



**To: WSW Clients**  
**FROM: WSW Team**  
**DATE:** January 12, 2017

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On January 12, 2017, the Senate Armed Services Committee held a hearing on the nomination of General James Mattis to be Secretary of Defense.

**HIGHLIGHTS/KEY POINTS:**

Because Gen. Mattis served in the military so recently, he needs a waiver to be confirmed as Secretary of Defense. Several Democrats on the committee expressed concern about granting such a waiver.

There was also significant discussion about the United States' relationship with Russia, and whether Mattis would take a strong stance against President Putin.

**NOMINEE INFORMATION & LINK TO TESTIMONY**

[Chairman John McCain's Opening Statement](#)

[Ranking Member Jack Reed's Opening Statement](#)

[Gen. James Mattis' Testimony](#)

**MEMBER INTERESTS**

- Senator Wicker asked about the crossover of Defense and Foreign Policy positions concerning Israel.
  - Gen Mattis: Israel is the only real democracy in the Middle East. The US must promote peace and resolution in the region including working with the Arab countries.
- Senator Wicker asked if China, as a rising power, was seen as a threat.
  - Gen Mattis replied that competition must be managed through engagement: diplomatic, strategic alliances, economics, as well as military power.
- Shaheen: On Energy, will you continue to pursue sources of alternative fuels to power out military.
  - Gen. Mattis: yes
  - Shaheen: Do you see Russia as a continuing threat to the US? Do you support continued NATO and transatlantic alliances? What about Trump's comments?
  - Gen Mattis: Yes. We need allies to thrive. I have spoken to the PEOTUS on this issue and he is open to my position.

- Shaheen: Do you support adequate levels of force structure for the National Guard and Reserves.
- Gen. Mattis: Our Military Capability has shrunk to insufficient levels. NG and Reserves are our backbone and must stand at a high state of readiness.
- Fischer: Do you support the modernization of TRIAD? The bomber, submarines and ICBM force?
  - Gen. Mattis: Yes. ICBM force in particular as a cost imposing strategy on our adversaries. They are of great deterrent value.
  - Fischer: What is the state of our cyberspace deterrence policy?
  - Gen. Mattis: Incomplete. This needs to be a coordinated effort among many government agencies to clearly define consequences and costs. We need to set boundaries and be clear. “We must not stumble into war.”
- Gillibrand questioned General Mattis about any intention to reverse the decision to allow women to serve on combat positions especially in light of his previously stated opposition to the policy.
  - Gen Mattis replied that he had no plan to oppose women serving in any role in the military and he will focus on training all military leaders to lead all service members appropriately.
- Senator Cotton asked Gen Mattis if he supported continuation of the Columbia class submarine, the B21 bomber, GBSD and cruise missiles.
  - Gen Mattis replied that he did support them.
  - Sen Cotton asked Gen Mattis about his personal priorities for DoD.
  - Gen Mattis named strengthening the capacity of the military forces and improving lethality, building relationships with allies, and getting business practices under control. He added that the last task may require its own Assistant Secretary.
- Senator Blumenthal expressed his concern about granting a waiver as it may set a precedent; but conceded that Gen Mattis’s case was the best for him to consider as a backstop and reflection to the real consequences of war.
  - Senator Blumenthal also expressed interest in suicide prevention and those service members suffering from PTSD when dishonorably discharged.
  - Senator Blumenthal also inquired about a Columbia class replacement, a 2 year continuance for a Virginia class attack submarine and the importance of the F-35 to Israel.
- Senator Rounds asked Gen. Mattis to explain how he would provide guidance as a civilian as opposed to a military leader. He also asked about sequestration and if should be rescinded for the defense budget. Specifically, should defense spending be treated equally with discretionary non-defense spending?
- Senator Hirono asked the General if he thought if women and LBGTQ persons were capable of being in a lethal force.
  - Gen Mattis: Yes.

- Senator Hirono also asked about US commitment to Indo-Asia/Pacific presence. She also asked if the area needed a NATO equivalent.
- Gen Mattis affirmed his commitment and felt that the relationships were strong enough that a NATO parallel in the region was not necessary.
- Sen. Ernst mentioned her support for the National Guard/Reserve Forces, addressing sexual assault in the military as well as getting rid of wasteful spending. She also asked for a commitment to update military issue small arms.
  - Gen Mattis agreed that they needed to be updated but was not current on the most recent developments.
  - Finally she asked that DoD focus on ISIS in SE Asia as well as in the Middle East. Gen Mattis felt that a strong blow to ISIS in the Middle East was needed as part of a larger global strategy.
- Sen. Heinrich expressed his support for civilian control of the military led with a calm temperament and sound policy in light of the incoming White House. He also asked the General if he saw the role of the National Labs as a deterrent to our enemies.
- Senator Tillis expressed his frustration with and commitment to reforming the DoD acquisition process.
- Senator Warren asked General Mattis about cybersecurity, DoD investments in innovation – particularly in human capital in MA. She also asked if he considered Russia a threat to the US and if he would always speak his mind when advising the President.
- Senator Sullivan expressed concern over Russian buildup activities in the Arctic.
  - General Mattis agreed that the Arctic was an active area especially with the sea ice retreating and foresaw more search and rescue patrols as well as the need to defend our borders.
  - Senator Sullivan also mentioned Chinese aggression in the South China Sea.
  - General Mattis replied that a collaborative strategy with our allies was needed as it was in international waters.
- Senator Peters asked General Mattis about his philosophy on role of military might.
  - General Mattis said it had its place in defense of the nation but could not be relied upon alone. The US needed to also use its power of inspiration and forward planning and good policy.
- Senator Perdue said the national debt was the greatest threat to national security; asked if the DoD had suffered because the level of borrowed money and if current force level and structure was up to global challenges.
  - General Mattis said we need to strengthen the military, he would have to figure out how to adapt to these realities and that the nation cannot solve its budget problems on the back of the military alone. In his mind, Congress should do away with sequestration and make the hard choices themselves.

- Senator Kaine, like several colleagues, expressed concern about granting a waiver; but thought General Mattis may be a good exception.
  - He asked Gen Mattis if he believed that the nation should not go to war without congressional approval; he agreed.
  - Senator Kaine also asked about the Israel/Palestine relations and improving communication with our allies around the world in a more tangible way.
- Senator Cruz asked about the needs of the military as compared to current resources. He also stressed the importance of the F35 to the US and our allies. He characterized it as expensive but needed.
  - Gen. Mattis agreed there were cost concerns but supported the project.
- Senator King asked that Gen. Mattis concentrate on the civilian Administration of the Department.
  - Gen Mattis concurred and said a new approach coupled with new technologies will allow him to move the Department forward.
  - Senator King was also supportive of the modernization of TRIAD and the elevating cyber security to a full unified command level.
- Senator Graham focus on the defense Israel, a “red line” on North Korea, pulling back the agreement with Iran and sanctions on Russia.
- Senator Donnelly discussed mental health of our armed forces as a readiness issue and our responsibility to vets.
  - He also stressed to need to further integrate DoD and VA health records.
  - He also mentioned nuclear modernization efforts and the need to streamline.
- Senator Sasse expressed concern about a lack of clear cyber security doctrine and the specific need to define a “cyber act of war.”
  - General Mattis agreed that a government-wide collaborative effort was needed to formulate definitive cyber policy.
- Senator Nelson asked General Mattis about his opinion of Putin.
  - Gen. Mattis characterized Putin as a strategic competitor and adversary but wanted to pursue an agenda of engagement as opposed to cooperation.
  - When asked about the role of NATO, Gen. Mattis called it vital to American interests and fully backed Article 5.
  - Finally, Senator Nelson asked the General if he could work with General Flynn.
  - Mattis described the relationship as untidy but respectful and believed good ideas will win.