

**ENSURING FORCE READINESS:
EXAMINING PROGRESSIVISM'S IMPACT
ON AN ALL-VOLUNTEER MILITARY**

HEARING

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY,
THE BORDER, AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
AND ACCOUNTABILITY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

MARCH 28, 2023

Serial No. 118-15

Printed for the use of the Committee on Oversight and Accountability



Available on: *govinfo.gov*
oversight.house.gov or
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U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

51-720 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2023

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Tuesday, March 28, 2023

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY, THE BORDER, AND FOREIGN
AFFAIRS
Washington, D.C.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:22 p.m., in room 2154, Rayburn Office Building, Hon. Glenn Grothman, (Chairman of the Subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Grothman, Gosar, Higgins, Sessions, Biggs, LaTurner, Fallon, Armstrong, Perry, Garcia, Lynch, Goldman, and Frost.

Also present: Representative Raskin.

Mr. GROTHMAN. The Subcommittee on National Security, the Border, and Foreign Affairs will come to order. Welcome, everyone.

Without objection, the Chair may declare a recess at any time and without objection Representative Mike Waltz of Florida is waived onto the Subcommittee for the purpose of questioning witnesses of today's Subcommittee hearing. I recognize myself for the purpose of making an opening statement.

Thank you all for coming to today's hearing and thank you to our witnesses for coming to testify on this important topic of military readiness.

I am proud to say the United States has the best and strongest military of the world. From our special operations to intelligence reconnaissance, to our air power strength to our precision strike capabilities, our military capabilities are in a league of their own. We all know the primary mission of the armed forces is to protect and defend the Nation and our interests abroad.

However, I am afraid, from talking to some people in the military, the military is not the institution for social experiments and political correctness. The Administration seems to be willfully blinded by how its progressive ideals are affecting military readiness and recruitment.

Not once in the Biden Administration's National Security Strategy released in October 22, does it address the military recruitment crisis we are having.

Today's hearing will examine how the Biden Department of Defense has politicized the U.S. military and harmed its ability to quickly respond to threats in our Nation.

In 2022, the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marines all fell short of their recruitment goals. Despite lowering fitness standards, relaxing tattoo policies, and increasing recruitment bonuses, fewer and fewer young adults are joining our military.

Meanwhile, the Biden Administration is more focused on how cadets at military academies use correct pronouns rather than to learn how to lead, work as a team, or defend our Nation.

The Biden Administration thinks that service members' understanding White rage, as recently described by General Mark Milley, our highest-ranking military official, is more important than promoting cohesiveness throughout the armed services.

Furthermore, this Administration has allowed active-duty service members to take time off from their duties to obtain sex change surgeries and related hormones and drugs at taxpayer expense.

Legislation has been introduced in Congress that would stop the teaching of critical race theory, or CRT, in the military, stop the millions of dollars flowing to the creation of diversity and inclusion offices, and would keep the thresholds high for physical fitness requirements by our combat forces.

Service members within the ranks are speaking out about these issues while military leadership continues to push the Biden Administration's progressive agenda.

Data shows most Americans still trust our military. But this trust cannot be taken for granted. The Biden Administration can use to exploit the military for political purposes and for experiments in social policy.

Today, our panel of experts will be able to shine a light on how these progressive ideologies are harming our men and women in uniform.

Again, thank you for all being here today and I look forward to your testimony.

I would now like to recognize my good friend, Ranking Member Garcia, for the purpose of making an opening statement.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I want to just begin by thanking our witnesses for being here as well. I think we can all agree that our national security and protecting our great nation and the lives and safety of Americans is incredibly important and remains very strong today.

We should also be very clear, and I think everyone can agree here as part of this committee, that our military is still the strongest in the world. We are leading global coalitions across the country, in Europe, across Asia, and, of course, we know that the U.S. spends more on national defense than China, India, Russia, the U.K., Saudi Arabia, Germany, France, Japan, and South Korea all combined.

And so, we continue to invest in our military, and we, of course, you know, welcome the conversation of how we do better. But this hearing today is not really focused on how we can do better. It is focused on issues around what it means to be progressive or what is being perceived to be happening in our military.

It is important that we do not politicize our military, that we do not focus on partisan issues. We should not be focused on the issues that we brought up today by my Republican colleagues.

But, instead, we should focus on what real—on what studies and what the facts and the data actually say are causing issues around diminishing recruitment and retention.

These are issues around sexual violence that we know still exists in the military, the need for improved mental health support for our service members, the need for reliable and affordable childcare, which are incredibly important, and so many others.

Even recent, numerous studies have shown that sexual assault, mental health care, and affordable childcare still remain the key factors in military recruitment, retention, and readiness.

But none of those real factors are, unfortunately, what is going to be much of the focus here at this Oversight Committee today.

We want to ensure, and as our most senior military leaders know and have pointed out, that focusing on the broader bigger issues has to be a national priority. In fact, in the words of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Milley, he quoted, “I personally find it offensive that we are accusing the United States military of being woke or something else because we are studying some theories that are out there.”

I fully agree with the general and that our warfighters should be open-minded and be widely read because they come from the American people. These are quotes.

Here are the facts. America is not the same as it was in the 1960’s. We know that. We are recruiting from a generation of young people who are the most diverse in American history.

We need to draw on their talents now more than ever. The U.S. military needs all of our best and brightest and that includes women, LGBTQ+ people, and people from all across this country. Our military needs are changing, and I hope that today we can focus on those broader issues.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GROTHMAN. This is the first time behind this podium.

I am pleased to introduce our four witnesses today.

First of all, Brent Sadler joined the Heritage Foundation after a 26-year naval career with numerous operational tours on nuclear-powered submarines, served on the personal staffs of senior Department of Defense leaders, and also served as a military diplomat.

As a senior research fellow Mr. Sadler has heavily focused on the future of maritime forces and issues facing the U.S. Navy strategy.

Second, we have Meaghan Mobbs, as an experienced policy leader. She is a graduate of West Point, holds a master’s in forensic psychology from George Washington, and a doctorate in clinical psychology from Columbia.

She previously served as a Presidential appointee to the U.S. Military Academy West Point board of advisors, and is currently gubernatorial appointee to the Virginia Military Institute Board of Visitors.

Next, we have Jeremy Hunt, currently serves as Chairman for Veterans on Duty, an organization that advocates for strong military and national security policies. Mr. Hunt is a graduate of the

U.S. Military Academy at West Point and previously served as an active-duty military intelligence officer where he was deployed as part of a multinational mission to train the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

He now serves in the U.S. Army in active Ready Reserve as he completes his final year at Yale Law School. You have a strong enough background you are going make it through there unscathed. And, most importantly, last week, he welcomed his second child to the world. Congratulations, Mr. Hunt.

Finally, Lieutenant General David Barno is a visiting Professor of Strategic Studies at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. General Barno completed a 30-year active-duty Army career, served as an infantry officer, Ranger, and paratrooper. General Barno currently serves on the Secretary of Defense's Reserve Forces Policy Board and is a member of the U.S. Army War College Board of Visitors.

Again, thank you for all being here today. Pursuant to Committee Rule 9(g) the witnesses will please stand and raise their right hands.

Do you solemnly swear to affirm that the testimony that you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

[Witnesses are sworn.]

Mr. GROTHMAN. Let the record show that the witnesses all answered in the affirmative, right? Yes. Good.

OK. We appreciate you all being here today, again.

You can sit down. I appreciate you all being here, again, today and look forward to your testimony. Let me remind the witnesses that we have read your written statements and they will appear in full in the record. We all should have read them all.

Please limit your oral statements to as close to five minutes as you can get. As a reminder, please press the button on the microphone in front of you so that it is on and we can all hear you. When you begin to speak the light in front of you will turn green. After four minutes it will turn yellow. When the red light comes on your five minutes are up and please wrap up.

I recognize, first of all, Mr. Sadler, to begin your opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF BRENT SADLER
SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW
CENTER FOR NATIONAL DEFENSE
THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION**

Mr. SADLER. Thank you, and good afternoon, Chairman Grothman and Ranking Member Garcia, and Members of the House.

The root cause of why we are here today stems from the corrosive impact recent policies are having on our all-volunteer military.

While ostensibly noble, a growing cadre of DEI staffers across the military backed by \$114 million budget, a 33 percent increase over last year, and several executive orders are having a divisive impact.

As a 27-year Navy veteran, it is clear a course correction is needed. To be totally clear, diversity has enabled battlefield advantages

like code-talker Navajo Marines of World War II or female soldiers able to engage Afghan women for intel.

Yes, the military appreciates diversity, but it is more than balancing skin tones on a roster. Inclusion in the military is everyone being held to the same standards and a common desire for operational success. Inclusion without this in mind, risk unit cohesion and camaraderie. Good measures of effective military inclusion, not numbers of categories present, of gender, sexuality, et cetera, and certainly not excluding those who do not share popular political or social views.

And equity—equity becomes problematic if actualized to balance outcomes running contrary to a military meritocracy. When paired with Marxist theories of critical race theory, espousals of America is systematically racist or assigning groups oppressor or oppressed roles as rationale for limiting or curtailing a person's access to services or career options based on immutable difference of characteristics is racist and un-American.

By featuring on a military professional reading list authors such as Ibram Kendi's "How to Be an Anti-Racist" discrimination is seemingly normalized. The embrace of such thinking has led to a perception—perception—that the military is no longer an egalitarian society where hard work and self-improvement can get you far.

Such perceptions were furthered when racist tweets by a DOD official came to light and suffered no apparent meaningful repercussion. The real question is how the DOD hired someone with such a problematic public background to be chief of diversity, inclusion, and equity—the message to half of the military and their children in DOD schools, you are valued less.

All service members matter. But amidst the emotions of 2020's riots, anti-establishment protests, and a Presidential election, too many lost sight of this, the damage done.

Military Family Advisory Network polls showed a 7.6 percent drop from 2019 in veterans recommending family members join the military. Confidence in the military has also hit new lows. Pew Research, nine percent down; Gallup poll, five percent decline; and finally, Reagan Institute's a 22 percent drop.

The perception today is of a military increasingly captured by a political agenda, leading some to forego military service. The nation is weaker for this.

To be clear, not all recruits or officer candidates began their careers with the same aptitudes, often a function of poorly performing schools or unhelpful family situations.

The military and Congress should find ways to get more willing patriots from such conditions within standards for the military and, for the most promising, extra academic training so that they may be even more successful in the long term.

This nurturing comes with added cost and time for sure. Until 2008, the Navy had a program called Boost that did much the same. Perhaps a reimagined and expanded Boost program can deliver on diversity inclusion based on rewarding hard work, while not alienating segments of the military.

On top of this, the military needs help in getting access to educate more people about what military service is. It is a noble pro-

fession, and when a high school student gets to talk with a Marine, sailor, airman, or soldier only three or four years older than themselves and likely from the same town, trust is highest.

But too often, parts of the country are devoid of that type of exchange. This, too, must change. True, most in uniform go about their daily routines and operations much as they always have. That is not to say corrosive influences are not at play as evidenced by several unfortunate incidents.

Should military members see their opportunities narrowing and themselves being undervalued they will vote with their feet. Retention is a lagging factor, and it is showing signs of trouble.

Recruitment is a leading indicator. For the Army last year, it was a historic failure; short 25 percent of 15,000 people, with next year looking to be worse. It is already the worst since the all-volunteer force came into being in 1973.

COVID and economics do not explain this. But it does correlate with an added emphasis on DEI and increasing CRT-informed training.

The problems are not caused by congressional oversight or people asking tough questions. In fact, the surest way to reverse course is demand transparency in all DEI-related activities within DOD and doing so allows for needed adjustments and rebuilding confidence.

The military is a meritocracy, or at least the closest to one existing today, because the environment in which it operates is unforgiving, where competency and unit cohesion often determine survival. The military is of and serves all Americans. Sadly, the military has not been served as well.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you.

Ms. Mobbs?

**STATEMENT OF MEAGHAN MOBBS
SENIOR FELLOW
INDEPENDENT WOMEN'S FORUM**

Ms. MOBBS. Chairman Grothman, Ranking Member Garcia, and Members of the Committee, it is a privilege to be here today both professionally and personally.

My name is Dr. Meaghan Mobbs, and I am the daughter of two former Army officers. My mother was one of the first women to go to Airborne School and deployed to Grenada. My father served for over 30 years deployed, and was decorated for valor numerous times, and was in the Pentagon on 9/11 when I was a sophomore in high school.

It was their footsteps I followed when I chose to serve and accept an appointment to West Point. I was the first in my family to attend the academy and my little brother eventually followed my footsteps and did the same.

My nuclear family has served in every major conflict from Vietnam to the present day. I am now the mother to two exceptional little girls and the aunt to two energetic nephews.

As it stands, and it pains me to say, I would not recommend military service to them. Understandably, our military cannot function as family business with children of service members the predominant source of the force.

However, it was until recently a reliable pool of candidates. That is changing as I am not alone in my hesitation. Deficits in recruitment potential for military families is just one facet of the broader crisis facing our armed forces. Most concerning, the desire in our youth to serve is only nine percent. This is a grave national security threat.

Just yesterday, the Wall Street Journal reported on a poll which demonstrated the priorities that helped define our national character for generations are declining in importance. One of the variables, patriotism, falling from 70 percent in extreme importance in 1998 to just 38 percent today.

Relatedly, Republicans, Democrats, and Independents show double digit declines in national pride compared with 2013. Pride is an imperative human emotion, particularly pride in the self. Feelings of pride reinforce positive social behaviors like altruism and lead to adaptive behaviors like achievement.

Conversely, people who are deliberately shamed even over a modest violation of social norms are at much greater risk for depression and anxiety, and if they are repeatedly shamed, they are less likely to take positive risk-taking behaviors that can lead to success in adulthood.

While pride in self and pride in nation may not necessarily be related, it is highly likely that both are contributing factors in the decision-making process to join the armed forces.

It is for this reason that curricula or instruction which hyper focus negatively on immutable characteristics are destructive, both to the self and to esprit de corps.

Moreover, a consistent centering of what divides us rather than what unites us is particularly pernicious. This is not to call into question the necessity of grappling with the complexity of a historical past. It is the manner in which it is currently being done in many of our educational settings and, lamentably, in the Department of Defense and at our service academies.

These programs do not build teams. They destroy them. Moreover, there is a unique danger in telling those who are called to fight our Nation's battles the very notion they are expected to sacrifice and potentially die for is inherently bad.

No good leader would say diversity is a bad thing. Diversity of all types, to include those often not considered such as cognitive diversity and diversity of experience, build strong teams. The sole function of our military is to deter our Nation's enemies and, if that fails, to fight and win our Nation's war.

We are no longer in competition with China. We are in conflict. A failure to recognize and reorient toward those demands will be disastrous. This necessary reorientation will require close examination of decades of multiple military failures with little to no accountability and poor command climate and culture, which is decimating our ranks.

Some of the most detrimental decisions have been the casual disregard of data in favor of a political agenda. One such example was the out of hand rejection of a 2015 study done by the Marine Corps which found that gender integrated combat formations did not move as quickly or shoot as effectively as all-male formations.

At that time, many of the disparities were dismissed and re-framed as opportunities to train women more comprehensively with a push toward equal standards. Neither the Marines nor the Army followed through. To date across the services there are a difference in physical standards for men and women. That is not helpful for women, and it makes it more difficult for them to earn trust and confidence of those they serve alongside.

Make no mistake, that is not to say that women cannot fight or contribute. In fact, it is often when we recognize the biological differences between men and women that we increase lethality.

An example of that is a heroic and lauded efforts of the cultural support teams in our most recent conflicts. Their conceptualization was rooted in the recognition that women and womanhood were unique and thereby would allow access for them to places that men could not go.

It is the frequent Department of Defense denials of reality and their unwillingness to confront hard truths which places lethality at risk.

For example, President Biden signed an executive order in 2021 to embed diversity, equity, and inclusion in all Federal agencies with the overarching goal of advancing equity for all.

There is no equity for combat and there should not be a push for it in our society. Forced equality, which is equity by definition, leads to a lack of competition. This is not leveled playing fields for the positive. It flattens capability. The military should and must be standards-based and a meritocracy.

The problem with recruitment and retention in our military are long in the making and it will be long in the fixing. Business as usual is no longer an option as we look to the pacing threat of China. The world is an increasingly dangerous place and for now warfare remains a predominantly human endeavor.

It is Americans who fill our ranks and operate our weapon systems and our current and future men and women need legislators willing to hold the Department of Defense accountable for its failings and to demand results.

There is a phrase often used the military, getting left of bang. It means you have accurately observed pre-event indicators for what is to come and acting practically to prevent it. Being on the opposite end means being right of bang. We are now right of bang and headed to a much louder one if we fail to heed the alarm bells ringing.

I look forward to your questions and thank you.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Hunt?

**STATEMENT OF JEREMY HUNT
CHAIRMAN
VETERANS ON DUTY, INC.**

Mr. HUNT. Good afternoon, Chairman Grothman, Ranking Member Garcia, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the state of our military's readiness.

I am Jeremy Hunt and I have the honor of serving as Chairman of Veterans on Duty, which is a nonprofit policy advocacy organiza-

tion made up of veterans who are concerned about the state of our military and the strength of our national security.

Many of us have deployed to Afghanistan, Iraq, and in my case, Ukraine, and during my time on active duty as an intelligence officer, I helped train the Ukrainian Armed Forces for what was then a hypothetical scenario of Russia launching an invasion against Ukraine.

Five years later, I watched footage of Yavoriv Training Center in Lviv where I lived for many months become engulfed in flames following a Russian attack. That footage reminded me, yet again, that our adversaries abroad are more emboldened than ever. And it is not just Russia. China continues its multigenerational effort to supplant the United States as the world's leading superpower.

The CCP to this day is building hypersonic missiles that our radar systems can barely detect and, of course, threats remain from barbaric regimes in North Korea and Iran.

In light of these rising threats, there is growing concern that our United States' military simply isn't ready. We stand amid a once in a generation military recruitment crisis. At the end of FY 2022, the Army fell 15,000 soldiers short of its recruiting goal, missing by 25 percent. Our military is facing the worst recruitment challenge since the advent of the all-volunteer force following the Vietnam War.

And apart from these manning shortfalls, other readiness issues abound. Just last year the Navy reported \$2 billion in shipyard backlog for their service fleet. This report came during the same year that the USS Connecticut, an indispensable fast attack submarine, crashed into an underwater sea mount entirely due to avoidable human error.

Avoidable accidents abound in the sky as well. The National Commission on Military Aviation Safety found that from 2013 to 2020 our military lost 224 personnel and 186 aircraft worth over \$11.6 billion to avoidable aircraft accidents.

There are many factors that have led us to this dangerous position. Global supply chain challenges have made it difficult for the services to maintain their vehicles and equipment. Low nationwide unemployment rates have created a challenging environment for military recruitment and, of course, with rising teen obesity rates data shows that only about 23 percent of America's youth are even eligible to enlist.

These factors do matter and play an important role in this recruitment crisis. However, these are factors beyond the military's control. I would like to focus on a few things that the military can control.

The Reagan Institute annually conducts a Trust in the Military poll which analyzes the public's faith and confidence in the military. It should be of concern that the survey found an astonishing double digit decrease in the number of Americans with strong confidence in our armed forces, and the Pew Research Center had similar findings.

This politicization of our military can be best described in terms of priorities and practices. That is, the things that the Pentagon says are important—the priorities—and the things that the Pentagon does—the practices.

When Secretary Austin was sworn into office, he rightly identified China as a pacing threat. But he also identified and started expressing an emphasis on policies atypical to the military's core purpose.

He included a huge amount of emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion, domestic extremism, and climate change. These are priorities that are more appropriate to the domestic political debates, and they just don't—and it is an odd fit for an institution purposed for a violent clash of arms against a tough and determined adversary. This has led to the perception that the Pentagon serves a political party rather than the American people as a whole.

As a matter of practices, the Pentagon has followed through on its political agenda. In the wake of the Supreme Court's Dobbs decision, Secretary Austin made an unprecedented political announcement that the Department of Defense would pay for service members and their families to travel to different states to receive abortions and offer three weeks of paid vacations for those seeking these abortions, shoving the Department of Defense into one of the most polarizing political issues of our time.

Further, recent Presidential administrations have ordered the replacement of long-standing equal opportunity programs with an entirely new DEI bureaucracy. The current program subjects some service members to 11-week resident DEI training classes, all this despite there being no measurable increase in racist incidents that demonstrated a need for such a dramatic increase in the number of DEI bureaucrats or such an extreme training requirement.

As America watches the Chinese military grow in power and the largest land war in Europe since the Second World War unfold, we are given the impression that our military serves other masters beyond our national defense.

The Pentagon cannot magically make American teens fit for duty or eager to serve, nor can they reverse cultural considerations beyond their control. But we can change the recent policies that have left our military unfocused, untrained, unmanned, and unprepared for combat.

Congress has an opportunity to take politics out of the military and refocus the Department of Defense back to what it was made to do, to deter, fight, and win our Nation's wars.

I look forward to your questions.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you very much.

Lieutenant General Barno?

**STATEMENT OF GENERAL BARNO (RET.)
VISITING PROFESSOR OF STRATEGIC STUDIES
JOHNS HOPKINS, SCHOOL OF ADVANCED
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

General BARNO. Chairman Grothman, Ranking Member Garcia, thanks for inviting me to speak here today.

As we all have heard, the U.S. military is facing a recruiting crisis in the year 2023 of unprecedented magnitude. I served for 30 years of my life on active duty in the U.S. Army and commanded U.S. forces at every level from lieutenant to lieutenant general.

I served in combat three times, culminating in my 19 months as the overall U.S. commander in Afghanistan during the early days

of the war and, yet, I have never seen a greater challenge to the all-volunteer force than the one we see today.

This crisis has many complex causes, but so-called wokeism in the military is not one of them. Let me be clear, there are no data that support the argument that wokeism has precipitated a decline in U.S. combat readiness nor is there any correlation between wokeism and the current difficulty in attracting new recruits.

However, in my view, the overheated and unsupported rhetoric on this topic does have harmful consequences, which exacerbates the recruiting crisis and undermines military effectiveness in ways that are the exact opposite of what all of us intend.

Since the draft ended in 1973, the U.S. military has had to fill its ranks with volunteers at every level. Every military mission since then has been conducted by high-quality volunteers who have rightfully earned the esteem of the Nation.

Yet, today, that force is at risk. As you heard, the Army missed its recruiting goals last year and the other services barely met theirs. The current year's prospects for all appear equally dim.

If the trends for the Army, alone, continues, service officials have warned that the Army could shrink by over 30,000 soldiers between 2022 and the end of 2023, or nearly seven percent of its active force.

If these trends don't change, the lack of qualified and motivated volunteers will jeopardize the national security of the United States by leaving our military too small to address the challenges and threats of the years and decades ahead.

U.S. military recruiting today faces a crisis in both eligibility, those who are qualified to serve, and in propensity, those who want to serve. The percentage of young Americans who meet the military's entrance standards has hovered around 30 percent for more than a decade. But last year that number suddenly dropped to an all-time low of 23 percent.

This is a shockingly low number that threatens the viability of the all-volunteer force.

Equally disturbing is the other half of the equation, the propensity or willingness, interest in serving. Before the pandemic polls showed that only 13 percent of young Americans said they would consider military service. Last year, that number shrank further to a mere nine percent.

These figures are simply unsustainable for the volunteer military to remain a robust high-quality force. Too few recruits means a shrinking military at a time when the strategic threats facing the Nation continue to multiply. The services are developing some innovative ways to deal with this.

The Army has developed a pre-boot camp program that the Navy has now copied. Other services are looking at that as well. They are also examining ways to revisit some of the medical conditions that are now so commonplace in our society that have previously been disqualifications from military service such as successful treatment for ADHD or depression as a child. These need to be looked at carefully in terms of increasing potential eligibility numbers.

Finally, propensity to serve—how to get more young Americans to consider military service—is a tougher problem. Although the

all-volunteer force has seen great success it has one tremendous Achilles' heel. It has created an ever-widening gap between the U.S. military and the American people. Fewer and fewer young Americans today are exposed to the U.S. military.

As we have heard, the U.S. military has become increasingly a family business. Today, more than 80 percent of the young people who join the military have a family member in the military. Between 25 and 30 percent have a parent in the military.

Congress can help improve the propensity to serve by extolling the virtues of service in uniform in the ways that were commonplace throughout the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Repeatedly and publicly castigating the U.S. military as a woke institution is both wrong and directly undercuts efforts at military recruiting among swaths of young American men and women.

It effectively discourages our young men and women from serving in uniform at the very time when the services are struggling with this challenge. Recruiting young Americans demands the military find ways to attract more people who would otherwise not consider military service. To do that, and retain the very best of those, it has always emphasized equal opportunity for all regardless of race, creed, or color.

Put unequivocally, military efforts to recognize that diversity, equity, and inclusion within the force are both valuable and essential. They have long been part of our force structure. The military is a team of team. It is a remarkably diverse force built on different people that make up the strength of America. We cut away at that at our very peril.

In my first days at West Point, I got a class on race relations in a military that was fraught with racial tensions, with drug abuse, and indiscipline. The president at that time was Richard Nixon and the Secretary of Defense was Melvin Laird.

Neither were well known liberal progressives, but they maintained this was an important program that even in my first days at West Point I should start learning about, and it helped me immensely as I went out to lead troops for the rest of my career.

The successors of those programs exist out there today. We cannot afford to undercut them entirely and we can't afford to tell Americans who are thinking about serving that this military is not up to their expectations.

We have the best and most powerful military in the world. You heard that from our Chairman at the beginning here today. We must sustain that by maintaining and growing programs to expand the number of people who are interested in the military and to make sure they understand it is a proud and honorable place to serve.

Thank you.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. Thank you much. I will call upon myself, first of all, just to make a general statement.

I, personally, believe—I am glad we have gone over 70 years without having a war with China and I look forward to another 70 years, A. And, B, I recently ran into an employee back in my district of a manufacturing firm and she was a little bit sad because her company—this is in the private sector, you know, just a manufacturing firm—had gone from a very conservative company to one

in which the employees had to put up with this woke training stuff and she regretfully said she might have to look for another job, and I thought that was too bad, but I thought if that is what is going on in private, you know, who knows in an area like the military what this woke training does.

Now, a couple a couple of questions. First of all, we will start with Mr. Hunt.

As far as physical requirements, are the physical requirements for the military today any different than, say, what they were 30 years ago?

Mr. HUNT. Thank you for that question, Chairman.

The physical requirements have changed, as we have seen in a lot of the different—in the new kind of research that is coming out now in terms of the standards that are allowing people to come in the military.

I would say that a lot of those types of issues are kind of room for more research and I would hope that this body would continue to ask those types of questions.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. So, in other words, our military is not quite as physically strong today as they were 30 years ago—your average soldier or sailor?

Mr. HUNT. No, sir.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Oh, wow. That is concerning.

How about mental problems? There was a time where I think mental problems would kind of disqualify someone from the military. Is there a change in the way we deal with mental problems today compared to, say, what we were dealing with 40 years ago?

Mr. HUNT. There have been some changes in that regard as well, Chairman.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Could you elaborate on it a little bit?

Mr. HUNT. Well, I will just say the organization I am a part of, Veterans on Duty, a lot of our research has been done with looking at how we can make sure our military is ready. We have not done a variety of research into that particular question of mental aptitude and that kind of question. But we can get back to you with—

Mr. GROTHMAN. I think there was a time where if you were taking certain medications you couldn't get in the military. Is that still true?

Mr. HUNT. Yes, sir.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. More or less, or has it changed at all?

Mr. HUNT. I would not be the best person to give you the answer to that.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Either one of the other—any of the other three know have we changed the—yes, Mr. Sadler?

Mr. SADLER. So, with regards to certain specialties and ones that I am more familiar with in the nuclear submarine community and the ballistic missile program there are stringent medical as well as psychological requirements that are in prescreening and continually through the career. That has remained unchanging at least in the last 30 years.

Now, outside of that, inside my foreign area officer experience, there is a very wide spectrum of differences based on location and the stressors that you might be on.

And so, in that regards it is not uniform and it is—does change from time to time based on what the medical community—the military medical community believes is important for that area for that operation.

And so, you can't paint with one brush for all DOD or even one service, and it does change. Some of that there is some things to look at more closely.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. So, are things getting tightened up or are we loosening the standards?

Mr. SADLER. What troubles me most when I hear from the military medicine community is that there is a tendency to get distracted from metrics or issues that are not medically focused and, again, this comes back to the influences of DEI type policies and that is, in my mind, a distraction from the provision of traumatic care for soldiers, airmen, and sailors that need, you know, help when they have an injury in either the day-to-day operations or in combat.

Mr. GROTHMAN. In other words, is what they are doing affected by the person they are dealing with?

Mr. SADLER. There is some indication that is starting to become a mentality or thinking that is overtaking their approach to medicine.

Mr. GROTHMAN. What would be the reason, Mr. Hunt, why we changed the physical requirements?

Mr. HUNT. That particular question I would ask many of the leaders right now in our Department of Defense of what is their criteria. I think a lot of times it is unclear, and I think that is part of the problem that this body should know exactly what that criteria is.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Yes. I have been told by people in the military academies that sometimes they change the physical requirements with regard to gender or what have you. Is that true?

Mr. HUNT. I think you would have to ask the Department of Defense exactly what is going on because, quite frankly—

Mr. GROTHMAN. I see Ms. Mobbs kind of says that. Is it Mobes, Mobbs? I don't even know.

Ms. MOBBS. Mobbs, sir.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Mobbs. OK.

Ms. MOBBS. That is correct, Mr. Chairman. They have changed the physical fitness standards. So, when we had the army physical fitness test, which was the APFT, we switched to what was then called the Army Combat Fitness Test and that was designed to transform the Army fitness culture and improve readiness for ground combat.

Many of the events within the Army combat fitness test were specifically expected to map onto combat related things like the sled carry, the shuttle run, amongst other things. I think the broader question is that when we adopted the Army Combat Fitness Test, we did not necessarily look holistically at what kind of an overhaul of fitness culture in the military looked alike.

And so, to that point, we can't just look at a single physical fitness test as a measure of readiness within our armed forces. We must be better about addressing kind of all pillars of fitness to include things like sleep, nutrition, cognitive, psychological, to your

point, Mr. Chairman, because that is how we are going to create the most lethal fighting force.

Mr. GROTHMAN. How about when we promote people? Does any of this diversity stuff get in the way there?

Ms. MOBBS. So, in terms of if you are talking about specifically physical fitness, so those are used as indicators on report cards, if you will, for NCOs, junior soldiers, officers. That is the case. So, they are utilized in that capacity.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. So, to a degree is it ever possible that somebody would be promoted or not promoted on the margins based on diversity concerns?

Mr. Sadler wants to speak.

Mr. SADLER. Yes, I can weigh in a little bit on that concern and that is, if the emphasis on diversity equates with a quota or some ratio there is an unspoken or there can be an unspoken pressure to actually try to tip the scales in one way or the other, and that is a perception. That is something that is very real, and I would say that to say that it doesn't exist would not—would be a falsehood.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. This woke stuff—when I talk to people who work for big corporations, and I am talking of military people, they all have a low opinion of it. How much are we spending as far as you are concerned with these diversity type bureaucrats? I know we need—you know, there is so many things we need more of in the military to preserve our country. I wonder how much we are spending on these people.

Mr. HUNT. Mr. Chairman, right now the numbers are \$114 million on DEI programs. In some cases, we are paying these DEI bureaucrats over \$200,000 a year which is—

Mr. GROTHMAN. \$200,000 for a diversity person?

Mr. HUNT [continuing]. Tiple the mean of the household income in the United States—the average household income. So, this is a major problem that we are seeing where we are investing all of this money without any data that reflects, A, if it actually works, which we know it doesn't, and, B, whether—what the point is or whether there was any type of underlying data that would necessitate such dramatic increases in the funding of these programs.

Mr. GROTHMAN. I am sure it lowers morale to put up with this stuff. I mean, you like to look up to your commanding officer. You don't like to think that they are a joke.

But in any event, I have used up my time. So, I suppose I will go on to Mr. Garcia.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

A couple of comments and some questions. Let me just, first, just make a couple of notes. I think that there is a lot of conversations and comments about diversity and inclusion programs and diversity in the military, and I think it is important to remember that we have been diversifying our military for decades and so this has been a priority of the United States to have a more inclusive military, a more inclusive force, since the 1960's and 1970's.

And so, this isn't a new thing. This isn't, like, this has just started happening. This has been a critical mission of the U.S. and our military is stronger today because of the focus on inclusion and di-

iversity. And so, I just want to make that very clear. I think it is important to note for the record.

Our military changing and becoming more inclusive has been a very positive thing. Our military reflects the American people. As American people become more diverse and more focused on these issues, so should our institutions and, certainly, our military.

The U.S., of course, has a long history of implementing changes to the military that affect its engagement with a variety of groups. For example, obviously, the integration of women into the military has been critical. The desegregation that happened across our forces has been critical, and the DOD today reports that our 1.3 million active-duty personnel has, of course, greater racial, ethnic, and other—and gender diversity than we have had in the past and from decades in the past.

And so, if you look at just our current force today, 17 percent of our active-duty members are female, 31 percent of our active-duty members identify with a racial minority, and 85 percent of our military officers have a BA or an advanced degree. That is actually higher than any time, even if you look at the last decade.

And so, our military continues to be more reflective of the American people. It continues to get more educated. It continues to include more people. So, if that is a reflection or an outcome of focusing more on diversity and focusing more on inclusion, then I welcome that and I think that is actually positive development as our military continues to grow.

And I wanted to ask General Barno, because you mentioned some of this in your opening comments, how does a educated, racially diverse and gender diverse military actually make us stronger as a military?

General BARNO. I think one of the most important things to recognize, I think everyone on the panel would agree, is that military leadership has to build cohesive teams, that that is a leadership function. It may be the most important thing that leaders do is put together cohesive teams.

The United States has an immense advantage over our adversaries in that we are a very diverse culture. We, since our history began, have been comprised of people from all ethnic groups, all races, all creeds, all colors, men and women.

If you look to the Chinese military and look at the Russian military, you don't see that. They are going to operate at that permanent disadvantage. Our ability to knit teams together that can function well no matter what their educational background, no matter what their race, their religious beliefs are, or their gender that is an incredible advantage the United States has always brought to the battlefield out there. That is going to make us out-think and out-innovate the enemy in any future conflict.

And so, building that cohesion in peacetime and recognizing that there is a way to make these differences into strengths is always something the military has tried to do.

And I would just comment on, briefly, maybe on the Chairman's points. I think we actually have higher standards today in a lot of areas than we had when I came in the Army. We certainly have a higher physical fitness standard.

The new Army combat fitness test is a very, very tough test for men and women both. It is much tougher than what it replaced, and we have also moved in the selection system to doing blind selections, which is far more reflective of equity. Without knowing—you don't know if you are seeing the file—the promotion file of a woman or a man, what they look like. And so, we have actually taken a lot of steps in the last few years—

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, sir, and I completely—I completely agree with that testimony and I thank you for, you know, reinforcing that.

I also want to just note something right now. So today, the GAO released a report on active-duty recruitment and retention challenges and I ask for unanimous consent to put this report in the record. As you can see from the poster behind me, the GAO identifies a number of real factors that affect military recruitment and retention such as commercial sector employment opportunities, medical qualifications, dependent care, and family planning.

Obviously, if we support our men and women in uniform rather than actually trying to score political points, we might actually make some progress on this issue.

These are—there are real challenges we should be focused on, not necessarily the ones that are being brought up today at this hearing.

General Barno, broadly speaking, what actions can the military take to effectively compete for the best and the brightest?

General BARNO. I think the military has got to get out among the American people and become better known than it is today. It is very geographically centered where the bases are in the country. It is very family oriented in terms of militaries being a family business. My father, all three of his brothers, myself, my three brothers, my two children all served in the U.S. military. We can't sustain the AVF on that model. So, we have to get out and see the American people. They have to see what a great military this is.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, sir. And I think just to close, you know, it is interesting we have a more diverse military today. We have more women in the military, of course more people of color in the military. We have a more educated military. Yet, somehow, we are worse off today than we were before. So, I don't understand that. I don't agree with that. I want to thank you all for your testimony.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you.

We will go on to Mr. Sessions.

Mr. SESSIONS. Chairman, thank you very much.

It seems like we have gotten off into equity and diversity and all these other matters. I would like to, if I can, go a little bit higher and go to the challenges of politically driven agendas, because I think politically driven agendas is more to the point rather than whether we are talking about who but what a political agenda is.

I have two questions. I will just throw it open for you, No. 1, to talk about COVID. Why do I talk about COVID? Because my nephew, who could not wait to get into West Point and served United States Army for five years, literally was summarily dismissed from the Army as a United States Captain at the end of his five years because he would not submit himself to the knowledge that 30-

year-old men did not do as well in the COVID experience, and the pandemic was over long before he ever had to make any decision about that. And they dismissed him. They told him his career was done. Thank you very much. Please get out.

Anybody have a comment about that politically driven agenda placed on the military?

Ms. MOBBS. I think in general, sir, we have to be data driven in our armed forces in the Department of Defense, and I think what you just spoke to reflects moving away from data driven science.

What we know is that natural immunity was 2.8 times better in preventing hospitalizations and, in particular, this wasn't a risk for young people and, in particular, the vaccines for males that are young, aged 16 to 29, had a pernicious risk, potentially, of heart myocarditis and other associated risks.

Mr. SESSIONS. That is the way he looked at it.

General BARNO. My dad did. If you come in the military, and we all have served there, the number of shots you get for all kinds of things from yellow fever to diphtheria to, you know, all variety of things—anthrax, in my case, at one point in time—is part and parcel of being in the military.

COVID was something brand new. We didn't have a lot of experience in that. We had over 1.1 million Americans die of that and, I think, depending on when the decision was made, the military made a wise decision to try and vaccinate its people so they didn't have more incidents like USS Theodore Roosevelt having most of its crew gets sick with COVID and have to not be available for deployment.

So, again, I would want to be looking back humble about what we knew when in that environment, and I am not a medical professional, but I can understand the logic of the decisions that were made.

Mr. SESSIONS. Well, perhaps we can, if we were talking about early on that might ring true but not later as we gained more information and learned that the initial things that we learned, in fact, were falsehoods.

I would like to move then to the political agenda of the transgender recruiting. If someone can talk with me about that it. I understand that they are actively recruited.

Tell me what the process for bringing them in, going through bootcamp, and then what that process is including them going through that period of time with this transition.

Anybody?

[No response.]

Mr. SESSIONS. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, please let the record reflect that we are—the people that we have today to offer testimony do not offer any insight as to the trend—gender recruiting, the agenda, the amount of time, and that process, as well as the period of time that these individuals might be unable to serve the United States military, and what requirements would be placed upon them.

So I would like to go next to a politically driven agenda, and that is what I believe is an overall belief and feeling about trying to encourage people to become a different person than what we might need as a warfighter, just the agenda that may be placed upon

them, a discussion that may be placed upon them as—but what we need is our military to be warfighters. Does anyone have an idea about this?

Mr. HUNT?

Mr. HUNT. Absolutely, Congressman. I appreciate the question. It is incredibly important, especially as we look at our threats abroad and what is going on with our adversaries—China, Russia, Iran, North Korea—that our military is focused on developing and training and developing warfighters.

And so, that is why many of us here are concerned about the seeming shift away from the military's core mission in kind of a direction to more political ideas like climate change, the entire robust bureaucracy of DEI that has just exploded in this most recent Presidential administration, and this kind of a distraction from the most important task at hand, which is deterring, fighting, and winning our Nation's wars.

Mr. SESSIONS. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back my time.

Mr. GOLDMAN. Chairman, could I have a point of order?

Could I just ask the gentleman from Texas—were you citing a particular document related to the impact of COVID?

Mr. GROTHMAN. May I ask what the point of order is first?

Mr. GOLDMAN. Just—if he could just submit that document to the record—for the record so we could all see it.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Yes, what is the point of order?

Mr. GOLDMAN. The question is whether he could submit a document that he is citing from to the record.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Yes. That is not a point of order, though.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Chairman?

Mr. GROTHMAN. Yes.

Mr. SESSIONS. I will be very pleased to engage the gentleman. I was not citing anyone. I spoke about the very public information that the President was requiring COVID to be given on an order from the United States military by the Commander in Chief, and I felt like in the beginning, perhaps, that could have sounded true, but as we learned more it diminished and my question was about the diminish—as time moved the diminishment of the need for this and yet they continued their policies.

I thank the gentleman.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. That is enough.

Now, first of all, I would like to ask unanimous consent to enter into the record two documents pertaining to today's hearing: GAO report released today titled entitled, "DOD active-duty recruitment and retention challenges," and a letter signed by myself and other Members—Majority Members of the Committee—from September 22, 2021, asking for documents and communications from the White House on the firing of 18 Trump-appointed military service academy board members.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Let the record reflect that the White House did not respond to our inquiry.

Now we will go on to Mr. Raskin.

Mr. RASKIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Army fell short of its recruitment goals by 15,000 last year. Why has it become more difficult to recruit people into the military?

Here is one theory. Potential recruits are not afraid of going woke. They are afraid of going broke. Pay and benefits are so low that the RAND Corporation estimates that more than a quarter, 26 percent, of our military service members are food insecure, and 14 percent actually use food assistance programs, like food banks, to meet their family needs.

General Barno, how can our military improve the lives of our most junior service members so they don't have to struggle for basic necessities for their families like groceries?

General BARNO. I think the military has done well, over the last 20 years, is increasing the amount of compensation that military members get. But that applies least of all to the most junior members of the force. They come in and are still making a very, very minimal amount of wages.

I can recall actually qualifying for food stamps myself when I was a first lieutenant with my wife and a new baby at one point in time. So, we fixed some of those problems over the years, but we still have a problem for our force that is in the E-1 to E-4 category, the most junior enlisted, and we ought to devote some more attention to making sure that they have a tolerable standard of living, especially if they are married and they, perhaps, have dependents.

Mr. RASKIN. Well, I appreciate that. The Blue Star families which I have been in touch with suggests this is a real problem, not an illusory problem. It would be great if we actually had the Department of Defense here to speak to this question of what we are doing to compensate the newly recruited members of the armed forces.

Ms. Mobbs, in your testimony you cite a recent survey which found that 30 percent of Americans ages 16 to 24 say that the possibility of sexual assault, rape, or sexual harassment is one of the main reasons that they would not consider joining the military, and I would like to submit for the record an article in the *Military Times* that has come out since then titled "The military's sexual assault problem is only getting worse."

Will you elaborate on this point? To what extent do you think this is actually deterring women and men from going into the military?

Ms. MOBBS. Thank you, Congressman. I appreciate the question. I can't speak directly to the totality of the impact on preventing them from serving. I would say that it is clear that our focus on sexual harassment, sexual prevention within the military, those programs have not been as effective as they should have been over the years, which does decline trust in teams, and I would posit that focusing on improving programs like that are a far better use of resources than where some things are currently placed.

Mr. RASKIN. Well, I appreciate that. But a lot of people would say those are precisely the programs that are promoting wokeism. To talk about sexual harassment or sexual assault is actually to try to impose a bar of political correctness, to politicize the Army, to engage in social engineering. What is your response to that?

Ms. MOBBS. I would say that is not the case at all. I think that the military's ultimate function is to build the strongest teams possible and that is what its function should be and that it is regardless of identity, of gender, of race, which is why I do think some of these programs are particularly pernicious when it comes to the DEI overarching frame, which looks at individual characteristics versus building teams broadly.

But to your point, Congressman, I do not think that focusing on sexual harassment or assault prevention is a bad thing. I think it is absolutely critical to build teams that have trust.

Mr. RASKIN. Well, I appreciate that, and I would just like to remark, as the Ranking Member did, that, you know, it has been a historical struggle to desegregate the Army, to let African Americans into the Army, to let women into the Army, to let gay people serve in the Army publicly, and at every point there was a complaint that, oh, this is woke or this is politically correct or this is social engineering or what have you.

In fact, it is the process of democratization and making the Army look like the rest of society and allowing everybody to serve.

Lieutenant General Barno, are there any studies which document the rather extraordinary claim being bandied about today that fear of wokeism, or political correctness or what have you, is actually depressing recruitment to the military?

General BARNO. I am not aware of any studies that actually have any factual data that support that assertion. I also know that at least two service chiefs—the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Berger; and the Chief of Staff at the Air Force, General C.Q. Brown—have both said that, you know, wokeism is not—there is no such thing. It is not affecting military readiness. They have seen—they see no evidence that this is a problem inside their two services, and I think that applies in the recruiting domain as well. But no, in terms of actual evidence, I have not seen that.

Mr. RASKIN. All right. Well, I want to thank all of the witnesses for their testimony and for their service.

And I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you.

On to Mr. Biggs.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

The question for each of you, and I hope you recognize that it is just a real short question, so I will start with you, General.

Who is the biggest geostrategic adversary of the United States today?

General BARNO. I would say, as the National Defense Strategy says, China.

Mr. BIGGS. Mr. Hunt?

Mr. HUNT. China, sir.

Mr. BIGGS. Ms. Mobbs?

Ms. MOBBS. China.

Mr. BIGGS. Mr. Sadler?

Mr. SADLER. China.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you. So, I think maybe you might be surprised to know that our Commander in Chief said in June 2021, that glob-

al warming is our greatest threat. So, it makes one wonder what the priorities of the military are.

So, I am thinking of China with the vax mandate that we placed on our men and women in the military—8,400 active-duty left; 40,000 National Guardsmen left; 22,000 Reservists also left the service.

Do you know whether China placed the same kind of constraints on their military, Mr. Sadler?

Mr. SADLER. Their constraints are different as a communist society. So, if you don't follow the diktat of the Communist Party, you are politically—

Mr. BIGGS. Did they—do they drum you out of the service if you didn't—well, yes, they would. They would drum you out.

Mr. SADLER. They would drum you out for political reasons, yes.

Mr. BIGGS. How about teaching CRT in their military academies?

Mr. SADLER. I think they probably do as it is a neo-Marxist and a Marxist ideology.

Mr. BIGGS. Right. DOD prioritizing climate literacy.

Mr. Hunt, do they do that in China?

Mr. HUNT. I have seen no evidence to suggest that they are highlighting climate readiness.

Mr. BIGGS. How about environmental justice in China?

Mr. HUNT. Not that I am aware of.

Mr. BIGGS. How about any kind of climate goals in China?

Mr. HUNT. Not to my knowledge, Congressman.

Mr. BIGGS. Ms. Mobbs, do you think China requires its Federal defense contractors to comply with ESG and DEI requirements as ours does?

Ms. MOBBS. Not to my awareness, no.

Mr. BIGGS. One thing that was said is that there has been no real study on this and that individual—a couple of individuals were cited by the General that nothing on wokeness really has an impact on—maybe you were limiting it to recruiting. I may be wrong. I don't want to expand—I don't want to say more than you were. So, I think maybe you were limiting it to recruitment. Am I right on that?

General BARNO. No, actually the two service chiefs said that they—as I recollect—this is fairly recent—did not see that wokeism was having any effect on the readiness of their service. They did not see that inside the service.

Mr. BIGGS. I see. I see. In May 2021, Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks said, quote, “Every dollar we spend addressing the effect of climate change is a dollar that we are not putting toward other priorities like meeting the challenge posed by China and modernizing our forces,” close quote.

Additionally, we spent \$87 million just on the Department of Defense Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity. We have also seen Air Force and the Navy paying DEI managers \$180,000 a year. The person that was in charge of the DEI office of DOD at the Pentagon had to be let go for racist statements.

This type of effort, whether it is climate change, whether it is gender equity, whether it is DEI, whether it is ESG mandates, seem to be diverting from military readiness and certainly might have an impact on whether individuals want to join the military.

Ms. Mobbs, your comments, please.

Ms. MOBBS. So, I think anytime that dollars are pulled away from doing operational or tactical training is problematic, broadly speaking. I do think to your point, Congressman, that that level of funding directed specifically to that program is also direct evidence of implementation of a broader agenda regarding diversity, equity, inclusion, that is, in fact, divorced from the original diversity inclusion that was spoken to by the Ranking Member.

That is a drastic shift of what previously was acknowledged as being diversity and inclusion efforts that supported bringing in, kind of, more women or things like—but were not necessarily rooted in the critical race theory ideology that DEI is currently.

Mr. BIGGS. That we are teaching at our military academies. With that I yield back.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Lynch?

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the Ranking Member for holding this hearing. I think it is very important. I had the privilege of chairing this National Security Subcommittee for the past two Congresses during which time we examined several critical issues affecting military recruitment and retention, including multiple CODELs by multiple Members here on this Committee to Fort Hood, Texas.

Fort Hood has historically struggled with a crisis of homicides, suicides, and sexual assaults among troops who are stationed there with 11 homicides and over 50 suicides in the last five years and widespread reports of sexual assault.

Importantly, in 2020, we initiated an extensive oversight investigation following reports of, again, sexual harassment and sexual assault at Fort Hood, an Army installation that has witnessed nearly 30 service member deaths in one year—one single year—including Army Specialist Vanessa Guillen and my constituent, Army Sergeant Elder Fernandes, from the city of Brockton in my district.

Our investigation was followed by the removal and suspension of various members of senior leadership at Fort Hood. Just last year, we conducted robust oversight surrounding the management of the JROTC program, Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps.

This program is instrumental in developing our young people who may be inspired to embark on a life dedicated to military or civilian public service. Regrettably, our investigation found serious gaps in the processes undertaken by DOD and the military services to address allegations of sexual misconduct made against JROTC instructors.

General Barno, would you further discuss the impact of these incidences of sexual assault and other sexual misconduct on recruitment and retention efforts?

General BARNO. I believe there are several surveys out there. I have seen some of them that suggested one of the major deterrents for young Americans signing on to join the U.S. military is a belief that they will be at risk, that they could be male or female sexually assaulted or sexually harassed during their time in uniform and even beyond that, that they have a high chance of becoming injured or traumatically distressed by their time in service.

And so, this is a huge perception out there and as several of the Members have noted, this has not gotten a great deal better in recent years, especially the issues of military sexual assault.

So, I think it is an area where the services need to double down on what they are doing and find out what is causing this. But, again, as with Fort Hood, the leadership aspect of this is a critical component—getting the leadership right.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Lieutenant General, and thank you as well for your service.

As a matter of fact, supporting your testimony, according to the latest military propensity update released by the Department of Defense, 30 percent of DOD youth poll participants indicated that, quote, “The possibility of sexual harassment and assault is the main reason why they would not consider joining the military.”

General Barno, the National Defense Authorization Act, that was enacted by Congress last year and signed by President Biden, included several military justice reforms designed to combat sexual assault and harassment in the military.

Could you discuss the importance of these reforms to establish a culture within our military that alleviates some of the enlistment concerns expressed by our young people who aspire to serve in the military?

General BARNO. This is going to take time for this change to take hold and for it to be publicized among young citizens that are thinking about service.

But it essentially takes, after many years of studying this and evaluating this and initially a lot of opposition from the military, there has been removed from the military chain of command oversight for the investigation and prosecution of felony-level cases such as sexual assault or other felonies, murders, et cetera. So, the commanders themselves are no longer the direct investigators and ultimately the judicial authorities for that.

That is a huge sea change inside the military. We haven’t seen anything like this in my lifetime, and I think it is going to take hold and eventually provide some additional credibility for prosecution of people that are suspected of these offenses.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you.

And last, General Barno, would you agree that it is vital for us to demonstrate to those eager to serve our country in uniform and their families—especially the families—that we do not take the health and safety of our service members lightly?

General BARNO. No, I think that is critical. You know, individual young men and women don’t make these decisions to join by themselves. They rely upon the advice from their family members, their teachers, their coaches, and if they—those older adults in the room don’t perceive the military as safe for these people, they will never recommend they join.

Mr. LYNCH. Right. Thank you, General. I thank all the witnesses. Mr. Chairman, my time has expired, and I yield back.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thanks much.

Mr. FALLON?

Mr. FALLON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank all the witnesses for coming today.

General Barno, do you think the Ukrainian Armed Forces right now are currently conducting sensitivity training?

General BARNO. I have no knowledge of that, but I would be surprised.

Mr. FALLON. Yes, and probably not concerned about pronouns either. Maybe more concerned about the 100,000 casualties they have suffered at the hands of the Russian aggressor, probably more focused on the 20,000-plus civilians that have been indiscriminately murdered by the Russian regime.

And, listen, the military is overburdened. You all know it. We know it. They know it, and, you know, wasting time on valuable, quote/unquote, “training” like sensitivity training, diversity, equity inclusion, I am far more concerned—not concerned about diversity. I am far more concerned about the word talent because when you seek out talent you will get the diversity. We are a very diverse nation.

And as a conservative, we understand that success comes in all shapes, sizes, and shades. I was in the military 30 years ago, and the first thing they did when you get into training—when you finish your training, and you go on active duty—is they talked about the isms and there was zero tolerance for it because this is about culture. There was no room for racism or sexism or nepotism and it was zero tolerance. You can get kicked out.

So, you build a culture over decades and now we see that a lot on the left, in particular, in this Administration, want the military to fight their political wars instead of preparing for an actual real hot fighting war. We had—I am on the Armed Services Committee—we had the Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman sitting in the witness chair and saying that he wanted to understand White rage, and he is White. That is a political statement.

General Barno, do you think that there is a serious problem in today’s military with political extremism?

General BARNO. I think political extremism exists in military as it does in society, and I know that it is not tolerated in the military.

Mr. FALLON. Sir, but do you think it is a serious problem?

General BARNO. It is a very serious problem with any individuals that serve in uniform that believe in those beliefs.

Mr. FALLON. I think there is—one is one too many, but it is clearly not a serious problem because after much pulling of teeth and gnashing, we got some answers that in 2020—do you have any idea how many Army active-duty or Guard or Reservists were separated for military or political extremism?

General BARNO. No, I do not.

Mr. FALLON. It was nine—out of 1.1 million. The Marine Corps out of 222,000 Active and Reserve, it was four. I don’t believe that is a serious problem.

We had the Secretary of Defense stand down the military in a staggered fashion and probably burned at least \$230 million on training to remove—there were nine, four. I mean, there are a couple of dozen. I think that was a terrible waste of taxpayer money.

We can’t meet our recruiting goals and when you start seeing 20,000—my contacts in the Army are saying that we are going to

miss our mark by 20,000 or 30,000 this year. I hope that is not the case.

But you keep doing that year over year, you are not going to have a military. We lose the military, and we are not lethal and we can't deter and we can't project power, we are going to lose this country. It is a massive problem, and when you look at—they do these pulse surveys—that when you combined potential recruits' concerns for wokeism, the way they handled COVID and other recent events, 21 percent didn't even want to serve in the military.

We only have 23 percent of the Americans that can serve. Nine percent are interested in serving and less than one percent do serve. So, I am very concerned about the direction.

I don't want my military to be—I don't want Democratic generals and I don't want Republican generals. Damn it, I want American generals. I don't want to know your politics. We have some that serve like that, and then we have others that are serving political masters and wearing their ideology on their sleeve and then shoving it down the American people's throats.

We do not want that. That is the one thing that unites us, is our military. And I don't want this Administration to deter that very narrow pool to service, because if you grow up not loving this country and believing it is worth fighting for, you are not going to serve. And there is too many people in the political arena that are doing just that.

They are deterring and they are teaching young people, particularly at the universities, that America on balance is a net negative for the world. Always has been, always will be. Unless we follow some socialist Marxist path.

I want to deter North Korea. I want to deter Venezuela. I want to deter Iran, and I especially want to deter and detour Russia and China.

And thank all the witnesses. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Mr. Goldman?

Mr. GOLDMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank all of our witnesses for your service.

My colleague from Texas just mentioned Ukraine's military preparedness in fighting Russian aggression.

General Barno, I would like to know from your vast experience in the military how you believe that the Ukraine military, that is bravely fighting for democracy against Russian aggression, feels when politicians on the far-right express support for Vladimir Putin over Ukraine.

General BARNO. I don't think I can answer that question since I am not part of that force. But I do understand that they model themselves in many ways about—on the U.S. military, that they have been trained, as one of my colleagues here has trained Ukrainians in the past, by American military forces and the American military is the model for the most aspiring armies in the world and the Ukrainians are certainly part of that.

So, I think they admire this force that we are so concerned about here in ways that, perhaps, is greater than some Americans do, as we look at it today.

Mr. GOLDMAN. Mr. Hunt, please define the term woke.

Mr. HUNT. Congressman, I describe it as a loose collection of progressive political ideas that are constantly thrust upon our institutions in the United States.

Mr. GOLDMAN. What progressive ideals? What do you mean thrust upon our institutions?

Mr. HUNT. So, thrust upon our institution. So, Secretary Austin making an unprecedented statement after a Supreme Court decision, having the military weigh in on the most polarizing political issue of our time about abortion.

I would say at my old—at my alma mater, West Point, getting a lecture on Whiteness. When I was there, we weren't getting lectures like that. I don't understand why that is now being a part of the curriculum there.

We have—at the Air Force Academy there are now cadet DEI officials walking around writing up their fellow classmates and, of course, we have the Air Force Academy professor who proudly teaches critical race theory and wrote about it in a very public op-ed in the Washington Post.

So, I think it is fair to say that all these are very kind of political in nature, very—these are ideas that we just—we want our military to be apolitical. We don't want a Democrat military or Republican military. We want an apolitical military focused on their mission to deter, fight, and win our Nation's wars.

Mr. GOLDMAN. That is a long definition, but thank you.

The other the other thing that I think is getting lost here, and I don't think anyone disagrees with you that we would like to have a military that is apolitical and prepared.

General Barno, the question I have for you is, describe for us the benefits of having a diverse military.

General BARNO. As I mentioned earlier, one of the reasons the U.S. military is the envy of other militaries in the world is because of the incredible teams of diverse individuals that we have.

If I go to any other major military they are almost all homogeneous in terms of their racial background, their ethnic background. Few have as many women as we have in the force. So, we bring a lot to the table in terms of thinking around all aspects of a problem, being able to harness that energy and get great synergy about having all those different kinds of people that work together as teams in our military.

That is what every military would like to do, and we can bring in a lot of different thinkers with different backgrounds and experiences that, again, if you are a Russian or you are a—or even a Ukrainian for that matter, certainly a Chinese, you don't have that wealth of diversity to draw upon.

Mr. GOLDMAN. Mr. Sadler, you mentioned in your opening statement the benefits of the Navajo code talkers, and I believe you also referenced the benefits of having women in the military in Afghanistan being able to relate to women, which are clearly benefits of having diversity.

Would you also agree that language accessibility in other countries is also a benefit to the military?

Mr. SADLER. Absolutely. I was a foreign area officer for about eight years or so in the tail end of my career because of my growing up in Asia. So absolutely. That regional language, cultural un-

derstanding, definitely does have a military utility and that really should be part of the focus in forming this discussion about diversity.

Mr. GOLDMAN. Right. Well, in 2022, the DOD released a finding—a report—that found that 12 percent of the military stated that they experienced an unhealthy climate in the military and this group was far more likely to identify as a racial or ethnic minority, a woman, or not heterosexual.

The point of DEI is to make minorities—racial or ethnic minorities or other underrepresented populations feel included, so they do not have to identify as having an unhealthy climate and I think that that point is very lost in much of what your testimony is here today.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you. Just a little bit of housekeeping here. On behalf of Representative Biggs, I ask unanimous consent to submit to the record a series of public reports on military readiness, and also, on behalf of Representative Raskin, I submit to the record papers which he forwarded to the Committee. So unanimous request. So ordered.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Representative Perry?

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank each of you for your service in uniform. We certainly appreciate it. The country does.

I want to talk to you, sir, General Barno.

In your opening statements, you said there was no data and no correlation regarding the description of woke policy, what have you, and the reduction in recruiting that has also been referenced multiple times in this hearing.

Do you have any data at all that you referred to when you say there is no data and no correlation? Do you know of any studies that have been conducted in this regard?

General BARNO. No, my point is that there is no data that says that there is a correlation between wokeness and recruiting. So, I can't document data that there is no data.

Mr. PERRY. So, I agree with you, right. It is hard to quantify, I think, for a lot of people, but you certainly can't say that there is no correlation if there is no data. There could be a correlation. Just because you don't have the data, or we don't have the data, doesn't mean there is no correlation. It just doesn't—it just means you don't have any.

General BARNO. We don't have any evidence that says that is a more accurate way to say that I think.

Mr. PERRY. Right. Right. You have got a long and storied career in the U.S. Army serving commands at all levels and you talked about eligibility and propensity. When did—for instance, when did eligibility change? When did it go to 30 percent? Do you know? Were you still serving in uniform?

General BARNO. I think it has been that way for over a decade. So, probably yes.

Mr. PERRY. OK. I would agree with you. I would agree, because I have heard that issue for some time, and I was serving during that last decade so I would agree with you. So, if it has been over a decade that we have had an eligibility, if not a propensity prob-

lem—an eligibility problem, how do you explain that is the worst now since 1973? So, this has been going on a long time. 25 percent in the Army—you are in my alma mater, right, our branch of the service. How do you explain the lack of ability to recruit? 15,000 short. If the eligibility has generally remained the same? What has changed if that hasn't changed?

General BARNO. One of the points—and I would like, I think, to submit an article that we wrote here a couple weeks ago on military recruiting for the record, but it specifies in there the drop from 30 to 23 percent last year is a huge drop.

Mr. PERRY. Yes. Can you attribute it all to that seven percent drop?

General BARNO. That is a significant factor in terms of the number of people that are out there.

Mr. PERRY. I understand you. Significant. But can you positively attribute it to that? Does your—

General BARNO. Attribute what, the lack of numbers last year?

Mr. PERRY. The lack of recruiting. Yes.

General BARNO. I think that is part of the answer to last year.

Mr. PERRY. How much? How much?

General BARNO. I don't know.

Mr. PERRY. Yes. I think that is the point.

General BARNO. I think if you have fewer people that can actually serve—

Mr. PERRY. Yes, absolutely.

General BARNO [continuing]. Logically then you are going to have a more difficult time recruiting.

Mr. PERRY. Absolutely. Absolutely. I think—I think that the Army, the military, the uniformed services, should focus generally on two things. I will just ask for each—lethality and readiness, those two things.

Any disagreement Mr. Sadler? Dr. Mobbs? Mr. Hunt? Sir?

General BARNO. I don't disagree.

Mr. PERRY. OK. So, with that, because you served at all levels, did you always have enough time to train to proficiency in all the warfighting functions required for your units to be effective?

General BARNO. I think no one has enough time to train to the perfect level.

Mr. PERRY. I completely agree. So, how much time is appropriate to train on things like DEI, climate change, Whiteness or CRT? How much time did you want your service members to sit there and endure that?

General BARNO. I want to make sure my teams work and if my teams are composed of diverse individuals, I want to make sure we understand how to work together.

Mr. PERRY. Yes, I get it. I agree with you. So, when you joined, and when I joined, I served with people from Texas or New York. I served with women. I served with men—Black men, White men, Asian men, Catholic, Jewish.

You know what we all did? We all got the same haircut. We put the same hat on. We shined our boots the same way. We used the same weapon. If that worked for all your career and all of my career, and it did, diversity of thought, diversity of background, diver-

sity of capability, diversity in every single way, and it worked. Did it work when you were in command?

General BARNO. As I mentioned, I started receiving diversity training when I was a plebe at West Point. So, we have done this for 30 years of my career and beyond.

Mr. PERRY. Right. Right. Was it to the extent that it is now when you were a plebe at West Point?

General BARNO. I think it may be because the Army was suffering immense problems with race relations—

Mr. PERRY. So, throughout your career you kept revisiting it at the same level it is being imposed now.

General BARNO. I don't—I can't actually measure it year to year, but it was certainly a significant part of my career.

Mr. PERRY. Well, it wasn't a significant part of mine because we knew what the right thing was, and our focus was on the lethality and readiness. We knew who was going to get the job done. We knew we were from diverse backgrounds.

It didn't matter, because we were focused on the mission, sir, and the mission for commanders for the military is lethality and our mission as leaders is lethality and readiness to make sure we are prepared and anything that focuses on anything other than that is a waste of our time, sir.

I yield back.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Frost?

Mr. FROST. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses for being here.

I come from a military family. My father was in the Air Force, was actually in the Air Force band, I think one of the greatest recruitment tools. My grandfather was a First Sergeant. I wanted to join the Air Force after I watched "A Few Good Men", but found out I couldn't because of my asthma. So, I joined America's best kept secret, the Civil Air Patrol, and, you know, that was all I could do.

But either way, you know, we have had many, many hearings on this Committee. I feel like we are getting to a place where we are valuing—not me, but our friends on the other side of the aisle—valuing quantity over quality, because as I hear a lot of the lines of questioning coming from my colleagues, they are just ridiculous, wild. They are not founded on facts.

I mean, No. 1, this hearing is about the military and instead we just heard one of my colleagues disrespect retired Lieutenant General Barno here, lecturing him on what military readiness is.

Another colleague went on a wild rant about China—asking you each about China and what they are doing with their military and his line of questioning to me sounded like he thinks the U.S. military should act more like the Chinese military and I just wonder if he actually believes that.

And then we also have wild questions about transgender folks in the military and I just—you know, from one of my colleagues in talking—when we are talking about problems about recruitment and retention, I am not sure telling transgender soldiers that they don't belong in the military or that they are not fit to serve is the right thing to do when we talk about recruitment and retention.

I am here to find solutions rooted in facts. It has been stated time and time again no data shows that DEI or woke or whatever impacts recruitment, retention, and/or confidence in the military in a big way and I think it is really important to know that these efforts, when we talk about diversity, equity, and inclusion, and they have been under many names, have been part of the U.S. military ever since the draft was abolished in 1973 and these efforts traditionally have been supported by both Democrats and Republicans in Congress.

But I think because now we are seeing that the politics is kind of shifting and I guess woke is part of the Republican talking points now, we are having a hearing on this.

I even heard somebody bring—up one of the witnesses—an unspoken rule on pressures of promotions can be based on quotas or DEI or et cetera. I think it is important to know 76 percent of active-duty officers in the U.S. military right now are White.

And so, I just—I highly doubt that there is an unspoken pressure that is pushing people to promote based on DEI, race, or et cetera. Our military has about 1.3 million active personnel. However, women recruits continue to climb. Men still make up 82 percent of our military.

I think it is important to know that recent surveys have found that an estimate 21 percent of women in the military and about four percent of men have experienced unwanted sexual contact in the prior year.

Mr. Sadler, would you say that staggering numbers like that might, just might, contribute to some of the lapse in recruitment we have seen?

Mr. SADLER. Well, I think you have to also put it in the context of the Nation because the military is a part of the American society.

Mr. FROST. But do you think that is part of the numbers we are seeing in recruitment going down?

Mr. SADLER. It is one of the parts, but it is not a new part.

Mr. FROST. OK. Thank you so much.

General Barno—yes, it is not new. Sexual harassment has been around. What we are seeing that, when we talk about these programs, we are looking to bring those numbers down and I think we also have to look at the way that our military personnel live and that is a huge reason why we are seeing lapse in recruitment.

General Barno, 15 years ago, the U.S. Army established SHARP, a program to combat sexual assault in the ranks. Former Secretary of the Army, Ryan McCarthy, said it is clear we have significant work to do to regain our soldiers' trust in our sexual harassment and assault response. What additional steps do you think the military can take to accomplish this?

General BARNO. I think the U.S. Army who has the SHARP program has been dissatisfied with the results of that. Certainly, we haven't seen the numbers go down and I know that is a concern for all military leaders out there.

My own exploration into that, having two sons on active duty during part of that time, is that I don't think the chain of command owned that program as much as they needed to, to make a difference. I think it became a program where, as with other pro-

grams, implementation of the program is a problem. The idea of the goals are laudable, but the implementation needed to be focused on the chain of command making that case to their soldiers and I don't think that is how it was set up.

Mr. FROST. Thank you for your response. And while the military is moving in the right direction on this, there—with these modest improvements there is a lot more that needs to be done. I mean, it wasn't enough to save people like Private Nicole Burnham, who was sexually assaulted twice shortly after being stationed in South Korea and took her own life after her command did nothing. This is not an issue of wokeness. We are talking about the women in our military that are serving our country, defending our freedom, that deserve to not be assaulted in the workplace. And we, as Members of Congress, need to look at how are we protecting them, how are we ensuring that the quality of life for our service members are better than it is right now.

And I want to ask, while we are here talking about wokeness, where is the outrage on ensuring that we can raise wages of military members? Seventy-four percent of our military budget goes toward contractors. Why are we not talking about that?

Why are we not talking about what happened just last week on this Committee in this room where my friends on the other side of the aisle were gunning and going for telework, which military spouses disproportionately use to help support their household because the wages are not where it needs to be?

So, this is about politics, not about policy. It is not about things rooted in facts and the facts show—well, there is no data that shows that wokeness is a part of the problems we are seeing in terms of recruitment.

Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. Next, we have Mr. Higgins.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, a gradual emasculation of our country has been happening for decades, so the modern progressive woke movement is not completely to blame. But, we seek truth in this Committee, so let us talk about it and the first truth I will acknowledge is my deep respect for General Scott Perry, a combat veteran who has earned the right to ask his fellow combat veteran anything he wants to ask him on this Committee.

I joined the Army in 1988, went through bootcamp in 1989, Military Police Academy right after. One station unit training at Fort McClellan. I didn't join for money. I left money to serve my country. That is why most young soldiers, with the encouragement of their family, which I will get to in a moment, that is why most young soldiers join the Army.

In society, woke is a social discussion, but in the military, woke is weak and that is the problem. In the 1990's, I recall a recruiter friend. He called me. He said, Clay, most of these youngsters we are trying to sign-up by now they never been in a fistfight. It was an issue.

The Army had to make adjustments. Said these kids have never climbed a tree, never been in a fistfight. So, this thing has been gradual for a long time. To not acknowledge that is not squared away. That was the 1990's. On March the 1st of this year, I was

struck looking at the front page at Epoch Times. It says almost 80 percent of Americans aged 17 to 24 aren't fit for military service.

Department of Defense reports that 77 percent of young Americans physically unqualified to enter the Army—enter the military. Unbelievable. And I was researching at that time, the Secretary of the Navy, for a meeting with him.

Same day, from his website and the Epoch Times, same day. The most pressing challenges confronted in the United States Navy and Marine Corps three of the top four: climate instability, COVID's ongoing impact, and strengthening the naval culture of inclusiveness and respect.

Not readiness and lethality, as this highly qualified combat commanding general noted earlier. Climate change, and diversity, and COVID, three of the top four concerns of our United States Navy right now.

Since the United States ended the draft in 1973, young adults from southern states have been over-represented among new military recruits. No other region experienced as wide a disparity in military representation versus population. This way it works.

Southern states have been providing the bulk of our military recruits for a long time, and what is happening now is families are holding our youngsters back, General. Families are saying don't join.

You are right. I cite your own words, good sir. During the first years in recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, many military experts worried that the constant deployments would break the force since they expected that fewer young Americans would volunteer to serve in a wartime military.

Thankfully, that didn't happen. Yet, a perilous recruiting crisis began just after the United States fully withdrew from Afghanistan last summer when Biden was the President, when woke began in the military. We had young American families willing to go and join the military during heavy warfare. These are your words, General, an article you wrote.

So, warfare didn't stop young Americans and American families from joining the Army but woke has because we are southern families, we are conservative families, and we are not going to encourage our young men and women to join and endure that stuff. I would like to have five hours with these folks, Mr. Chairman, but it appears my southern drawl has absorbed my five minutes here.

Mr. GROTHMAN. All right. Somebody ought to do a study and see if the same speech was read by someone in the north, how—.

But in any event, Congressman Gosar?

Mr. GOSAR. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Today's military leadership has become the world's laughingstock, more concerned about appeasing the left-wing ideologues than about having the world's most lethal fighting forces. Eight-thousand-four-hundred members of our military were kicked out because they refused an ineffective, harmful, and deadly vaccine. The U.S. military is permitting the recruitment of mentally troubled people who think they were born in the wrong gender and is even paying for their sex change surgeries and harmful chemical infusions.

The Navy is hosting drag shows on their ships. By the way, I don't think China and Iran are too worried about diversity and gender ideology.

Military schools are focused on describing oral sex, masturbation, and pornography in books too disgusting to mention out loud in this Committee room. Lloyd Austin, the Secretary of Defense issued, quote, "a stand down" of the entire military in 2021 because he falsely believed the military is systematically racist. What an insult to our brave men and women.

General Milley, instead of fulfilling his constitutional duty to serve Donald Trump, the duly elected President at the time, representing the voice of the American people, conspired with both Nancy Pelosi and a foreign adversary, the CCP, on separate occasions, to hatch plans to overthrow the sitting President of the United States. What insurrection, you say?

The point of all these actions is clear. Cleanse the military of conservatives and the consequences are devastating. Recruitment is down. Morale is down. Our enemies are emboldened. It needs to stop.

Mr. Sadler and Mr. Hunt, in what ways does graphically describing oral sex, masturbation, and pornography in military school children's schoolbooks help military families?

Mr. SADLER. I can't think of any circumstance that it would.

Mr. GOSAR. Mr. Hunt?

Mr. HUNT. I doesn't.

Mr. GOSAR. How does paying for sex change surgeries and chemical infusions ensure military readiness?

Mr. Sadler?

Mr. SADLER. It doesn't, and in fact that is a distraction and from resources and time of a service member and they should be serving. They would have to be in medical and psychological care before going back to active duty. So absolutely not.

Mr. GOSAR. Mr. Hunt?

Mr. HUNT. I think it is an embarrassment for our Department of Defense.

Mr. GOSAR. So, how has Lloyd Austin's stand down due to the imagined White supremacy improve military readiness? Can you think of anything, Mr. Sadler?

Mr. SADLER. I think it was completely and wholly unnecessary. When you look at the figures before, during, and after the events of January 6, which was the trigger for supposed—this event, none of the facts bear reason for his action and it hasn't changed anything. In fact, the data collection has gotten a little better, but it still needs to go—little further to get better in the annual reports from DOD. But there is no seeming—no statistical change.

Mr. GOSAR. Mr. Hunt?

Mr. HUNT. Absolutely I agree with my colleague here. There is there is no statistical change. If you look at the numbers this year, they looked at it and said there might be 100 cases of supposed extremism, and that is out of 2.1 million people in armed forces. That is .005 percent of our military are supposed extremists. But yet, our Secretary of Defense shut down the military for that reason.

Mr. GOSAR. It is crazy. So, now, how does throwing out thousands of soldiers for refusing to take a deadly experimental vaccine

that led to over 20,000 deaths and over a million injuries affect morale, not just statistics up to the date? How would that affect the morale?

Mr. HUNT?

Mr. HUNT. I think it would absolutely destroy morale in a lot of units in our military.

Mr. GOSAR. Would you agree, Mr. Sadler?

Mr. SADLER. I think the way in which it was executed was definitely lacking. The military has a history of this with anthrax. But if it is a lawful military order, you have to take the vaccine, unfortunately. How they actually dealt with religious exceptions and other follow-up and the way that they drummed people out that, I think, needs to be reviewed and probably rectified.

Mr. GOSAR. Continuing on that line of questioning, do you support—and looking back at these individuals that were excused from or forced out of the military—they weren't excused—to be able to become back fully pensioned?

Mr. SADLER. Absolutely. I think they should have their situations reviewed.

Mr. GOSAR. Do you agree with that, Mr. Hunt?

Mr. HUNT. I do absolutely.

Mr. GOSAR. Got you. What kind of message does General Milley's communications with Nancy Pelosi and the CCP behind President Trump's back send to rank and file military members?

Mr. Sadler?

Mr. SADLER. It sends a politicized one, quite frankly, and simply put.

Mr. GOSAR. Does it belong in the military?

Mr. SADLER. Absolutely not, not for uniformed military leaders.

Mr. GOSAR. Who is the commander in chief?

Mr. SADLER. The President.

Mr. GOSAR. Mr. Hunt?

Mr. HUNT. I think it sends a message that our senior DOD officials seem to be more focused on political—pet projects than actually the insurance of readiness in our force.

Mr. GOSAR. Last question. Should they be held accountable?

Mr. Sadler?

Mr. SADLER. Absolutely.

Mr. GOSAR. Mr. Hunt?

Mr. HUNT. Absolutely.

Mr. GOSAR. Thank you. I yield.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you. Mr. Armstrong?

Mr. ARMSTRONG. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Like the rest of my Republican colleagues, I am concerned that politics is getting in the way of our military carrying out its vital mission. The Department of Defense, on its own website states, "Our mission is to provide the military forces needed to deter war and ensure our Nation's security."

To me, that is a very clear mission statement. But this Administration has pulled out of thin air requirements that have nothing to do with the stated military mission.

For example, in 2021, President Biden issued a pair of executive orders demanding that our military tackle the climate crisis as an

essential element of national security and address the impacts of climate change by developing a Climate Action Plan.

This led to the military leaning into environmental justice, changing all nontactical vehicles to electric by 2035, and the GSA proposing new emission standards for Federal contractors.

In that list, I heard absolutely nothing that prepares our troops to deter war and ensure our Nation's security. Instead, perhaps our Democratic colleagues would like us to look like the shining example of climate virtuosity, China.

China was responsible for 26 percent of the global emissions in 2019. The People's Republic of China now has the world's largest solar energy capacity.

Moreover, the International Energy Agency states that China's share in all key manufacturing stages of solar panels exceeds 80 percent. Sounds like China is making great strides toward clean energy. But this is built on the backs of the Uighurs, a Muslim minority population that China is desperately trying to eradicate by forcing them into reeducation camps and slave labor.

The United States Department of Labor estimates that up to 45 percent of the material used to manufacture solar panels comes from the province in which the Uighurs reside. How can clean energy truly be clean when it is built on the backs of slave labor?

And while China is using slave labor to fool my Democratic colleagues into believing they are a paragon of climate change, the Administration is running around in circles attempting to catch up with these false statistics rather than relying on what is actually necessary for our military to succeed.

I support any energy policy that lowers costs of energy for Americans and, similarly, I support any energy policy that helps our military fulfill its mission to deter war.

I do not see that at all in these progressive policies in our Nation's fighting force.

Mr. Hunt, DOD policies mandated that all military nontactical vehicles transition to electric vehicles by 2035. Electric vehicles rely on lithium ion batteries. The International Energy Agency states that today's battery and mineral supply chains revolves around China.

China produces three-quarters of the lithium ion batteries and is home to 70 percent of production capacity cathodes and 85 percent of anodes. Over half of the world's lithium cobalt graphite processing and refining capacity is located in China.

Do you think it is in the best interest of American national security be so reliant on China for sourcing lithium ion batteries that are essential for electric vehicles Democrats are demanding our military rely on?

Mr. HUNT. No, I do not.

Mr. ARMSTRONG. Mr. Sadler, this summer I joined my Republican Energy and Commerce Committee colleagues in sending a letter to EPA Administrator asking for information on potential blackouts and grid instability.

Like the military, California announced that all new cars sold must be electric by 2035. Yet, just two days later, California's electric grid was in crisis and officials were asking citizens not to charge their electric vehicles. If California cannot handle its cur-

rent electric demands, I fail to see how it will thrive when so many new electric vehicles enter the market. Do you have any concerns about converting all nontactical military vehicles to electric by 2035?

Mr. SADLER. Actually, I have two concerns with this.

One, if the military—

Mr. ARMSTRONG. Just two? Because I have more.

Mr. SADLER. Two big ones to mention on this particular topic. One, if there is a war that occurs with China it is going to rely on military footprint that is in the West Coast, California, obviously, home to a lot of these bases.

If their infrastructure and logistics can't support military operations or the military can't have access to reliable energy, then that has a tactical impact on a war that could occur this decade.

The second thing is, if you have a platform that is only reliable on an electrical source and you don't have multiple ways of providing that electrical energy, either solar, out in the field, as well as maybe a diesel generator located from place to place, you hamstring your operational resiliency.

And so, therefore, it comes with a tactical cost, and I think right now the intent is just in the United States that mitigates only on that second point, but not on the first if we get into a fight with China.

Mr. ARMSTRONG. Ms. Mobbs, last week a headline on Defense One read wokeism is not an issue top military leaders say. The byline read inclusion is actually a critical part of unit cohesion, Air Force Chief and Marine Commandant said.

Air Force Chief of Staff General C.Q. Brown and Marine Commandant General David Berger gave exclusive interviews to Defense One on the topic of this hearing.

How do you refute their claims both as a former service member and an expert on the issue?

Ms. MOBBS. Do I have time to respond?

Mr. ARMSTRONG. I am toward the end, so I am assuming yes, but I am not in charge.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Oh, yes. Sure. Sure. Absolutely.

Ms. MOBBS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Congressman, I think it is a very important question because I think ultimately what we are seeing here right now is the use of language to try to dissuade or dismiss some very real concerns about what DEI looks like, what diversity, equity, inclusion looks like in its current form. And the reality is, actually there is data that suggests that woke practices are impacting recruitment and retention. That does need to be answered.

For example, the reason why the Reagan National Survey found a major decrease in confidence in the military was 30 percent cited woke practices undermine military effectiveness. That data does exist. Secondly, the Monitoring the Future survey, which has measured representative samples nationally of 12th graders since 1975, found, in fact, that the biggest decrease was among Democratic White men.

In 2018, 18 percent of them expressed a desire to serve in the military. That is now only 2.9 percent. So, that is a precipitous drop in a specific population receiving messages around what the

military looks like with regard to things like diversity, equity, inclusion. And I think it is very important we begin talking about that, not in this kind of necessarily broad woke framework, but what the data actually shows in terms of how that impacts desire to serve and propensity to want to serve our Nation.

Mr. ARMSTRONG. Thank you. Thank you. I should have talked less and let you talk more. I apologize. I yield back.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Very good. Mr. LaTurner?

Mr. LATURNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you all for being here today.

It is a time of significant geopolitical upheaval. The fog of war hovers over Ukraine, communist China is increasing their aggression, and individuals on the terrorist watch list are slipping into our country through our porous southern border.

Alarming, given this context, I have received numerous complaints from enlisted members of our military regarding the waste of valuable time and capital on frivolous matters like affirmational pronoun training and subject matter adjacent to critical race theory.

The Biden Administration is prioritizing short-term political gains over our long-term national security. One of Congress' foremost duties is ensuring our brave servicemen and women have the resources that they need to defend America's interests at home and abroad.

America's combat readiness is incumbent upon our troops' ability to fight alongside one another as a cohesive unit under one flag, regardless of demographic or creed. If service members are taught to view one another with suspicion on account of their upbringing or come to believe they are fighting on behalf of a country built upon inherently flawed principles, America's military strength will continue to be undermined.

Forcing progressive ideology on our service members threatens to degrade the morale, camaraderie, and effectiveness of our armed forces.

It is also important to note that American taxpayers are unknowingly subsidizing this divisive rhetoric. Recruiting shortfalls and the relaxation of physical standards have become a feature of the Biden Administration DOD agenda. I have long been a proponent of big stick ideology, but deterrence through militaristic strength doesn't work while we are wielding a twig.

Mr. Sadler, your colleagues at the Heritage Foundation, Travis Fisher and Maya Clarke, have recently written about a proposed change by the Biden Administration to the Federal Acquisition Regulations I find deeply concerning.

This pending rulemaking would force arbitrary greenhouse gas emission standards, as determined by the Paris Climate Accord, upon the Department of Defense and other major Federal suppliers and contractors. Not only would this weekend our defense industrial base and materials procurement capabilities, but it would take approximately \$4 billion to implement this asinine rule. You could purchase 42 F-35 fighter jets for that sum.

In your opinion, is there something else DOD contractors should be prioritizing over their greenhouse gas emissions?

Mr. SADLER. Quite a long list, actually. If we are hamstrung by resources and budgets, leveling more requirements and more cost on an already overly constrained budget and resourcing to build the military needed, and also have contractors provide the supplies we need, it is the wrong direction and, in fact, at a dangerous time.

What would be better would be to look at what the military requirements—look at what the services need in capability and capacity and readiness and fund to that.

Transitioning to a green energy or transitioning into new regulations to try to meet a Paris Accord requirement distract from that, and we—certainly in a time when we don't have the resources for it.

Mr. LATURNER. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you. I think we have got everybody here. I would like to yield to Ranking Member Garcia one more time. He has got some closing remarks.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to just begin just by reading a couple consented following items into the record: an article by General Barno on addressing the recruiting crisis, also a previous article by General Barno and Dr. Benson Hill on the curse of racism in the military, a statement from Ms. Kathy Watt Bouquet of Blue Star Families as well. So, if I can put those into the record before I make my comments.

Mr. GARCIA. We have heard a lot of testimony today, some of it, quite frankly harmful. Much of the comments that we heard today I think we would have heard at hearings and congressional hearings in the 1960's, the 1970's, the 1980's and some in the 1990's.

Now, our military is drawn from our incredible people, reflects our ideals and its diversity. Our military will continue to change as does our country.

I also want to address this idea that it has been said over and over again that the military is being used by the woke left for some sort of social engineering agenda.

Was it woke for President Truman to desegregate the armed forces in 1948? During the Vietnam War, we saw racial tensions between Black Americans and Black servicemen and White servicemen.

Was it woke then to address those issues for Black servicemen? Was it woke when we finally allowed gay men and women to serve openly in the military? Was it woke when we currently try to protect service members from rape or sexual assault?

So, each of those policies at the time were considered by many progressives, traditionalists, and the right-wing as a version of woke, or a version too far, or too diverse or too inclusive.

And so, I think that we are just hearing the same thing over again. As we note, the military continues to be the best in the world, and we all continue to support that mission.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you very much.

First of all, so ordered on the paper you have there.

I would like to thank you all for being here today. I wish we could go another couple hours, because there were some questions there at the end that I thought the answers were so very good and

I think it is too bad some of our guys only got four minutes or five minutes to question.

It is scary what you are telling us, which is kind of in line with what I have heard from talking to people in the military. I don't know whether Lieutenant General Barno knows it, but anywhere in the real world with this pronoun training is considered kind of embarrassing and foolish. I am disappointed to see we have some of that in our military.

I think lowering physical standards is a scary thing. There are reasons the standards were there in the first place and our goal should be to be, as Mr. Perry said, a lethal fighting force, not one excessively concerned with bean counting.

I think when you get over concerned with this diversity stuff, as Mr. Sadler said, there is always concerns that promotions will be made, not on the base of the best person to give us the best fighting force, but to make the form look the best.

It is shocking to me that we pay people over \$200,000 a year to do this diversity training. I mean, these people almost by definition when they get a major in something like this are inundated in their head with this idea that we have a horrible racist America and we have to do something about it.

So, I think they would be overpaid for free. The fact that they are paid \$200,000 when we are short of money in our military makes it all the more scandalous and it is scary that people at the top of the military apparently have such warped thinking, that they think it is a good expenditure of funds.

But in any event, I am glad you were here today. If you have any more to give our Committee, please give us more. It was a great hearing and a lot of people sure missed it—missed out on it—all the empty seats we have behind you guys.

But, again, thank you for being here one more time and, hopefully, Congress will do what we can to do what the average fighting man and woman wants and stand up to—as the corporate world has to put up with—stand up to some of the woke people who somehow have gotten themselves to the top.

I suppose, you know, there are just—there is a certain type of person both in the corporate world and the military that seems to work their way to the top and it is a shame and I think that is what we were educated on today.

So, thank you one more time and with that and without objection, all Members have five legislative days within which to submit materials and submit additional written questions for the witnesses, which will be forwarded to the witnesses for their response.

If there is no further business, without objection, the Subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:16 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

