked to cut funding for basic  
10 research for the third year in a row. That is a more than 7  
11 percent decrease in funding for basic research since fiscal  
12 year 2015. I am also concerned that the department is not  
13 doing everything it can to keep up with advances in  
14 commercial technology.

15       So, Dr. Wilson, if you are confirmed as Secretary of  
16 the Air Force, will you prioritize funding for basic and  
17 applied research?

18       Dr. Wilson: Yes.

19       Senator Warren: Good.

20       And how will you work with the commercial technology  
21 sector and universities so they can help you tackle the Air  
22 Force's greatest military challenges?

23       Dr. Wilson: Senator, this is an area where I think you  
24 and I have very common interests in not only identifying  
25 technologies that have been developed in commercial areas

1 that can be spun onto the military but making it easier for  
2 commercial companies and universities to provide those  
3 capabilities to the Defense Department and particularly the  
4 Air Force.

5 In the area of basic and applied research, you are  
6 absolutely right. The things that we invest in today result  
7 in -- sometimes it is very hard to predict which ones or  
8 which vectors are going to be the ones that lead to the  
9 breakthrough. And it was Hanscom Air Force Base in World  
10 War II where they developed radar, revolutionized the  
11 protection of this country and of the United Kingdom.

12 What is the next one? We have trouble sometimes  
13 imagining how basic research can lead to innovation. But if  
14 you do not do it, you will not have innovation, and that is  
15 why I am so concerned about it.

16 Senator Warren: Good. Thank you very much, Dr.  
17 Wilson. I find your answer very encouraging.

18 Our adversaries are investing heavily in research and  
19 development, and doing whatever they can to exploit advances  
20 in commercial technology for their own interests. I want to  
21 see us do the same. I think it is a matter of national  
22 security, so thank you very much.

23 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Chairman McCain: Well-said.

25 Senator Ernst? Colonel Ernst?

1 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Admiral.

2 Thank you, Dr. Wilson, very much. And I appreciate  
3 your testimony today and the fact that you are willing to  
4 take on this very, very great and grave responsibility.

5 Before I begin, I would just like to ask you some  
6 simple yes or no questions.

7 Dr. Wilson, number one, do you commit to cutting  
8 wasteful spending and making it a priority?

9 Dr. Wilson: Yes.

10 Senator Ernst: Two, do you commit to working with me  
11 to combat and prevent military sexual assault and  
12 retaliation in the Air Force?

13 Dr. Wilson: Yes.

14 Senator Ernst: Three, will you provide me with  
15 advanced notice should changes to the gender integration  
16 policies be considered?

17 Dr. Wilson: Yes.

18 Senator Ernst: And finally, given your previous work  
19 with the defense contracting industry, do you commit to  
20 upholding an unbiased approach throughout the acquisition  
21 process?

22 Dr. Wilson: Yes.

23 Senator Ernst: Thank you for those answers.

24 Dr. Wilson, when Secretary Mattis was commander of  
25 CENTCOM, he initiated Combat Dragon II, an innovation

1 experiment designed to rapidly introduce highly lethal, low-  
2 cost capabilities to the battlefield.

3 As part of this experiment, SOCOM borrowed two  
4 mothballed Vietnam-era aircraft from NASA. They outfitted  
5 them with advanced commercial ISR systems and precision  
6 weapons, which cost less and, in many cases, provided more  
7 capabilities than traditional ISR and strike aircraft  
8 combined.

9 During a 3-month deployment, the SOCOM unit achieved a  
10 99 percent sortie completion rate and was able to find, fix,  
11 and finish highly sensitive missions by employing 63  
12 precision-guided rockets on 41 different targets.

13 Can you speak to the benefits of a high-low mix of  
14 combat capabilities? Specifically, how can we leverage the  
15 lessons of Combat Dragon to rapidly provide new capabilities  
16 to the warfighter without overburdening our American  
17 taxpayers?

18 Dr. Wilson: Thank you, Senator.

19 I think that is probably a good example. I was aware  
20 of some OV-10s that were recently brought back to service.  
21 I do not know if that was the Combat Dragon program.

22 But I do think that there are ways to innovate. I have  
23 been involved in a few of them myself when I was on the  
24 National Security Council staff trying to get some very new  
25 capability to the warfighter.

1           We always have to be sensitive to the fact that  
2           sometimes our great ideas in the world of science and  
3           engineering have to be operated by an 18-year-old with  
4           minimal training in a very highly stressed situation. So we  
5           always have to be sensitive to those things and the total  
6           cost of maintaining and all of those things.

7           But I think, particularly the Air Force, we are  
8           supposed to be the innovators. We are supposed to be the  
9           can-do, fix it, get it there, duct tape and bailing wire  
10          kind of service, in a way. And I think I am very open to  
11          those kinds of experiments.

12          Senator Ernst: Very good. Do you see other ways that  
13          you can use innovation in the Air Force to really protect  
14          the taxpayers? Are there other programs that you think  
15          should be looked at?

16          Dr. Wilson: There are a wide variety of innovation  
17          programs. I do think that thinking about how we engage the  
18          scientific and technical community, because we are all short  
19          of scientists and engineers, so how do we better engage them  
20          to try to move us forward, and also to try to be aware of  
21          what our adversaries might be doing?

22          Our entire intelligence system since Pearl Harbor has  
23          been set up for indications and warning. It is to prevent  
24          surprise attack. In the area of science and technology,  
25          preventing surprise attack is detecting what our adversaries

1 might be doing with respect to scientific and technical  
2 advancement, and what implications that might have for us.

3         So their development of stealth technology -- the best  
4 examples are the development of the jet engine in World War  
5 II or the V-2 rocket or Einstein's letter to the President  
6 about the potential for a nuclear weapon.

7         How are we systematically assessing scientific and  
8 technical development to prevent surprise at the scientific  
9 and technical level? And I think there may be some things  
10 that we can do today that were not even possible to do 10  
11 years ago because of the ability to link scientists and  
12 engineers who otherwise would not have known each other.

13         Senator Ernst: I appreciate that very much and will  
14 continue to look for innovation.

15         Something I heard not long ago, which I think really  
16 plays into the Combat Dragon II, is a comment that was made:  
17 Why do we spend our millions and millions or even billions  
18 of dollars on aircraft and munitions to destroy a \$10,000  
19 pickup in the middle of the desert?

20         So I think there are ways that we can refine what we do  
21 with innovation and make it very cost-effective as well for  
22 our armed services.

23         I want to thank you again for being here today and  
24 taking on this challenge. Thank you, Dr. Wilson.

25         Thank you, Mr. Chair.

1 Chairman McCain: Senator Heinrich?

2 Senator Heinrich: Dr. Wilson, welcome.

3 Congratulations on your nomination.

4 Two of the President's nominees for civilian leadership  
5 posts in the military services have now dropped out, so I  
6 think it is incredibly important that the administration  
7 nominates and that the committee considers qualified  
8 nominees as quickly as possible, and you certainly have  
9 impressive qualifications for this post.

10 As you know well, New Mexico's men and women in uniform  
11 are proud to take the lead in addressing many of the  
12 challenges that you would face as Secretary, and Holloman  
13 Air Force Base in New Mexico has already proven to be  
14 critically important in addressing the Air Force's shortfall  
15 for both RPA and F-16 pilots.

16 As Secretary of the Air Force, you will be responsible  
17 for growing and retaining our pilot and our maintainer  
18 forces. When selecting an installation for these purposes,  
19 can you talk a little bit about what criteria you would most  
20 value, given the constraints that the Air Force is currently  
21 under?

22 Dr. Wilson: Senator, the strategic basing initiative  
23 for every mission comes up with a set of criteria for that  
24 mission, and there is at least an interim decision with  
25 respect to Holloman and training there. There has not been

1 a final decision on a final location. But as I mentioned to  
2 Senator Peters, when those decisions are made, we will not  
3 put any thumbs on the scale. We will try to make those  
4 straightforward, direct decisions in the best interests of  
5 the country.

6 Senator Heinrich: Can you talk a little bit about some  
7 of the particulars that that decision basing system is based  
8 on and what the Air Force is looking for in those cases?

9 Dr. Wilson: Senator, with respect to a particular  
10 weapons system, I probably could not, but I think with every  
11 weapons system and with every mission, there is a set of  
12 things that the Air Force decides are really important to  
13 them, for example, airspace to be able to conduct training  
14 operations or particular kinds of electronic practice areas,  
15 those kinds of things. And for every mission, it is  
16 probably slightly different. And then they just rank those  
17 in order.

18 Senator Heinrich: I was looking at your preliminary  
19 hearing questions and you said that you strongly support  
20 rapid prototyping, experimentation, and using rapid  
21 acquisition authorities to provide new capabilities to the  
22 warfighter.

23 Last year, the Senate Armed Services Committee granted  
24 rapid acquisition authorities for directed energy weapons  
25 systems.

1           As Secretary, would you look to use those authorities  
2 for directed energy? And would you support transitioning  
3 these systems to the warfighter more quickly?

4           Dr. Wilson: Senator, I do support transitioning  
5 systems very quickly to the warfighter. With respect to an  
6 acquisition strategy for a particular procurement, I would  
7 look for advice from the acquisition community before I  
8 would make any particular decision.

9           Senator Heinrich: In light of the current  
10 administration hiring freeze, one of the things I am  
11 concerned about is the military's ability to meet mission  
12 requirements under those pressures. And military leaders  
13 have explained that, by not hiring civilians, more pressure  
14 is shifted onto military workers to finish those jobs, and,  
15 in some cases, they are now being asked to do additional  
16 duty as a result.

17           At Air Force Research Lab in Albuquerque, there are a  
18 significant number of vacancies for civilian positions that  
19 actually carry out critical missions for the military.

20           Can you talk generally a little bit about how important  
21 you believe civilians are to the overall mission of the Air  
22 Force and what steps you might take or what things you would  
23 look to as Secretary to be able to fill those vacancies and  
24 ensure that the mission requirements are being met?

25           Dr. Wilson: Senator, we do have the hiring freeze in

1 place. There are exemptions and work through position by  
2 position. It is my understanding the Air Force is operating  
3 under that at this point.

4 Almost half of the people that serve in the United  
5 States Air Force are civilians. Many of them were prior  
6 military, but many were not, and they make significant  
7 contributions to the mission. And they are part of the  
8 team, and I treat them as part of the team.

9 I would say with respect to the pressure on the force,  
10 the worst thing we can have happen right now is to have a  
11 continuing resolution for the last 5 months of the year that  
12 would probably result in a complete hiring freeze with no  
13 exemptions and will exacerbate the pilot shortage. We will  
14 have to stop, likely, if confirmed, we would have to stop a  
15 lot of the new starts that we have going, and we will dig  
16 the hole deeper.

17 So with respect to civilian employment, I think that is  
18 the biggest issue before us all.

19 Senator Heinrich: Thank you, Chairman.

20 Chairman McCain: Senator Perdue?

21 Senator Perdue: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 Dr. Wilson, thank you for your stellar career and your  
23 willingness to take this on. I have two quick questions  
24 today.

25 I grew up in Warner Robins, Robins Air Force Base, and

1 I am very proud that that base has morphed over time from  
2 being a SAC base to a MAC base, and today is a major depot  
3 for the U.S. Air Force. But at a time when we have the  
4 smallest and oldest Air Force, I am very concerned.

5 General Levy is in charge of the Air Force supply  
6 chain, a great lieutenant general and has a stellar career  
7 of his own. But he has been educating me about the  
8 difficulties. Half the employment of the Air Force are  
9 civilians, as you just mentioned, and yet it takes 148 days,  
10 according to General Levy, because of Air Force rules, to  
11 onboard a new employee.

12 At a time when we are competing for cyber talent,  
13 mechanics, engineers, scientists, programmers, and so forth,  
14 as we talked privately, I am very concerned that we are not  
15 competitive in trying to reach out and retain and attract  
16 the best and the brightest for the Air Force in these  
17 civilian jobs.

18 So can you address how you would prioritize that, if  
19 you are confirmed?

20 Dr. Wilson: Senator, there are a lot of rules and  
21 regulations that sometimes -- they are trying to prevent us  
22 from doing bad things, but they keep us from doing good  
23 things. And I think, obviously, there are rules and  
24 regulations that are there for a reason. We all want to  
25 drive on the right side of the road in the morning and have

1 everybody else do the same thing.

2 But sometimes, and you just identified one, if it is  
3 that hard to hire someone, talent is going to be taken out  
4 from under you.

5 So I would be happy to take a look at those kinds of  
6 things. If there are particularly priority regulations that  
7 others have identified that need to be looked at, I am very  
8 open to what those should be.

9 Senator Perdue: Personally, as one example, two-thirds  
10 of our F-18s are not airworthy today. This is an all-hands-  
11 on-deck issue.

12 Would you pledge to work with the committee and bring  
13 us those idea to break through those regulations that we can  
14 help with to become more competitive?

15 Dr. Wilson: Senator, I would, and I would ask you to  
16 do so and help me.

17 Senator Perdue: Absolutely. You have it.

18 The second thing, I want talk about something we do not  
19 talk much about here, and that is space.

20 The Vice Chief of the Air Force, General Wilson,  
21 provided written testimony recently at one of our last  
22 subcommittee hearings on readiness that, "In the not too  
23 distant future, our potential adversaries will have the  
24 capability to hold all of our military space capabilities at  
25 risk."

1           Dr. Wilson, those are strong words. Do you agree with  
2 those words? And how would you propose to make changes in  
3 the national security space policy and programs, if you are  
4 confirmed?

5           Dr. Wilson: Senator, one of the things I am most  
6 looking forward to about this job is being potentially the  
7 senior adviser to the Secretary of Defense with respect to  
8 space and chairing the Defense Space Council.

9           There is no question that space will be a contested  
10 domain in any future conflict, and I was actually serving on  
11 the House Intelligence Committee at the time the Chinese  
12 successfully launched an antisatellite weapon, and I do not  
13 expect that things have slowed down since then.

14           There are a variety of things I think we need to do.  
15 There are launch issues we are going to have to deal with.  
16 But I think rethinking the way in which we think about space  
17 as a contested domain has to be part -- it is the  
18 development of strategies and techniques and capabilities to  
19 be able to fight through, to be resilient, to be as crafty  
20 and as successful in space as we are in air, and that is a  
21 very big change for the country, to be starting to think  
22 that way.

23           I think there are some elements in the Air Force that  
24 already are starting to develop those thoughts. I look  
25 forward to working with them and, of course, our national

1 partners and partners in other agencies.

2           Senator Perdue: Thank you. The last question I have  
3 is, at the very time that you are considering this  
4 responsibility and we are considering your confirmation, it  
5 looks to me like all the major platforms of the Air Force  
6 are maturing to the end of their expected lives and beyond  
7 at the same time. And at the very time that they are  
8 expiring, the ramp-up of new programs to replace them,  
9 through delays and regulations and whatever funding, we are  
10 building a gap and it is a significant gap. The B-21, KC-  
11 46, the F-35, the JSTAR platform, all of these have  
12 projected gaps in capability between the time that the  
13 existing platform rolls out and expires and the new  
14 platforms are available.

15           Have you had a chance to look at that yet? And would  
16 you pledge to us to help educate us about that growing gap  
17 in the Air Force?

18           Dr. Wilson: Senator, when we talk about what is the  
19 risk or the Air Force talks about what is the risk of things  
20 like the Budget Control Act, that is a very good example of  
21 one.

22           Senator Perdue: But it is bigger than that. I am  
23 sorry, Dr. Wilson. It is actually bigger than that. This  
24 is a multiyear issue that has to do with our debt position  
25 and the fact that we will not face up to our responsibility

1 as Congress and how we spend money. And we are not  
2 fulfilling one of the major responsibilities we have as a  
3 unified government, and that is to defend the country.

4 So I welcome your input, and I pledge to you our  
5 support. I am out of time, but I would love to work with  
6 you to make sure we fill that gap. It is very concerning.

7 Dr. Wilson: Yes, sir.

8 Senator Perdue: I fully expect your confirmation. And  
9 thank you, again, for being willing to do this.

10 Dr. Wilson: Thank you.

11 Chairman McCain: Senator Donnelly?

12 Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 And thank you, Dr. Wilson.

14 I wanted to ask you about a discussion we had in my  
15 office. Your predecessor made a commitment to continue the  
16 heritage of the 122nd Fighter Wing in Fort Wayne, Indiana,  
17 by maintaining a manned combat mission there at the base,  
18 replacing the A-10s with either F-16s or F-35s.

19 Will you honor that commitment that has been made to  
20 us?

21 Dr. Wilson: Senator, I am not familiar with the  
22 particular commitment that has been made.

23 Senator Donnelly: I asked you this a month ago.

24 Dr. Wilson: Senator, I cannot commit to a future  
25 mission today, in part because I am not privy to a lot of

1 the internal discussions in the Air Force because I cannot  
2 be because I am before my confirmation. So there are a lot  
3 of things.

4 The Air Force can provide me all of the things that  
5 have been publicly available, but not anything behind it. So  
6 I am still kind of outside of the door in that way.

7 Senator Donnelly: I know you are referring to the  
8 strategic basing process, but I am not talking about making  
9 a new basing decision. This one has already been made, and  
10 all I am asking you to do is to honor the commitment of the  
11 person who went before you.

12 Dr. Wilson: Senator, I will tell you this. If a  
13 commitment has been made, we will stand by it.

14 Senator Donnelly: Thank you.

15 Dr. Wilson: I need to understand what the commitment  
16 was a little bit more before I feel comfortable, and I  
17 cannot know that until I walk in the door of the office.

18 Senator Donnelly: Well, let me ask you about mental  
19 health as well. I appreciate your commitment to  
20 prioritizing that. It is a readiness issue. It is a matter  
21 of maintaining the strength of our force.

22 And, in 2014, this committee passed legislation  
23 providing a mental health assessment for every servicemember  
24 every year. It was named after a constituent of mine, Jacob  
25 Sexton, who was lost to suicide in 2009. Each of the

1 service chiefs has testified to this committee that the  
2 mental health assessments required under this act will be  
3 fully implemented by the end of this year.

4 If confirmed, will you ensure the Air Force keeps to  
5 that schedule?

6 Dr. Wilson: Yes.

7 Senator Donnelly: Thank you.

8 In regards to our nuclear arsenal, we are undertaking a  
9 tremendous and necessary effort to modernize our nuclear  
10 deterrent. We have put it off for a long time, and as a  
11 result, we have a heavy bill coming due. But we are going  
12 to need to implement acquisition practices across-the-board  
13 to succeed, and that means doing a better job of promoting  
14 collaboration and commonality.

15 So what I am also asking is, will you be committed to  
16 commonality as a means to modernize and maintain the triad  
17 and reduce the cost of risk?

18 The Navy has a lot of parts of this. The Air Force has  
19 a lot of parts of this. We want to try to work together so  
20 we are not in separate stovepipes here, so we are not  
21 reinventing the wheel every time we start a new system

22 Dr. Wilson: Senator, yes. There are some times where  
23 that is appropriate. There are some times where it is  
24 actually more costly to force systems to use common parts.  
25 But where it makes sense, obviously, you bet.

1 Senator Donnelly: Thank you.

2 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 Chairman McCain: Senator Cotton?

4 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

5 Dr. Wilson, congratulations on your nomination. You  
6 have a big job with a lot of big challenges ahead of you,  
7 some of those we explored yesterday in a Subcommittee on  
8 Airland power hearing with some of the deputy chiefs from  
9 the White House -- or from the Air Force.

10 One in particular was the pilot shortage. We heard  
11 testimony yesterday saying the pilot shortage was up to  
12 1,550 pilots as of yesterday.

13 I think there seems to be a mismatch between force  
14 structure and strategy. If we continue down this road, are  
15 you worried about creating a hollow force for our Air Force?

16 Dr. Wilson: Senator, yes, I am.

17 Senator Cotton: The Air Force has provided pilots with  
18 bonuses. Those bonuses are increasing. We heard testimony  
19 yesterday the Air Force anticipates seeking even higher  
20 bonuses. But as you stated earlier, the retention crisis is  
21 about more than just money.

22 Both General Goldfein and your predecessor committed to  
23 reducing unpopular additional duties in squadrons, jobs that  
24 take pilots away from their core mission. For example, this  
25 committee has heard private comments from one frustrated

1 young F-10 pilot who said, "I would give up my flight pay if  
2 it meant getting a full-time squadron scheduler."

3 Do you share the commitment to reduce this burden of  
4 additional duties for our pilots and their squadrons?

5 Dr. Wilson: Yes.

6 Senator Cotton: What are your thoughts on the best  
7 ways to continue to bring down those burdens on our pilots?

8 Dr. Wilson: Senator, there are a couple things. I  
9 think, again, this gets down to squadron leadership. But it  
10 is also, every time something happens, there is another,  
11 well, we have to train everybody, or there is another  
12 computer-based training program that everybody has to sit  
13 through and push the yes, no, and next buttons.

14 And I think taking a complete review from the  
15 perspective of an airman of what is the extra stuff you are  
16 being asked to do -- now, some of it is entirely  
17 appropriate. If you are asked to be the squadron training  
18 officer, you should be the squadron training officer. But  
19 there is a lot of other stuff that gets added on that is  
20 really dispiriting, and I think we need to take a look from  
21 their perspective on whether every one of those things  
22 really is needed. Do we really need to do ladder safety  
23 training again this year?

24 Senator Cotton: With those steps and with the  
25 additional civilians that have been added in squadrons, do

1 you think the Air Force will have the remaining combat coded  
2 squadrons fully manned by the end of the fiscal year?

3 Dr. Wilson: Senator, I do not know the answer to that,  
4 but I think it is probably -- I do not know the answer to  
5 that.

6 Senator Cotton: Okay.

7 I would like to turn my attention now to nuclear  
8 modernization. You spoke earlier about this with Senator  
9 Inhofe on the B-21, learning some of the lessons about the  
10 B-2 and the F-35 program. But I would like to ask about the  
11 stated goal of the program to acquire 100 aircraft.

12 Do you believe that 100 aircraft are sufficient for our  
13 National Security Strategy in the future, given the  
14 challenges we are going to face from growing A2AD air  
15 defense systems in places like Russia, China, Iran, North  
16 Korea?

17 Dr. Wilson: Senator, we certainly need to be able to  
18 penetrate to hold targets at risk. I understand that the  
19 next piece of the national military strategy at the  
20 classified level was finished late last year. I have not  
21 yet seen that.

22 And I believe threat drives strategy. Strategy drives  
23 force posture. And so, really, the force posture is  
24 dependent on that strategy, which I have not yet been fully  
25 briefed on.

1 Senator Cotton: Okay, thank you.

2 You spoke with Senator Fischer about nuclear  
3 modernization, specifically about the B-21, about nuclear  
4 command and control, and about the ground-based strategic  
5 deterrent. I do not think you touched on the long-range  
6 standoff cruise missile.

7 What are your thoughts on that missile?

8 Dr. Wilson: Senator, the Air Force has it in its plan.  
9 And we need modernization across-the-board with respect to  
10 the nuclear deterrent.

11 Senator Cotton: Do you support the LRSO program?

12 Dr. Wilson: Yes, sir. I do.

13 Senator Cotton: Now I would like to ascend from  
14 nuclear modernization to modernization as a whole and the  
15 budget.

16 The Air Force has a lot of bills coming due, not only  
17 nuclear modernization but the F-35 and the B-21 and the KC-  
18 46 and the JSTARS and the presidential aircraft replacement  
19 program, among other things.

20 Have you received indications from the senior  
21 leadership in the Department of Defense, the Office of  
22 Management and Budget, and the White House that their budget  
23 request will fully support the Air Force's modernization  
24 needs over the coming years?

25 Dr. Wilson: Senator, as I understand it, there is a

1 top line for fiscal year 2018, and the Air Force and the  
2 other services are working through what is the structure  
3 under the fiscal year 2018 number. And I think we all know  
4 we are not going to get out of this in a single year.

5 Senator Cotton: Are you confident we will in the  
6 coming 5 years' defense program?

7 Dr. Wilson: Senator, I am here to try to do that.

8 Senator Cotton: We will be here to try to help you and  
9 our Air Force do that as well.

10 Thank you, Dr. Wilson. Congratulations again.

11 Dr. Wilson: Thank you.

12 Chairman McCain: Senator Gillibrand?

13 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 Thank you, Dr. Wilson, for being here, and for your  
15 commitment to public service. We are all very grateful.

16 One of the good fortunes we have in New York is our  
17 talented work force, and the Air Force Research Lab in Rome  
18 is a perfect example of an installation that has benefited  
19 from the State's ability to attract and concentrate high-  
20 skilled workers.

21 Past Air Force leaders have visited Rome and have been  
22 very impressed by the amazing work happening at the lab and  
23 its leadership on cyber in the Air Force and beyond. I  
24 would love to have you visit Rome and see this critical work  
25 firsthand. Will you come to the Rome labs?

1           Dr. Wilson: Senator, as I mentioned with respect to  
2 Alaska and others, I do like to get out of the office and up  
3 and out and be where people are. I find that I learn a lot  
4 more that way, and particularly in the area of research and  
5 development, which is a focus for me. So, yes. All of this  
6 will depend on timing.

7           Senator Gillibrand: Of course.

8           Dr. Wilson: But I do want to come.

9           Senator Gillibrand: It is just really impressive and  
10 very inspiring. I think if you get to see what they are  
11 doing, you will have more of an interest in supporting their  
12 work, so I would like to extend that invitation.

13           The second issue I am interested in is the issue of  
14 PFCs. The Air Force, including the Air National Guard, is  
15 dealing with contamination of water supplies across the  
16 country as a result of perfluorooctane sulfonates, PFOS,  
17 expelled by firefighting units on these bases.

18           There are two known sites in New York, one at the 106th  
19 on Long Island, which was quickly identified and immediately  
20 cleaned up, and one at the 105th in Newburgh, which has  
21 moved much slower.

22           My staff has been in constant contact with the National  
23 Guard on this matter, and I know it is not unique to New  
24 York.

25           Do I have your commitment to address this crisis head

1 on and work with communities in New York and across the  
2 country to ensure that all contamination is remediated in a  
3 timely manner so our citizens can have access to clean  
4 drinking water?

5 Dr. Wilson: Yes.

6 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

7 My last issue is about LGBTQ issues. As Secretary of  
8 the Air Force, you will be responsible for running the Air  
9 Force enterprise, including dealing with issues related to  
10 LGBT airmen and civilians, and I am concerned by some of the  
11 things you have said in the past about the rights and  
12 protections for LGBT citizens.

13 Specifically, in 2012, you stated that you "tolerate"  
14 but do not "approve of" LGBT individuals.

15 Do you still stand by that statement?

16 Dr. Wilson: Senator, it is not my intention to change  
17 any of the policies currently in place with respect to  
18 sexual orientation. And I think the appropriate thing to  
19 do, as I do as a university president, is to treat everyone  
20 with dignity and respect.

21 Senator Gillibrand: Well, I appreciate that you make a  
22 commitment to treat everyone with dignity and respect. I  
23 think that is really important in a position of leadership  
24 and very important as a public servant, because you must  
25 value all men and women who serve underneath you regardless

1 of their sexual orientation.

2 Dr. Wilson: Yes.

3 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 Chairman McCain: Senator Strange?

6 Senator Strange: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 And welcome, Doctor, here today. I appreciate your  
8 willingness to serve, and I have a high degree of confidence  
9 that you will do very well in this position.

10 I especially enjoyed our conversation and your  
11 background as a graduate of the academy and a female in the  
12 Air Force. As I mentioned, my aunt was one of the  
13 pioneering women aviators in World War II, so I know she  
14 would be proud to see you in this position, leading the Air  
15 Force.

16 We covered a lot of ground when we talked, and I  
17 appreciated your answers. I just want to point out again  
18 the importance of Dannelly Field Guard station in Alabama,  
19 one of the installations I am very proud of in our State.

20 It is one of the five being considered, as you know,  
21 for the F-35. That process is ongoing. I just want to  
22 confirm that you are comfortable with the process and the  
23 timing for the selection of one of the two facilities that  
24 will ultimately be the destination for that program.

25 Dr. Wilson: Senator, I know that that is underway. As

1 I mentioned, I do not have a very deep insight into what the  
2 tradeoffs are, but I am sure I will be briefed on that, if  
3 confirmed.

4 Senator Strange: Great. That is a very high priority  
5 for me. I am proud of the service men and women that are  
6 there. And it is an excellent facility, and I look forward  
7 to working with you in that process.

8 Mr. Chairman, that is really the only question I had.  
9 I will yield back my time.

10 Chairman McCain: Senator Blumenthal?

11 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

12 Thank you for your service, Dr. Wilson, and for being  
13 here today.

14 I want to follow up on a couple questions that Senator  
15 Reed asked. I know that with respect to most policy  
16 questions, you said you need to be briefed, you need to  
17 learn more, you need to be better acquainted with the  
18 policies and programs ongoing at the Air Force. So there  
19 will be a time, I am sure, when we will want to go into  
20 greater depth on those issues, if you are confirmed.

21 But on the issue of the contract that Senator Reed  
22 cited, my understanding is that you were cited by the  
23 Department of Energy inspector general for lacking  
24 sufficient detail in your own invoices. One of them I would  
25 like to place in the record, if there is no objection.

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Chairman McCain: Without objection.  
[The information referred to follows:]  
[COMMITTEE INSERT]

1 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you.

2 And the IG investigators noted that I think you  
3 attended a single meeting on at least two separate occasions  
4 and billed two individually owned labs for the exact same  
5 time and service.

6 Because of the lack of detail in the invoices that you  
7 submitted, it was difficult to discern what service you  
8 provided to whom and when. The document that I just placed  
9 in the record is an invoice, which I could show to you to  
10 read, but there is nothing to read on it because it is  
11 virtually blank except for your name and the invoice number,  
12 and an item that says "consulting services."

13 So just as a matter of procedure and accountability,  
14 because this is a profoundly important issue for defense  
15 procurement, should there not be better oversight of  
16 contractor billing and documentation?

17 And is this not a bad example -- leadership is by  
18 example; the best leadership is by good example -- of how  
19 billing and invoice submission should be conducted?

20 Dr. Wilson: Senator, in each of the months in which I  
21 worked for the national laboratories, I did more than 50  
22 hours a month of work in close consultation with the people  
23 at the laboratories.

24 I was working for them quarter time. I did the work.  
25 I complied with the contract, a contract negotiated and

1 signed by the laboratories. The review found actually no  
2 fault with me.

3 And the DOE auditors never even bothered to talk to me.  
4 If they had at the time, I probably would have been able to  
5 reconstruct what I did that month.

6 Senator Blumenthal: Assuming all of that is true, why  
7 not invoice it?

8 Dr. Wilson: Senator, the laboratories never asked for  
9 that.

10 Senator Blumenthal: Well, I am asking you, as a  
11 potential Secretary of the Air Force, whether you will hold  
12 contractors to a higher standard than is indicated by this  
13 document. It is a forward-looking question. I am not  
14 asking you to reconstruct in your testimony now what you  
15 did. But should we not expect more from contractors than  
16 this kind of blank invoice?

17 Dr. Wilson: Senator, I think we should expect  
18 contractors to comply with the contracts which they signed  
19 with the government. And, in this case, I did.

20 Senator Blumenthal: Well, you know, the answer to my  
21 question is really a simple yes. That is the right answer,  
22 don't you think? Because regardless of what you did, in the  
23 future, looking forward, my hope is that we improve  
24 contracting involving the United States Government and  
25 United States taxpayer money by imposing a higher standard

1 than is indicated or reflected by this invoice.

2 And there is no way of knowing from this invoice even  
3 vaguely what you did.

4 Dr. Wilson: Senator, the people that I worked with  
5 were supervising me and knew what I did and that I was doing  
6 the work that they were satisfied enough with to offer me a  
7 full-time position as the vice president of the laboratory.  
8 I did the work. They were happy with the work. I complied  
9 with the contract. And I will expect anyone who has a  
10 contract with the United States Air Force to comply with the  
11 contract as well.

12 Senator Blumenthal: Did it occur to you that maybe the  
13 United States of America deserved a fuller accounting of  
14 your services than this blank slate?

15 Dr. Wilson: Senator, the United States deserved my  
16 best work, and that is what they got.

17 Senator Blumenthal: Well, they may have gotten your  
18 best work, but I hope, if you are confirmed, that you will  
19 hold contractors providing services to the United States of  
20 America to a higher standard than this blank sheet of paper,  
21 which is not the only invoice that is as vague as this one.  
22 And it is in the record, so it will speak for itself.

23 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Chairman McCain: Senator Shaheen?

25 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1           Dr. Wilson, I want to congratulate you on your  
2 nomination, and I certainly appreciate your willingness to  
3 serve at this difficult and complex time.

4           I also want to point out that you are a native of  
5 Keene, New Hampshire, and we are very proud of you in the  
6 State. I do not know if you saw earlier, but we had about  
7 40 members of the New Hampshire Army and Air National Guard  
8 who were here for the early part of this hearing. They are  
9 here for their professional development today, and it is a  
10 recognition of the effort that you are taking on.

11           I want to start with a program that we are very  
12 concerned about in New Hampshire, and that is the KC-46A.  
13 We have learned recently that the delivery of the first  
14 aircraft to Altus and McConnell Air Force bases is likely to  
15 miss the target date of 2017.

16           We are concerned about it because Pease is one of those  
17 first bases that is supposed to get the new KC-46A. And I  
18 understand it is going to be delayed another 6 months to the  
19 end of 2018.

20           There was a recent GAO report that identified Boeing,  
21 the manufacturer of the KC-46A, and explained that it  
22 struggled to meet scheduled milestones throughout the  
23 duration of the program, and it is at least a year behind on  
24 most measures.

25           So I wonder if you could talk about how, if confirmed,

1 you would work to maintain the delivery schedule of aircraft  
2 and prevent further delays, because, as we know, this is not  
3 the only delay that we are seeing. I am not even going to  
4 get into the F-35, though we discussed it when you were in  
5 my office.

6 But can you tell us how you might approach this  
7 problem?

8 Dr. Wilson: Senator, I think there are a number of  
9 things. You have to set realistic schedules upfront, and  
10 you have to have very good program managers who are  
11 authorized, and often very small and focused program  
12 management offices of exceptional professionals to manage  
13 these programs.

14 And then, of course, you hold people accountable for  
15 results. Sometimes people set out schedules and timelines  
16 that are too ambitious upfront, but I think getting those  
17 realistic upfront, and then, finally, making sure that  
18 requirements do not change in the process. Fix those  
19 requirements and build the system.

20 As a university president, the worst thing you can do  
21 is start changing the design after you have started  
22 construction in the laboratory or the building. You have to  
23 fix it up front and then come in and build to print and get  
24 it on a tight timeline. I think the same is true for most  
25 major weapons systems.

1           Senator Shaheen:  Should we be looking at -- it is my  
2 understanding that for a lot of these oversight positions  
3 that people are in, that they are only in those positions  
4 several years, and then they are moved on.

5           What kind of a challenge does that present as we look  
6 at long-term projects that we are doing in terms of new  
7 aircraft?

8           Dr. Wilson:  Senator, you are right.  There is turnover  
9 in that field.  And developing the capability in the  
10 acquisition field has been an issue in the past.  It may  
11 well be an issue today.

12           But one of the other things is procuring things on a  
13 tight time frame.  I think the A-10 was procured on a very  
14 tight time frame.  The F-16 was certainly tighter than some  
15 of the other aircraft that we built.  And getting somebody  
16 as a program manager and saying, "All right, you are going  
17 to be in this assignment for 4 years and here is what we  
18 expect you to accomplish.  We do not expect miracles.  We do  
19 not want a 15-year program.  We want tight turns, and then  
20 we will iterate and innovate after that."  I think that  
21 generally has been more effective at getting capability out  
22 to the service in a cost-effective way.

23           Senator Shaheen:  Thank you.

24           We had an interesting hearing yesterday in the Emerging  
25 Threats Subcommittee.  One of the presenters talked about

1 the new challenges of the hybrid warfare, cyber warfare that  
2 we are facing, and that we are not doing enough within our  
3 military to develop ways to address that, that we are very  
4 focused on conventional warfare and that we are not focused  
5 enough on the unconventional warfare, which is much of what  
6 we are facing today.

7 So I appreciate that we are still going to need the  
8 role of the Air Force, but what should the Air Force be  
9 looking at as you all are thinking about this unconventional  
10 warfare challenge that we are all facing?

11 Dr. Wilson: Senator, when people say unconventional  
12 warfare, sometimes they really mean guerrilla warfare, but I  
13 think you are talking about cyber and --

14 Senator Shaheen: I am actually talking about a  
15 combination. I am talking about cyber. I am talking about  
16 the kind of efforts that we saw in Ukraine and Georgia, to  
17 some extent. I am talking about what we are seeing with  
18 Russia.

19 So what else should we be thinking about?

20 Dr. Wilson: Senator, we need to be thinking about the  
21 full range of potential conflicts, all the way from low-  
22 intensity warfare through a near-peer adversary and nuclear  
23 deterrence. I think there are new techniques, and cyber is  
24 one of them, that can be used both by nation-states and by  
25 terrorists or insurgents to achieve their political

1 objectives. But we need to be able to pay both offense and  
2 defense in all of those realms.

3 Senator Shaheen: I am glad to hear that, because right  
4 now, I do not think we have a strategy. And we are playing  
5 defense, and we are not playing much offense.

6 So thank you. I look forward to working with you.

7 Dr. Wilson: Thank you.

8 Chairman McCain: Dr. Wilson, I just want to mention to  
9 you that one of the enduring frustrations, a source of anger  
10 and discontent in this committee and amongst the American  
11 taxpayers, is cost overruns and the way we do business and  
12 acquire weapons systems.

13 I was just looking at, in 2001, where there was a  
14 proposal for an F-35 that was going to cost \$233 billion,  
15 and we were going to build 2,800 of them. Today, they cost  
16 \$391 billion and about 400 less. The first trillion-dollar  
17 weapons system in history. \$400,000 for a helmet. Stuff  
18 you cannot make up.

19 So we have tried to make some changes, and have in the  
20 acquisition system here in the Armed Services Committee.  
21 But I have to tell you, we have not gotten a lot of  
22 cooperation from the Department of Defense.

23 We have made changes such as separating AT&L into two  
24 different divisions. We got nothing but resistance.

25 So I agree with all of the comments that you have made

1 and that of my colleagues about the dire situation we find  
2 ourselves in, and the absolute necessity of avoiding a  
3 continuing resolution. But when you have scandals like  
4 this, \$233 billion to \$239 billion cost of a weapons system,  
5 then it is hard for us to make a case for more funds to  
6 defend the Nation.

7 So there are a lot of challenges that we face, but I  
8 find myself continuously frustrated by the cost overruns,  
9 whether it be a \$3 billion cost overrun on the Gerald R.  
10 Ford or whether it be now we are having cost overruns  
11 associated with the tanker.

12 It goes on and on, and it has to stop. And we are  
13 pretty well aware that we can do a lot, but we cannot do  
14 everything unless we have a cooperative environment over  
15 where you work or will be working.

16 So I hope that, if not the highest, the next highest  
17 priority that you have is to address this broken acquisition  
18 system.

19 And frankly, I grow tired of fighting with the  
20 Pentagon. I get tired of seeing these scandals and calling  
21 people to account.

22 But the fact is, in reality, back on the F-35, to my  
23 knowledge, not a single person has been held accountable for  
24 a \$160 billion cost overrun -- not a single person that I  
25 know of, certainly not the manufacturer who comes before

1 this committee and tells us what a great job they are doing.

2 So there either has to be accountability and truth in  
3 contracting, and the American taxpayers get their  
4 investment, or we are going to face further crises, such as  
5 we are facing now.

6 One of the reasons why we have not got enough money is  
7 because we have wasted it. We have wasted so much, so many  
8 billions of dollars, time after time after time.

9 So my strong recommendation to you is that we start  
10 firing some people. We start penalizing contractors. We  
11 break up this iron triangle of the military-industrial-  
12 congressional complex. And I hope that you will devote some  
13 energy in that direction.

14 Senator Reed?

15 Senator Reed: Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for  
16 holding the hearing. I want to thank Dr. Wilson for her  
17 testimony today. And I presume there will be additional  
18 questions for the record.

19 [The information referred to follows:]

20 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Reed: Thank you, Dr. Wilson.

2 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 [Whereupon, at 11:38 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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