

Congressman Adam Smith
Ranking Member, HASC

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DWG: Welcome to the Defense Writers Group breakfast with, I'm only probably going to say this one more time, Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee, Congressman Adam Smith. Sir, thank you so much for being our guest today.

I'll vamp for a few minutes so you can get a couple of bites.

DWG: Well, maybe ask a long question.

Reading about the conversations among Democrats that are going on now and I guess will continue until January, one hears about the sort of conversation being on issue after issue, should we pass progressive legislation or take a progressive stand that won't get through the Senate but that will put a marker down on that particular issue? Or is that one of the issues where we might have the opportunity to compromise with the Republicans and get something done for the country? That's, it's being described at least in articles that I'm reading, the sort of how the choice frames up in a way.

So I'd like to ask you if that's the case, first of all. And secondly, in the area of defense, what are some of the issues that you see where you think compromise, there's a possibility of compromise, and something to be done for the country and where perhaps if you could identify one or two issues where you think the Democrats in the House are going to need to take a stand on something That may not mean that it becomes legislation and law in the next year or two, but it will put a marker down for 2020 and show leadership.

Could you talk about this tremendous responsibility you're about to assume and take us through a few issues and tell us how you see them. You know, which camp are they in, if you will on that. In other words, what's Chairman Smith going to be like?

Congressman Smith: Well, I'll get to that second point in a second. But broadly speaking, this is sort of a challenge right now for all the Congress to get to the specific issue for the moment. There's a great deal of division in the country. I mean ever since 2010 when the Republicans took over we've seen the result of this. Getting to an agreement on basic appropriations, on health care, there's just this huge divide that, you know, it's hard to bridge. Heck, even when the Republicans were completely in charge it was hard to bridge.

So it's going to be a challenge overall just because of, well, how divided we are misses the point slightly. In my view how unwilling we've been as a country, not just as a Congress, to confront some very, very hard choices. And the two biggest areas where that comes into play are number one, the budget. I've told this group before, the biggest problem, we sort of figured out a while ago through polling and basically common sense that when you're campaigning, by and large people want to hear that you're going to balance the budget. They don't want to hear how. They don't want to hear about taxes that are going to be raised or programs that are going to be cut. You can get away with sort of the dodge of, well, we're going to reform entitlements. We're going to reform the tax code. We're going to eliminate waste and that sort of stuff. But at the end of the day that doesn't balance the budget and it doesn't get the deficit under control.

So hanging over every decision we make is the fact that we're \$22 trillion in debt and we're running up a deficit, I think it was right around, a little less than \$900 billion this year projected to go up.

Now there's a certain school, of thought out there, economic school of thought, that says that deficits don't matter. When somebody told me this, I was frankly, quite excited. It's like when someone would say I've got this great new diet. It's the

ice cream diet. All you have to do is eat all the ice cream in the world, you'll be in the best shape of your life. You're like tell me more.

But, I read it. And the basic point is that the federal government does not run its budget like anybody else for a very simple reason. Unlike everybody else, we can print our own money, and that does sort of change the equation. You get into this complicated explanation about how, you know, the tax money you raise isn't really what funds the government. What funds the government is the money you print. And therefore, that changes it in ways that my brain can't quite process from an economic standpoint, but their point is that if you deficit spend in a way that stimulates the economy, you have an under-performing economy and you deficit spend, that's a good thing. And if at the end of the day you have too high a deficit it's not really a problem, you simply print the money and pay it off. Okay. And the only problem is if that drives up inflation. It's not actually the only problem in my opinion, but that was the problem they pointed out. And, you know, this is frankly what happened in the '60s and '70s in this country is, you know, we got into a big deficit, interest rates, inflation went through the ceiling. That's a simple problem to solve. You just raise taxes and cut spending. That also goes over well.

I don't quite buy that. And you know, the problem with economics is things are okay until they're not. And it's well, inflation's below two percent, it's fine, but you know, all of a sudden it goes to six and you're running this type of deficit and you're in real trouble.

The other problem of course is, simple debt service. Right now I think the amount of money that we pay on the debt is going to be greater than the defense budget for FY19. I read that somewhere. I'm not sure if it's true.

So that hangs over everything. So when people say oh, Congress, you know, if we just played softball together more everything would be fine. It's because of the personality. There are all these different -- at the end of the day it's because we don't

have enough money to do what we'd all like to do. And in divided government you don't ultimately have to make that choice. I saw a fine example yesterday of how this plays out. You sit around the table and blame the other guy. Everything would be fine if the Senate would agree or the House would agree.

So when you talk about what issues we're going to be able to compromise on, you can say something like well, infrastructure. There's wide agreement we need to make a massive investment in infrastructure, and that's true. There's no agreement whatsoever on how to pay for it. That's the hard part. So that hangs over every decision we make. And certainly it, I believe, hangs over the defense budget and our defense policy choices.

The second one that I'm not going to get into in any great detail is health care policy, is another area where we have not had an honest conversation about the difficult choices that are involved in crafting health care policy. Just witness the fact that everyone thinks that pre-existing conditions, you should have access to health care. I shouldn't say everybody. It's not everybody. There's always --

There's majority support for the notion that everyone should be able to have access to health care, that a pre-existing condition shouldn't preclude you from that. But that's expensive, if you cover people who are in bad health. Now we should absolutely do it, but the question is then how do you cover that cost? Well, one of the ideas that the Obama administration had was mandate everybody be covered. Oh, no. You can't force us to do that. Other ideas have been to limit what we'll pay for.

We don't want to have that conversation and that too, hangs over everything else. So that's why it's difficult to compromise, is because, as I've said before, there's a clear consensus in this country. We want a balanced budget. We want taxes cut. And we want our favorite spending programs increased. That's impossible. And all of us no matter who he is, people who have come and gone in Congress in the last eight years, you know, I haven't met one of them who can make two plus two equal thirteen. If that person shows up, I'll make that person Speaker.

So we're going to have to deal with that. And then we will make choices on health care and other policies along the lines of what you said. And I don't think actually what you've described is mutually exclusive. I think we can decide okay, we're going to put our marker down on climate change and green energy. We're going to put our marker down on health care and infrastructure. And then once we've done that, then we can see okay, what is the Senate and the President agreed to. We can do both. We can have okay, here is what a democratic controlled Congress would look like. This is the issue in how we would handle it. Then we've got to work with the Senate and go from there.

Now, on the Armed Services Committee side. There is plenty of room for agreement. Mack Thornberry and I have worked very closely together on a ton of issues. I think there's wide consensus on the idea of acquisition and procurement reform which we've been working on very hard. There's a growing bipartisan consensus on the need to modernize where we spend our money in defense, to basically look at what legacy programs are we spending money on. Actually, the Army did a deep dive on this and went in, okay, I think they have like 500 different programs. Which of these programs makes sense for today and which don't? As we transition into cyber warfare and information campaigns and higher tech and unmanned vehicles, what does it make sense to get rid of? And they actually were able to find somewhere, I forget the number, between \$25 and \$31 billion in programs that they didn't they needed anymore. So I think there's good consensus on that modernization piece. And you know, I think there will be consensus in general on the notion that the Pentagon ought to be able to audit itself, and we ought to be able to figure out how to do that.

The difficulty is going to come down to the budget number, and that brings me back to that discussion I just had about the deficit and the debt and how we manage that. You know, what's the overall number going to be? And I think it's fair to say that with a Democratic budget in a tight environment scenario, we are going to want to have other priorities in addition to the defense. How does that work? We did it last year by agreeing we

weren't going to worry about how much money we spent. We were going to spend what we wanted on defense. We were going to spend what we wanted on domestic priorities and go forward. I don't know that that's going to work in the future. So that's going to be the biggest area [inaudible]. What's the number and how does that number translate into a broader budget discussion of how we get to some sort of fiscal sanity going forward.

Then clearly, the two areas I think beyond that in disagreement. One, nuclear weapons, well documented. We've had that conversation. Two is just the idea of whether or not, I mean the general gist of the Republican approach to national security is to point out all the areas where we don't have enough money, where we don't have enough capability and say we've got to spend more money. We have a National Security Strategy. We've got to win a war with China and Russia, preferably simultaneously. We've got to stop North Korea. We're got to do all this stuff that frankly adds up to more money than we possibly have.

What I'm interested in trying to find is a national security strategy that balances risk, to be sure, but also understands that that National Security Strategy has to fit within a realistic budget framework. We can't do everything. And I think that the Department of Defense is being a little bit disingenuous in the way, someone testified the other day that anything below \$733 billion will increase our risk. Okay, great. Well, anything below a trillion will increase our risk. Okay? What's the magic of 733? Can you explain that to me? I've asked that question of several Pentagon officials. Thus far I have not been satisfied with the answer. Okay, it's like well we have to have this many ships, we have to have this much end strength, we can't get there if we don't. Like I said, the Army just went through the programs and found about \$30 billion. So does that mean now that anything below \$703 is what increases risk? That's the type of analysis that I would like. Where can you save money?

The analysis right now is basically here's what the Russians have, here's what the Chinese have, here's what we have, and we don't have enough money. We have to spend more. We've got to get more.

You saw what the Air Force did. They did their analysis and came up with their budget needing to be increased I think by 25 percent. Okay, where's that money going to come from? That's the discussion that I really want to have in the committee. How can we live within our means and still have a strong national security plan? My instinct tells me that we can do that, but I think we need to at least have the discussion.

DWG: Travis?

DWG: Thank you for doing this. I appreciate it.

Yesterday you Tweeted out that you were going to continue to oppose the administration's transgender military service policy. I was hoping you can elaborate a little bit on what that might look like. Is it an issue for the courts now? Or do you think there's a legislative [inaudible]?

Congressman Smith: It's primarily an issue for the courts. The legislative remedy would be clearer, you know, except for [BRAC], this is an area where the Senate, I think there's no way they would agree with us. Legislatively I would like to pass in legislation sort of like what we did when we got rid of Don't Ask/Don't Tell and made it clear that gay people can serve openly. I think we should pass the same thing for transgender. I'm realistic about our ability to do that, so I think it does play out in the courts at this point.

DWG: Connor O'Brien, Politico?

DWG: Thank you, sir.

There's been a lot of talk this week about, the last couple of months actually, about the border and about the wall. You've been pretty vocal in your opposition to the deployment of active duty troops to the border. I'm curious, what more do you want to know [inaudible]? And what do you think [inaudible] and more broadly Congress' recourse is on that deployment other than just kind of standard oversight?

Congressman Smith: I think standard oversight is primarily what we can do, obviously on the Democratic side for appropriations and in our policy bills, both Homeland Security and Defense. There's a variety of things we can do.

But it fundamentally misunderstands the problem and what the President doesn't get is no one's saying that border security isn't important. It is. We are spending an enormous amount of money on border security. Over the course of the last dozen years I think we've like quintupled the border security budget. We've had Guard and Reserve troops down there. Believe it or not, we built a wall, okay? The President seems to have missed that. In fact, the wall that we built was about what we can build. It turns out a lot of the property where the President wants to build the wall, some of it's tribal land, some of it is privately owned land, some of it is like at 10,000 feet elevation so you're not going to put a wall up there.

We have made a massive investment in border security and by and large it's been fairly successful. There has been, you know, a significant decrease in unlawful border crossings because of this.

The challenge that we are facing now is different. It's asylum seekers. So you don't need to build more security because these folks are not trying to sneak in. They're turning themselves in. They're looking to seek asylum so they're going through the process. Well, and I don't deny there's a problem. There's been a significant increase in people seeking asylum, but the solution to that is not to harden the border. The solution to that is to hire more judges and expedite the process for how you get through it so that you don't have to make the terrible decision of do we lock people up for two years waiting this, or do we let them go in the country?

I think there are better ways to manage those asylum-seekers, and I do think that the President's rhetoric is designed to try to use fear of folks from the southern border and does not adequately recognize what the challenge is. As Chuck Schumer

pointed out, we gave them \$1.3 billion in additional border security money in last year's budget, and the figure he cited was at this point they've only spent six percent of that money.

And as far as active duty troops are concerned, I think again, that is just an optic that the President wants to try to make people believe this is an invasion and a huge problem, and I think that's a mis-use of our troops. Our troops are not needed to secure the southern border. We have border agents down there, we have all the things I just said. That will be a challenge. We need to make sure that we don't have an open border. But we've spent the money and we've done it.

The asylum issue is broader and different than engaging troops. So we'll continue to make that argument and we'll see how it plays out.

DWG: Ellen?

DWG: [Inaudible]. There's an issue of getting the military [inaudible] more efficiently than last year's NDAA [inaudible]. Congress directed the services to move a number of the medical things into the Defense Health Agency rather than [into each service]. One of those is medical research, most of which is located in the Army. Secretary Esper made very clear immediately he didn't want to give it up.

In the meantime, he has moved it over to the Army Materiel Command and intends to put it into the Futures Command when that's stood up.

Is this a place that you think Congress is going to continue with Secretary Esper? Do you he's just going to say fine, [inaudible]?

Congressman Smith: The overall notion is that within the military we should have one health care system, not three. I think that's true. I think we would better serve the service people in general if we were able to consolidate. But that's going to take time because you have to consolidate different

cultures.

Just like when we did the joint basing. Eventually joint bases have worked very well, but it took longer than everybody expected it to. I forget the time line on Joint Base Lewis-McChord, but whatever that time line was, it turned out [inaudible]. You had personnel systems to deconflict, figure out how to make them work together. It's going to take a little time, but I think it is the best approach and the right direction to go in to eventually consolidate our health care system into one area. But there will be issues like the one that the Army has brought up that we'll have to work our way through in order to continue to work on it. But I think there's still a strong commitment in Congress to get to that one system.

DWG: Sandra?

DWG: Thank you, Congressman. I'm curious if you have seen the proposal that Deputy Secretary Shanahan has put together for the Space Force? Have you seen it? Is it something that [inaudible] would be receptive to discussing for the NDAA next year?

Congressman Smith: I haven't seen it. Obviously I'm aware of it. I know the broad outline. And I think the general opinion is that we need to place greater emphasis on space. I think it is also the opinion of a lot of members of Congress that the Air Force has not done as good a job managing our space assets as they could. The difficulties we've had with space launch has been a good example. We gave ULA this monopoly 20 years ago, I forget how long ago now, and we spent an enormous amount of money on space launch. At the same time we became reliant on Russian-made engines, all the while saying that well, the investment's too much, competition is impossible, and then of course SpaceX proved us wrong. They went out and competed.

And now we're getting to the point where there are a lot of different companies that are competing in this area, but we spent way too much money on launch and made a number of questionable decisions. And there are some other areas where I am concerned that there is not sufficient emphasis being placed on space. But

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creating a whole new bureaucracy, a whole new branch of the service to address it, I don't think that's the best way to do it. It costs more money than it nets.

So we will have a conversation within our committee about the best way to place a greater emphasis on space. I think there is bipartisan concern about creating a separate branch of the military for space. And that discussion will play out between -- I think there's sort of bipartisan consensus on that.

Look, you know, I mean the Pentagon wasn't crazy about a Space Force until the President decided that we had to have one. He is the boss. So once he decided that, they all got on board. But they know that this isn't the best way to do this. So we'll have to work through that.

DWG: The committee asked DoD to give you pricing on different options. Have you seen all those different numbers?

Congressman Smith: Yeah. We've seen a bunch of different numbers. There's not a clear consensus on what the accurate number is but you've seen what we've seen. They came out with an initial study like 10 to 12 billion dollars; then they came back and said 5 to 6. It's been my experience that I'm still waiting for the thing that winds up costing them less than they expected. It tends to go the other way.

So whatever that number is going to be ultimately, I think, it will probably be higher than what they've estimated. But yes, we're concerned about, we don't want to spend more money on bureaucracy. We just want to place greater emphasis on space given its emerging importance.

DWG: Tony Capaccio, Bloomberg.

DWG: A couple of questions. On the 750, what was your reaction when you heard the news on that?

Congressman Smith: It didn't surprise me. The President bounces all around. But again --

DWG: Say that again?

Congressman Smith: I said it didn't surprise me. The President tends to, depending on --

DWG: Let the record reflect -- [Laughter].

Congressman Smith: -- listens to the last person you talk to. They got in there and said the deficit's a huge problem. We've got to get it under control. Okay, we'll do 700. The defense guys came over and said you know, you've got to look strong. Okay, we'll do 750. But again, I'll say what I said at the outset. Why 750? Why 700 for that matter? If it's just an artificial number to make us feel good because we're spending a lot of money, that's not helpful. And I would say there are two issues with the number.

First is, I just think there's a lot more savings to be found in the Pentagon, and if you obsess about the number and say we can't be safe, that's why I'm troubled by people who say, you know, we can't be safe for less than 733.

I had this discussion with Secretary Mattis, so I'm not saying anything that I didn't say to him directly. I don't like his formulation of we can afford survival. You've heard that quote?

What does that mean? I asked this. So you're telling me if we spend \$600 billion we're all going to die? You know, I get it. It's a very clever formulation to try to get people to give you all the money you want. But it doesn't necessarily add up to a national security strategy. So that's number one.

Number two is, the strategy and the money have to match what's available. Okay? And I don't think it's as dire a choice as they put it out, like oh my gosh, if we have ten fewer ships or five fewer missiles than that -- you know, it's a difficult formulation. But part of that formulation has to be the debt and the deficit. Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mullen and Secretary Mattis was working for him at the

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time, and I believe he told me he wrote the speech where Mullen said that our greatest national security threat was the debt. And that's got to factor into it.

I think what they want to do to you in the military industrial complex, they want to convince you that if you don't spend the money you are fundamentally killing people. It's not quite that simple a formulation.

If you want to talk about we can afford survival, how many people in this country have died on collapsing bridges? How many people in this country die every day because they don't have access to the health care that can keep them alive? What do we mean by we can afford survival? Are the Russians really planning on launching an all-out war against us? Or the Chinese? If they are, that would be news to everybody at this table.

So we've got to move past that sort of rhetoric and get down to an actual number.

So when I saw the 750, to be perfectly honest with you, my reaction was, you know, they're just pulling a number out of the air. I want to see the justification for it.

DWG: Dynamics between you and Inhofe, you talked about the dynamics between you and Thornberry, there's areas of consensus. You and Inhofe have been in a number of conferences. What are the areas of comity and contention you see coming up?

Congressman Smith: We get along fine.

DWG: He likes you to, huh?

Congressman Smith: I mean there's been rhetoric. As I tell everyone, I don't know how many of you go out to the Defense Forum, but it was like three or four years ago when John McCain and I were on a panel together. But let's just say it got interesting. And as I said at the end of that, you would have walked away and go, well those two people are never going to talk to each other again. John and I got along very well. In fact we

had a very nice conversation right afterwards. John liked to mix it up and he liked the fact that I didn't just sit there and take it, that I mixed it up right there with him. So there are things said in politics and public policy when you're passionate about what you believe in, and I and Senator McCain and Senator Inhofe are. But no, we've never had a problem working together and I don't anticipate we will going forward. I think we'll work together just fine.

Because keep in mind, there is an overarching issue for all of us who wind up in the chair or ranking position in the House or Senate. That is 60 years of history of getting our bill done. It is the tradition of our committee that we are bipartisan and we get our work done. There have been, in fact this past year was the first time this wasn't true. But every year since I've been on that committee there have been several moments during the course of the process when we've said we're just not going to make it this year. This issue is intractable, we just can't get there. But we always do.

So it's going to be hard. It's going to be challenging. But Senator Inhofe and I and Mack Thornberry and Jack Reed, we know the responsibility that we have, and above all else is to live up to that responsibility and make sure we need it.

DWG: Rebecca?

DWG: The Senate today is voting on its Yemen War Power Resolution. The House is not going to do that this year. But you are getting a briefing this week on Yemen and Saudi Arabia and Khashoggi. Do you think those briefings will give any momentum to even doing like a [sense] of Congress on Khashoggi this year? And then next year what's your base plan there? Obviously you signed onto to the Khanna Resolution. [Inaudible], and is there anything else you're going to change?

Congressman Smith: There's two broad issues in this area. And then there are the specifics, Yemen being one of the big specifics. Number one, where are we in the broader effort to contain transnational terrorist groups? When I chaired the

subcommittee on terrorism from 2007 to 2010, I traveled all over the world, certainly Iraq and Afghanistan, but throughout Africa and the Philippines and a whole bunch of places to really, and the conception that had been framed and built at that time was what McCrystal had decided shortly after 9/11. That was his phrase, it takes a network to beat a network. So you number one, wanted to understand what is this network that we are facing; and number two, what are our assets to counter that network. And every morning they have a video conference call connecting people from all over the world saying okay, what's ISIS up to in Somalia? Or what's al-Qaida doing?

Now this spreadsheet has become much more complicated as the problem has metastasized. In post-9/11 it was Pakistan/Afghanistan. Then they moved to Yemen and you started having problems in West Africa. But having that framework of how do we contain the transnational terrorist threat represented by al-Qaida and ISIS and other groups is still important.

I don't have a sense now of what the Trump administration's approach to that is, other than they are more aggressive. They are bombing more, they are pushing more raids both in Somalia and Libya and Yemen. So that's part of the Yemen equation. You know, why have we tripled bombings in Yemen since the Trump administration came in and had a corresponding increase in civilian casualties? And how does that strategy play into the larger effort to contain transnational terrorist groups? And I think Yemen just sort of raises that question. You know, I understand the problem moved and Anwar al-Awlaki was responsible for two almost successful attacks on the U.S. homeland. So getting into Yemen and stopping him made perfect sense.

Is that what's happening now? Because overlaying that now in Yemen is a very complex civil war with a bunch of different tribes. Obviously it's the Houthis primarily going against the existing government, but how does that play into what al-Qaida is doing? How much of what we're doing in Yemen is about containing transnational terrorism and how much of it is, this is point number two and this is the really hard one, how much of it is about "containing Iran"?

Here is where I don't think we have a clear strategy. A lot of this stuff blurs as you get into it. You step back and you look at what Iran is doing in Syria, what they've done in Lebanon, the threats the pose to Israel, what they're trying to do in Iraq, what they're doing in Yemen. Iran is a maligned influence in the region. A destabilizing influence. There is no question about that. But it has come down to pretty much a proxy war between Arabs and Persians. Primarily between Iran and Saudi Arabia, but UAE as well. And then you've got the fact that Saudi Arabia, you know, 15 of the 19 hijackers when you get back to the subject of how you would contain transnational terrorism, that transnational terrorism comes from groups like al-Qaida which started in Saudi Arabia.

So while we're in there, you know, working with Saudi Arabia to stop the maligned influence of Iran, what's that doing to the maligned influence of groups like al-Qaida and ISIS. And at the end of the day, the Middle East would be a vastly better place if Saudi Arabia and Iran could figure out some way to get along.

What are we doing to make that happen?

And then I think where Yemen is concerned, if you're talking about the closing of ports, the cutting off of aid and food, a relentless bombing campaign and the civilian devastation that's resulted from that is the largest humanitarian crisis in the world. And what are we getting from that? How does this fit into our strategy to contain transnational terrorism, to contain Iran, to move to a more peaceful Saudi Arabia?

So we need to have that discussion.

Now the War Powers Resolution thing, there's no way on earth if you write these stories this is going to come out in a way that's positive for me. [Laughter]. But I'll say it anyway. The War Powers Resolution is only so useful. So let's say that the resolution passes in the Senate, the resolution passes in the House. And we say look this is a war powers thing and you're engaging in a war that's not been authorized by Congress and

you're in violation of the War Powers Act.

And let's be even more [inaudible] in our assumptions and say that the White House goes okay. Here's your War Powers notification.

At the end of the day, the President, going back to Thomas Jefferson, has always been able to do with the military what they want to do with the military until Congress completely cuts off the money. That's the only way Vietnam ultimately stopped. So if we're going to have this discussion, we would have to have a discussion about completely cutting off the money, and that's going to be difficult to get past the President for one thing. And for another thing, we've got the transnational terrorist threat which is a legitimate concern. And even, and I've worked with Ro Khanna, even in his resolution it makes very, very clear that he's not talking about stopping us from confirming al-Qaida and other terrorist groups within Yemen. So we've got that.

But in the War Powers Resolution there is no greater example of this, to show my bipartisanship, than Libya. Okay? I have to have a sense of humor in order to get through this job. [Laughter]. I understand the seriousness of it, I understand that people are dying, I understand how difficult it is, but if you don't have a sense of humor about it, it's really hard to get through the day. That's the preface to what I'm about to say.

So they sent us the War Powers Resolution. Okay. We're going into Libya. Which means that at the end of 60 days, according to the War Powers Resolution, you have to get approval from Congress or you have to cease hostilities. At the end of 60 days, approval from Congress is not forth coming, so the Obama administration, God bless them, sent up a very, very formal thing saying hostilities have ceased, which prompted one of the best questions I've ever heard. I think it was Congressman Kline who asked the question. He said, when there were some Obama people in front of us, he said let me just ask you, if several missiles were lobbed into New York City tomorrow, would you consider that a hostile act? The guy was like, I know there's a trap here. Yes. We are still bombing in Libya, and yet you say hostilities

have ceased. Please explain that to me. He didn't. But really, if he was being honest the explanation would have been look, the War Powers Resolution's a pain in the ass, we have to comply with it, so we're saying hostilities are ceased because that's what's required to comply with the War Powers Resolution and you know, you want to sue us, I guess we'll deal with that when it comes, but for now, that's how we're going to comply with it.

All of which is a long way of saying that there is a limitation to relying on the War Powers Resolution to get us to stop hostilities.

Now here's the part that I'm sure won't show up in the stories. It is nonetheless important to do what Ro Khanna is doing and what Bernie Sanders is doing because it raises awareness and attention to the problem and the question of what we ought to be doing in Yemen. It's not so much that the War Powers Resolution is going to make the administration go oh, shit, do we really want to do this, but hmm, since you hit us with this we won't. It's that it will put public pressure on them to change what they are doing, and we've already seen that they stopped the refueling in large part because of this public pressure. Then there was a very good article in The Atlantic about how we're actually not getting paid like we're supposed to by Saudi Arabia.

So this has raised the awareness and I think made it more difficult for the Trump administration to continue its full-throated support for the war in Yemen. But as a practical, legal matter, it doesn't change the equation if we pass this in both the House and the Senate.

DWG: Tony, Inside Defense.

DWG: As someone who's going to follow the debate between you and Senator Inhofe over the budget, over the top line, things that Republicans sort of have now at the outset, they've got a Defense Secretary with a national profile who says things like we can afford survival. They've got generals lined up, prepared to testify, 733 at least or we're at risk. And they have this independent commission on the National Defense Strategy that says

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we're nearing strategic insolvency, and they're waving it around.

So my question is, what is your sense of --

Congressman Smith: What have we got?

DWG: Yeah, what have you got? What's on your side? What do you bring to this when next year it's time to have the debate?

Congressman Smith: We have to push back against that. We do have, there was a very, you know, independent report that was just put out and it will always be more helpful if I knew the organization, and regrettably, [Inaudible] is not here so she can't tell me. But they came out with a study that explained exactly why we don't need to spend \$1.2 trillion on nuclear weapons. It walked through the strategy and said we can meet our national security needs for a lot less. I've got the Army telling me that when they decided to take a look at where they were spending their money -- gee, what a novel idea -- the found \$31 billion that they didn't need to be spending. Okay. I've got the notion that I think is going to be widely accepted that the Pentagon does not necessarily spend its money wisely and efficiently. I've got the idea that the military industrial complex has the tiniest little bit of an incentive to try to tell you that we need to spend more money on defense, and that that incentive doesn't necessarily translate into national security needs. It simply translates into money.

So we have other arguments. What we're going to have to do is we're going to have to convince the American public that we have a national security strategy that will protect this country and that we can do it for less money. I'm pretty sure the country in general believes that we can do it for less money. They tend, however, you know, and Bill Clinton's formulation, it's better to be strong and wrong than to [get it] right, and that's what the Republicans -- it goes all the way back to, I remember, one of my favorite books when I was in college was *The Triumph of Politics* by Stockman. I can't remember his first name now. In which he was trying to argue we need to spend less money --

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DWG: [Inaudible].

Congressman Smith: Exactly. And Cap Weinberger was in there and he put up these charts and he's a big strong guy, [inaudible]. You know. So I understand that.

The final thing I'll say about this, and this is why I think it's important that I'm in the position that I'm in, in the campaign that I just ran, my opponent, one of the biggest issues was I vote for the defense budget, and it turns out my district doesn't really have that big of a problem with that, but there's a general notion amongst some in the base of the democratic party that we should simply cut defense spending.

What I've done is I've worked with, there are some fairly smart people on this issue, and I put Barbara Lee in that camp. A lot of people who are wanting to push back against the defense budget because they believe in education, they believe in health care, they believe in infrastructure, they don't know a lot about national security. I had a number of people come up to me during the campaign saying we ought to be able to cut the defense budget in half, and the line that I use which is not particularly successful in that context, but I think it's funny here so I'll use it is, which path? And they don't know. They don't care. They simply know that we're spending too much money on it.

But we are not going to be able to be successful in arguing that we can survive and prosper and have strong national security for less money unless we can make the argument. But like I said, on nukes, on Army programs, on the audit, on Pentagon waste. There is a mountain of evidence that we can more than survive for less than \$750 billion.

Some of the arguments are not as compelling. The whole, we spend as much money as the next 12 countries combined. Well, okay, but in a lot of those countries that money goes farther. That doesn't necessarily carry the day. We need to be smarter about how we make that counter-argument.

DWG: A very quick follow-up on the commission report. You

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seemed to take issue maybe a moment ago, thinking that it wasn't so [intended]. Do you think the commission was, do you think it was stacked in some way or do you think that --?

Congressman Smith: Sorry. That wasn't --

DWG: -- things are reasonable or --

Congressman Smith: I don't find its findings reasonable, and I'll tell you what I've always told you, and this was from my earliest days back in 1997 when frankly, I didn't know that much about national security policy and I was just learning as a freshman member of Congress. Here's the way the Armed Services Committee works, I used to tell people back then. We have hearings, and at those hearings we either have people from the Pentagon or we have people from think tanks who come in and tell us about a threat or a multiple group of threats. They then explain how we are totally unprepared for the threat, there is the risk that we're all going to die because we're unprepared for the threat and oh my God, we have to do something, we have to spend more money. That is the entire theme of how 90 percent of the people who look at our defense budget look at it is, to scare the crap out of you and convince you that we need to spend more money.

Now some of that is self-interest, but I think the bulk of it is simple paranoia. All right? It's sort of bred into American culture that we are, you know, someone's coming after me. That's why we own so many guns. So that's the way they react to it. Okay? I think we can do better than that. I think we can understand better what those threats are.

So I'm just suggesting that the commission is probably in that line of thinking. Oh my God, the Russians have submarines. Oh, my God, they built this missile. We don't have that missile. What's going to shoot it down? You know, the Chinese built this, we built this. You know, okay. Yeah, the world's a dangerous place. I can walk out the front door, get hit by a bus and die. I can have an aneurism sitting here right now. A whole lot of shit can happen.

But what is a sensible approach to that? Is it plausible that the Chinese are going to decide to launch an all-out war against us? Probably not. The Russians, probably not. Is it plausible that they're going to try to mess with our elections through cyber? Yes. Let's counter that.

Also, what is sufficient to deter what we don't want them to do, or what we don't want North Korea to do? You know, that's what we have to look at. So I just tend to think that there's this build-in notion that more is by definition better and we never quite have enough. I say that, you know, in those 22 years on the committee I'll still be waiting for the hearing where someone came in and said okay, here's the threat, and believe it or not, we're ready. We thought of this one. We're prepared.

Sorry, I've gone on way too long. Just one more point. It's a point that Secretary Gates used to make. I never had the opportunity to confront him on this, or the opportunity never quite seemed right. But he was the one who said, you know, when it comes to predicting future conflicts, we have a 100 percent record. We've always been wrong.

And he said that in order to say come on people, get better at it. We've got to be ready for this, got to be ready for that.

My way of thinking of it is, I supposed it's possible that we're just the stupidest people in the history of the world, but I think what is more likely is that the reason we've always been wrong is because it's impossible to predict. And if you spend yourself into a massive debt, we're still going to be wrong. Couldn't we spend a little bit less money and be wrong?
[Laughter].

What we need to do then is to be able to be flexible and responsive to what we don't expect instead of spending all this gobs and gobs of money on what we think is going to happen when, as Secretary Gates himself said, we've never been right. I'm not sure he's right about that, but I haven't done a historical analysis. But that's the way I would like to shift the

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discussion. And I understand that I am pushing a significantly large boulder up a not insignificant hill in that regard. But I'm up for giving it a shot.

DWG: Jennifer Griffin of Fox.

DWG: I think we all agree that probably the 750 number is a negotiated [inaudible] on the part of the White House and the President, but yesterday when he tweeted that the military would build a wall, are you suspicious that he's trying to put wall funding into the defense budget? And if so, what can you do to block it? What legally can you do to stop the military from being used, active duty soldiers, from further building the wall? Is that something you plan to pursue?

Congressman Smith: We can certainly put legislation in that says no Department of Defense money should go towards the wall. That would include using our soldiers as part of the effort to build it. And I think there is some bipartisan support for that idea. Precisely because Republicans see greater defense needs.

Look, in a room full of reporters, I really want to make this point. The President said yesterday that this is the single biggest campaign promise. He can't just walk away from it. His single biggest campaign promise was that we wouldn't have to pay for it. Okay? Now I know to a certain degree we all thought that that was, sorry, I was going to swear there and I won't. Let's just go with insane, that somehow Mexico was going to pay for the wall. But that was his campaign promise.

His campaign promise was that Mexico would pay for the wall. So why in the name of God are we shutting down the U.S. government because we won't pay for it? The President promised us that we wouldn't have to. And I want someone to ask him, preferably every second of every day from now until we get this resolved, why is he breaking his promise?

DWG: Again, are you concerned that he's trying to put wall funding into the defense budget in that 750 number?

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Congressman Smith: I'm sorry. I skipped to your second question of what can we do to stop it.

Actually, I don't think he's putting in that 750 number. I don't. I'm not sure. Well, no one knows what the hell's in that -- it's just a number. What it adds up to, I don't know. But I don't think that there is wall funding in that 750 number, but it's certainly something -- well, I mean, it's a question that isn't really worth asking because the President will send up his budget and we'll see. And if there's wall funding in it, we'll all flip out and say you can't do that.

DWG: But you would plan as the Chairman to block that.

Congressman Smith: Yeah, and I think a lot of Republicans would be right there with me.

DWG: Eric Smith, New York Times.

DWG: The committee in the current NDAA directed OSD's SOLIC office to do a study on special operations and professionalism and ethics.

Can you tell us a little bit more about the rationale of the concerns you have in the committee? Some of the incidents that have been reported for the murder of the Special Forces soldier in Mali last year? And what do you hope to get out of this report from the SOLIC office?

Congressman Smith: It wasn't actually something that was my particular focus. You probably know as much about it as I do, and I think you just, you answered your own question. Those are the issues --

DWG: Setting aside the report then, do you have concerns about the professionalism of Special Operations units as they are being spread across the world in some of these transnational conflicts that you mentioned earlier?

Congressman Smith: The concern that we've had for a long time

isn't so much about the professionalism, it's about whether or not we are asking them to do too much. Can they keep up that pace? Can they keep up that tempo? And what impact does that have on unit cohesion and their ability to do the job? Have we pushed them too far? This is not the first time that question has been raised.

Now we've doubled the size of our Special Operations force in the last 15 years, but are we still pushing them too hard and asking them to do too much? That's the main driver behind that study.

DWG: Do you have an opinion on that at this point?

Congressman Smith: Not a clearly, that's the reason we asked for the report. Whatever opinion I would have would be anecdotal and not, you know, not as valuable as hopefully once we see what they've done when they do a deep dive on it.

DWG: Vivian [inaudible], Defense Daily?

DWG: Good morning. I wanted to ask you, a couple of months ago you send an OpEd talking about the declining transparency within DoD. As Chairman, how are you looking to impose some of those oversight issues that you mentioned in your article? And maybe particularly as it comes to the increase in classified hearings versus open hearings with DoD, and also the use of increasing for official use only and those sorts of classifications for specific documents?

Congressman Smith: I could give a long-winded answer here, but the short answer is this is a battle that we will always fight. At the end of the day, the Pentagon would just as soon not have to tell us stuff, but it's in the law, so we're always going to have to push them to be transparent. I've always joked that when they send witnesses over, the one thing they train them is, they sit them in a room and have they talk for hours without saying anything. Then they zap them if they say something of substance. Keep speaking banalities that don't mean anything as long as it's humanly possible. So it's always going to be a challenge, and frankly, that's been, it's bipartisan. A Republican Congress, a

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Republican President. It doesn't really matter. The Pentagon, they're focused on what they're doing, they're never as transparent as we would like them to be.

So we'll keep pushing on it. And I think the strongest thing that I can do is rely on personal relationships with people at the Pentagon. Say hey, we write you a letter about something, we expect an answer.

Now part of that also is we need to not write so many letters. Let's be focused, okay, here are the things that we really want to know.

As far as the classification issue is concerned, I get it. It's going to be really hard to fight that battle. It's going to be really hard, because these are the people who know what's going on. I mean they know the issues better than I do, better than any of us do. So how do we go in there and say look, you say this is classified. We don't think it should be classified. It's going to be a slog, basically, to get greater transparency and openness, but it's part of what we have to do and what we've always done and will continue to do.

DWG: It sounds like the biggest thing you're saying here is just having, developing greater relationships with people in DoD.

Congressman Smith: Yeah. It gets to the point of, you know, I sent them two letters over the course of the last month. Having said that, now I'm going to have to remember what they both were. One of them was about what are you doing on the border? What's the issue there? And the second one had something to do with Yemen. And they didn't get back to me. We made it clear that it's really not acceptable. Whether I like the answer or not, we deserve an answer.

DWG: Gordon [Inaudible], Wall Street Journal.

DWG: You mentioned nukes, you mentioned modernization and cost of modernization. I wonder if you can expand a little bit on if there was a leg of the triad that you think deserves the most

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scrutiny, which one would it be?

Congressman Smith: The ICBMs, without question.

DWG: Can you expand on that?

Congressman Smith: Survivability is the big issue. If you're looking at a deterrent strategy, you want to make sure that the nuclear weapons you have are difficult to take out. You know, the air-launched and the sea-launched are the ones that can be in the most protected status, whereas everyone's going to know where the ICBMs are. So they're really just targets at the end of the day. And I don't know that we necessarily need to eliminate it, but I'd be really interested in the analysis of why we need as many as we do, sorry, as many as we have. So I would think that would logically be the leg of the triad that's always come under the most scrutiny.

DWG: Is that going to be one of your first kind of launching points?

Congressman Smith: I don't know. I have too many firsts. There's a lot of different issues we want to try to handle at the same time.

DWG: Leo Shane of Military Times is next. But Mr. Chairman, there are a lot of people who would like to ask questions. Could I ask people to forego follow-ups, and can you stay a few more minutes?

Congressman Smith: Sure.

DWG: Wonderful. Leo?

DWG: I have a 17-part question. [Laughter]. No.

You mentioned transgender earlier. I don't know if there's other personnel issues that pop out to you. In particular, end strength seems to fit into your idea of do we need to have the size and the scope if the threat's going to be the same? The

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last administration talked about pulling down end strength, trying to have a more flexible force. This administration has gone the other way, added more people. That's obviously a lot of cost. I don't know where you are on end strength right now.

Congressman Smith: That will be part of the equation in determining. Again, this is with all of our equipment. Why? Why do we need a 500,000-person Army? And I know some of the answers to this. I know when they were shrinking the Marine Corps there was considerable concern that part of our deterrence strategy on North Korea was you know, these are the units that will go if there's an invasion, and the Marine Corps was at the front of that, and it got down to the point where the entire Marine Corps as going to have to go. I get that. So we can do some analysis on that.

The second thing about end strength, with the transgender issues. Basically one of my priorities is going to be equality within the military. That we do not discriminate against people based on sexual preference, race, gender, religion. We do discriminate on people based on capability. You have to be able to meet the standards that are necessary to do the job you're being asked to do. But we're not going to say, you know, no gay people, no transgender people, no Muslims. I'm going to try to combat discrimination within the military and I think that is a capabilities issue as well. Because if we're discriminating against transgender people or discriminating against women, there are a ton of jobs in the military that are crucially important that don't have anything to do with physical fitness for that matter past a certain point.

So I'm trying to make sure that everyone who is qualified has an opportunity to serve and there's no discrimination. It's going to be important.

DWG: Misty Brian, the Washington Post.

DWG: Hi, Congressman. Could you help me, are you planning to do anything in the committee on military preparedness for climate change? Is that something that requires congressional

involvement or legislation at this stage?

Congressman Smith: I'm not sure, to tell you the truth. I'd have to look closer at that. But certainly, well, I am sure. It's an issue. What we're going to do about it, I'm not sure. I need to understand better how it impacts our national security needs and interests. Obviously we've got the Arctic becoming more navigable. What does that mean? But yes, there are a number of questions there that will need to be answered, and I don't right now have the answers.

DWG: Tom [Inaudible], Military [Inaudible]?

DWG: Thank you. How concerned are you about declining quality in the recruits being brought in, particularly in the Army? Does the Army already have the tools to take care of that with bonuses and --

Congressman Smith: I'm not so much concerned about declining quality of people we're taking in the military. I'm concerned about the declining number of people who are able to come in. I don't think the military, I don't think there's much evidence the military has reduced their standards or reduced their requirements. They just have a smaller pool to draw from because of the overall health of the population that they're drawing from. That's a concern.

What we do about it is a tougher question, but that is definitely a concern.

DWG: Jeff Shogle, [Task and Purpose]?

DWG: Thank you. You had talked about the need to [define] certain things and you also said the defense industrial complex has an incentive to say if you don't spend money that people will die. I'm wondering, how do you square that with the need to provide money for aviation readiness? And are you concerned that if you cut defense spending that more pilots could die?

Congressman Smith: Here's primarily the way I square that, is I

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think there's two ways of looking at the readiness problem. One of them is we've cut funding, we've cut corners. We need to shore that up.

The other way is we've got too many missions. We've got too much that we're trying to do and we don't have the resources to do it. So you know, in part, if you reduce a program, reduce the size of the force, you can, I think training should be a top priority. Whatever the National Security Strategy is, we should ensure that the men and women who serve are trained and equipped to do it. If you expand that mission, then it's like well, so we don't, we have pilots who don't have the opportunity to get the training that they need, we don't have enough equipment to meet that mission, that's when you start to get into pushing people. It's just like with the Special Forces. Pushing them beyond what they're capable of doing.

So if we can better focus the mission, we can make sure they get that training. But I am absolutely concerned that that is one thing that I will not look to cut is readiness. Absolutely not. I think we need to go in the opposite direction on that, make sure that there is sufficient equipment, that there are sufficient -- a lot of times you don't have the planes to fly because you don't have the money to fix them. Then pilots don't get the hours they need. And you don't do adequate training. So in that area, I am not going to want to cut at all. But again if you have, and I don't know how large the Air Force is, but if you have this many people in the Air Force, you can train them. But you say okay, we can survive with this many. Well then, that's less training that you have to do because you have less people and there's less need for equipment.

So I want to make sure that they get the training and time that they need to be prepared.

DWG: Courtney [Inaudible], NBC.

DWG: One quick follow-up on the border. When you say that the U.S. is already building a wall, are you talking about the one the military's building out of concertina wire --

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Congressman Smith: No, no, no.

DWG: -- as opposed to concrete?

Congressman Smith: Not building, built. Back in 2007. You've seen pictures of the wall on the border, right?

DWG: The infrastructure that already exists is what you mean.

Congressman Smith: Yeah.

DWG: And then on Africa, do you support a cut of U.S. troops in Africa?

Congressman Smith: It depends on the mission. Someone asked me about this yesterday, and we're cutting back the troops in West Africa. One of the things that's going to be really important in terms of meeting our national security objectives for less money is partners, is working with different partners around the world. In West Africa the French have been helpful. We're beginning to shore up some of the governments in that part of the world -- Mali, Niger and elsewhere. So if we're reducing the number of troops in West Africa because we have partners that are able to meet our mission. That's great. I've got to look at that. So I don't think the decision to reduce over there is oh, this isn't really that important, we're moving on. I think hopefully what it reflects is the training, the cooperation that we've done with our partners has yielded results that we have others that can meet our mutual national security needs.

DWG: Rafael [Salido], [Refe].

DWG: Thank you, sir, so much for doing this.

I have a question on Venezuela. The Trump administration has had or has actually great [inaudible] on the government of Venezuela. President Trump has even threatened to use military force. Do you think that an invasion or using the military force is an option that should be on the table right now?

Congressman Smith: No. I do not. Whatever is going on down there, I don't see a U.S. military invasion as something that's going to help. There are challenges in Latin America that are more complex than I understand, but I would not support the use of the U.S. military. The U.S. military going into another country is not going to help the situation.

DWG: What do you think would?

Congressman Smith: I don't know.

DWG: Defense One.

DWG: Thanks for doing this. I wanted to return to space quickly. We're obviously still waiting for the NDR, but do you support building a space-based missile intercept capability? Do you think that's a good idea? And how might you address that issue in Congress? Talking specifically about the intercept question, not the surveillance.

Congressman Smith: I don't know at this point. I'd have to examine that. That's something I've not looked at that closely.

DWG: Okay.

DWG: We've gotten to 9:10 without asking a specific question about China or Russia so I would invite you, because I'm not allowed to do follow-ups, to critique the Pentagon's policy on both of those. But I do have to ask a question about Saudi, to go back and drill down a little bit.

There're two votes, obviously, as you know, in the Senate. One is about Yemen, one is about MBS specifically. So on Yemen specifically, you did criticize the notion of what we're doing in Yemen, but do you plan on trying to do anything to force the administration to cut back in Yemen when you become Chairman?

Congressman Smith: Yes.

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DWG: And then on MBS specifically, do you support the sense of the Senate that exists, and is there any plan either to support it this week before you leave or what about early next year? Would you push for that?

Congressman Smith: I certainly do plan to do things to put pressure on the administration on Yemen and on our involvement in what is a bloody civil war. Certainly we're going to try to do that.

As far as, what's the second question?

DWG: Specifics on how to do that?

Congressman Smith: Well, stopping the refueling. Stopping the funding of Saudi Arabia and UAE activity in Yemen. Cutting them off from anything that goes towards supporting the civil war there.

As far as Russia and China are concerned, the broader issue there is how do we deter their bad actions while at the same time not getting into a long-term arms race.

Look the world is a more peaceful and better place if Russia, China and the U.S. work together to confront global challenges. And believe it or not, even within our differences of opinion there are some areas where we're, you know, we're both concerned about transnational terrorist groups, we're concerned about climate change. Putin is more difficult than China in that regard. But overall, my hope is that we don't -- I know we're reentering an era of great power competition, but that competition is primarily for influence and economic strength. Is there a way that we can manage that that avoids broader conflicts? That's why I think diplomacy, development, other things are very important as well.

I don't want it to become another Cold War where it's a zero-sum game between us and China or between us and Russia. And then there's a thousand things to say about how we get through that, and I don't have time to say them. But we're going to have to

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manage that policy.

DWG: Very quickly, MBS?

Congressman Smith: We should sanction Saudi Arabia for what happened there. There's no question about it.

DWG: Including MBS himself and top aides?

Congressman Smith: Yeah. And I think the more troubling aspect of that is what has the U.S. been doing to promote human rights more broadly? I think there have been some troubling things that the President has done that -- why did Saudi Arabia think that they could get away with this? I mean that's the most shocking thing to me. Khashoggi did not present any sort of existential threat to the Saudi regime. But they had reason to believe that they could kill him and the international community would shrug. And I think President Trump's rhetoric is part of the reason that they believed that. I think his rhetoric about his support for Saudi Arabia, the constant rhetoric that he has that seems to be, you know, he likes dictators. His own comments about how the media is the enemy. You know, complimenting a Montana congressman for beating up a reporter. He sent a very clear signal that this was something that wasn't going to be terribly troubling to the United States. I think we need to send the opposite signal.

DWG: Last question to Mr. Bob Burns, Associated Press.

DWG: A question for you about Jim Mattis. Of course there's been quite a bit of talk for several months that President Trump is souring on him, that he's losing influence in the administration. I wonder if you agree with that analysis and do you think he's on his way out?

Congressman Smith: I don't. I think it's pretty solid. I think he knows how to work the issue. I think President Trump knows how important he is to the administration, to what they're doing. I don't see any evidence whatsoever that he wants to leave or that the President wants him to

DWG: Do you think he's losing influence in the administration?

Congressman Smith: I don't think he's losing influence. I think he's losing allies. His influence is probably as great as it's been. John Bolton is a more problematic National Security Advisor than McMaster. And you down there at the end of the table, I'm sorry, you know, why I'm laughing when I mention McMaster.

DWG: -- a little interaction with [inaudible] right?

Congressman Smith: It was bizarre. But now I have a story to tell.

No part of this can be off the record, huh? I could tell you a joke as long as you promise me it was off the record, but that's a stupid thing to do.

DWG: Do we have assent on that? Off the record.

Congressman Smith: All right. I joked with my staff afterwards, and I won't give you the whole build-up to how this happened. I swear to God I was just innocently sitting there, mostly trying to make sure that the Huskies won the PAC-12 title game. I was watching on my phone as the conversation was going on around me.

McMaster was being a little bit aggressive, and finally I pushed back on one point. And I, he literally called me a dick. I told my staff later, I want to update my Wikipedia page. In addition, Congressman Smith was once called a dick at a casual dinner at the Reagan Library by former National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster. [Laughter]. One of his proudest moments during his time serving as -- [Laughter].

I talked to him after. He seems like a nice, decent guy. I don't know what sort of got into that. But to answer your question, there's been a shift in terms of, well, actually I'll use an Office analogy. My kids and I are re-watching the TV show. There was an episode where Oscar in the office says, when

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Jim and Pam are on their honeymoon. He says there's a very delicate balance between crazy and sane in the office, and with Jim and Pam away on vacation the balance has shifted in a bad direction. I'm not quoting that exactly. That's similarly the way I look at the White House. There is a very delicate balance there, and as people like John Kelly and H.R. McMaster and Tillerson and others have moved on, there was a time when the balance was shifting in the correct direction, when Banning and some of the other people -- so now it's like -- so I think that's a problem for Mattis is having people he can work with within the White House. But I don't think his influence has been reduced. It's just a matter of who he's working with.

DWG: Congressman, thank you so much.

Congressman Smith: Appreciate it.

DWG: I hope now that you're about to be Chairman, we love having you here once a year, but perhaps we might try to even see you a little more than that. I think this is a useful forum. It certainly is for us. I hope it is for you too.

Congressman Smith: It is. Thank you.