

Patrick Host

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Sent: Thursday, March 30, 2017 9:50 AM
To: Bryant, Benjamin (Reed)
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Subject: Opening Statement by Ranking Member Reed at SASC Hearing on Nomination of Heather A. Wilson to be Secretary of the Air Force

**OPENING STATEMENT OF U.S. SENATOR JACK REED
RANKING MEMBER, SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**Room SD-G50
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Thursday, March 30, 2017**

To consider the nomination of the Honorable Heather A. Wilson to be Secretary of the Air Force

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Mr. Chairman, thank you. I appreciate Dr. Wilson's willingness to serve the nation and to appear before this Committee as the nominee for the Secretary of the Air Force.

There is no doubt that Dr. Wilson has many of the necessary qualifications to serve in this position. She is a graduate United States Air Force Academy, a Rhodes Scholar, a former member of the National Security Staff of President George H.W. Bush, and a former member of the House of Representatives who served on the House Armed Services and Intelligence Committees.

However, it is incumbent upon this Committee to address some questions that have been raised regarding Dr. Wilson's nomination. Failure to do so is an abdication of our oversight responsibilities and a disservice to the airmen and civilians that Dr. Wilson will lead if she is confirmed.

First, Heather Wilson & Company, LLC, founded by Dr. Wilson following her tenure in Congress, had contracts with four National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) laboratories – Sandia National Laboratories, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and the Nevada National Security Site. From January 2009 through part of 2011, Dr. Wilson's company received \$464,000 in payments from these laboratories for consulting services.

However, due to claims of contracting irregularities involving her company, the Department of Energy Inspector General conducted two investigations into this matter. As a result, the contractors who operated the laboratories on behalf of the government paid back at least \$442,877 to the Department of Energy with respect to payments made to Dr. Wilson's company. The rationale for the repayments was the absence of any appreciable evidence of work product. Furthermore, Lockheed Martin, which operated Sandia National Laboratories, agreed to an overall settlement of \$4.7 million for their management failures.

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

Second, in October 2006, Dr. Wilson contacted a sitting U.S. Attorney, David C. Iglesias, regarding the status of federal corruption cases in New Mexico while she served as a Member of the House of Representatives. As a former Member of the House myself, I have concerns about this action in terms of House ethics rules, and the possibility a federal prosecutor may have felt pressured by Congress in an ongoing investigation.

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

Thank you.

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