NOMINATION OF RICHARD L. WAGNER TO BE CHAIRMAN OF THE MILITARY LIAISON COMMITTEE TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC AND THEATER NUCLEAR FORCES

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES UNITED STATES SENATE

NINETY-SEVENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

NOMINATION OF

DR. RICHARD L. WAGNER OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE CHAIRMAN OF THE MILITARY LIAISON COMMITTEE TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

APRIL 26, 1982

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MONDAY, APRIL 26, 1982

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC AND
THEATER NUCLEAR FORCES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met at 10:03 a.m., pursuant to notice, in room 212, Russell Senate Office Building, Senator John W. Warner (chairman) presiding.

Present: Senator Warner.

Staff present: George K. Johnson, Jr., Patrick L. Renehan, and James C. Smith, professional staff members; and Marie Fabrizio Dickinson, staff assistant.

Also present: Buzz Hefti, assistant to Senator Warner; and Frank Krebs, assistant to Senator Cannon.

OPENING STATEMENT BY SENATOR JOHN W. WARNER, CHAIRMAN

Senator WARNER. Good morning, everyone.

The purpose of our hearing this morning is twofold: First, we will hear the nomination of Dr. Richard L. Wagner, nominated to be Chairman of the Military Liaison Committee to the Department of Energy; then we will turn to the consideration of S. 2286, the fiscal year 1983 Department of Energy defense program authorization request.

We have witnesses from the Department of Energy and from the research laboratories to discuss this year's request. The first part of the hearing, of course, will be open, for Dr. Wagner, then we will close the hearing because much of the information we will discuss is classified under the provisions of the Atomic Energy Act. We do, however, want to get as much on the record as possible in the way of cleared testimony, so that the American people can have access to these proceedings.

I want to stress that, ladies and gentlemen, we will basically be in classified session, but I will urge you at this time to indicate how much we can put in the clear at a subsequent date. This, I presume, will be a combination of analyzing during the course of the hearing and, subsequent to that, taking the record and reviewing it again.

Needless to say, across this Nation is a growing interest in a subject which heretofore you have acted like trustees on behalf of this Nation. That information now is sought by an ever-growing number of people

and, in my judgment, it is a healthy and constructive movement in this country for people to become more interested.

It is the responsibility of those of us who are knowledgeable in this field to give the proper direction as we all attempt to lessen the tension in connection with nuclear weaponry.

The defense authorization bill has increased substantially this year—an increase of more than $1 billion in budget authority. We need to study in detail the need for such additional authorization.

We will begin the opening hearing with you, Dr. Wagner, on your nomination to be Chairman of the Military Liaison Committee to the Department of Energy.

I will insert in the record your nomination reference and biographical sketch.

[The nomination reference and biographical sketch follow:]

NOMINATION REFERENCE

AS IN EXECUTIVE SESSION,
SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,
March 29, 1982.

Ordered, that the following nomination be referred to the Committee on Armed Services:

Richard L. Wagner, Jr., of California, to be Chairman of the Military Liaison Committee to the Department of Energy, vice James Paul Wade, Jr., resigned.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF RICHARD L. WAGNER, JR., ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (ATOMIC ENERGY)

Dr. Wagner was born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma on 7 July 1936. He graduated from Williams College in 1958 and was awarded the PhD degree in physics by the University of Utah in 1963.

Beginning in 1963, Dr. Wagner served in several capacities with the University of California's E.O. Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) in Livermore, California, focusing on nuclear weapons research and development efforts. Early work involved plasma physics projects and study of the interactions between the effects produced by nuclear explosions and the operation of antiballistic missile (ABM) systems, and development of the SPRINT ABM nuclear warhead. From 1968 to 1970, he represented the Laboratory in all interactions with AEC, DoD, and the military services related to ABM warheads and systems.

From 1970 through 1971, Dr. Wagner was responsible for the LLNL's "Net Technical Assessment" project sponsored by DoD and CIA in support of the SALT I process, which involved assessment of Soviet programs and corresponding US programs.

From 1972 through 1975, he served as a Division Leader with responsibility for physics calculations and related experimental work in design of LLNL's nuclear devices, three of which have now been developed for deployment.

From 1976 to 1978 he served as Associate Director for Nuclear Test, responsible for carrying out the Laboratory's underground nuclear test experiments at the Nevada Test Site.

From 1978 to 1980, Dr. Wagner served a two-year appointment as Executive Associate Director, working with and acting for the Laboratory Director. He then returned to the position of Associate Director for Nuclear Test.

Other work has involved participation in several studies and advisory groups including the Advanced Munitions Study, the Science Advisory Group to the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff, the ERDA/DoD Transfer Study, the Cosmos 954 Recovery Group, the Defense Science Board, the Joint DoD/DoE Long Range Resource Planning Study, and the Scientific Advisory Group on Effects to Defense Nuclear Agency.

Dr. Wagner was appointed as Assistant to the Secretary of Defense (Atomic Energy) in August 1981.

Dr. Wagner is married to the former Virginia Raymond of Kansas City, Missouri. The Wagners have two sons and one daughter.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD L. WAGNER, PH. D., TO BE CHAIRMAN OF THE DOD MILITARY LIAISON COMMITTEE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Dr. WAGNER. Thank you, Senator Warner.

I have a short statement to read and then I will be happy to answer questions.

I am privileged to appear before you today to tell you something about myself, my views, and what I hope to do if confirmed as Chairman of the Military Liaison Committee between the Department of Defense and the Department of Energy.

Virtually all of my professional career has been devoted to matters related to national defense and, in particular, nuclear weapons. After receiving my Ph. D. in physics in 1963, I joined the University of California's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in Livermore, Calif. I soon moved into nuclear weapon design, concentrating on designs for antiballistic missile systems and on studying the effects of nuclear explosions on the performance of ABM systems.

Starting in 1969 I worked for 2 years on intelligence analysis of Soviet nuclear weapons and Soviet ABM systems and have generally kept current in this area since then.

In 1971, I became division leader of one of two weapon design divisions at Livermore. During my tenure in that job we started development of what is now the B–83 strategic bomb and the W–79 8-inch nuclear artillery projectile. We also laid the groundwork for the W–82 155-millimeter projectile and began programs for weapon designs on general approaches to enhance weapon security and safety.

In 1976, I became an associate director of the laboratory, responsible for all of the laboratory's underground nuclear testing at the Nevada test site.

In 1979 and 1980, I served a 2-year term as executive associate director, working with Dr. Roger Batzel, the laboratory's director who is here today, on overall laboratory management. I then returned to the testing work for several months until August of last year when I joined the Department of Defense as Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Atomic Energy.

Starting in the late sixties I have been involved in an advisory capacity in a number of Department of Defense activities. I served for 7 years on the Scientific Advisory Board to the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff. More recently, I have been a member of the Defense Nuclear Agency's Scientific Advisory Group on (Weapon) Effects, and for 3 years I served on the Defense Science Board, concentrating on weapon system vulnerability and tactical weapon survivability issues.

Over the years, the positions of the chairman of the Military Liaison Committee and the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Atomic Energy have become tightly interwoven; they complement each other, and it is often hard to distinguish between them. However, the MLC chairmanship clearly has the function defined in statute, as the name implies, of liaison and communication. I am strongly committed to this function, and not only for liaison between DOD and DOE but also the frequent and full consultation between DOD and the Congress on all matters having to do with nuclear energy.

The challenge facing us all during the next few years with regard to the operation of the Nation's nuclear weapon program is to simultaneously produce weapons needed for the modernization of the stockpile and to revitalize the Nation's nuclear weapon technology base, both in DOE and DOD, which was allowed to seriously decline during the 1970's.

I will do everything I can to see that the aggregate nuclear weapon resources of the DOD and DOE are used optimally for the benefit of the Nation. This means, in my view, incorporating advanced DOE technology into the stockpile as rapidly as possible, while insuring that the characteristics of each weapon developed are best suited to valid national defense requirements.

But at the same time we must not allow the DOD requirements for weapon development and production to drive the DOE programs out of balance with regard to advanced development for the farther future.

Advanced development is important, for three reasons:

First, we will need new weapon designs in the future to meet new deterrence needs, even if progress is made in arms control.

Second, in my opinion, there is now just beginning the development of a new generation of nuclear weapon designs whose characteristics can be much more precisely tailored to military needs.

Third, we know very little about what the Soviets can do in the way of nuclear explosive design, but we know they have a vigorous program and we cannot afford to be surprised by a new capability.

To revitalize the nuclear weapons technology base to support both advanced development and near-term production, many things need to be done, ranging from more nuclear tests to training more nuclear-qualified officers in the services. Some progress has been made with the help of Congress in implementing such a revitalization program but much more needs to be done. I intend to work toward this goal as chairman of the Military Liaison Committee and as the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Atomic Energy.

The incumbents of these two positions, Assistant to the Secretary of Defense (Atomic Energy), and chairman, MLC, have become, over the years, the principal advocates within DOD for nuclear weapon safety, security, and survivability. Any job connected with nuclear weapons carries with it a sobering responsibility—a responsibility epitomized, for me, by the attention which must be paid to safety and security and, increasingly in recent years, to survivability.

The issue of survivability or invulnerability of nuclear weapons systems goes to the heart of the growing discussion in this country about nuclear weapons. Despite the differing views, it is clear that every effort must be bent toward avoiding a nuclear war. The issue is how best to accomplish this.

Eventually it may be possible to reach agreements with the Soviet Union to drastically reduce the nuclear arms we both have, but the experience of the past decades of trying to reach even limited agreements does not provide a basis for optimism about a quick solution; and while I believe we must keep trying, realistically it may take decades. Until then, the best way to keep nuclear weapons from ever being used again is to insure to the fullest extent possible that our weapons cannot be destroyed or made inoperable by a Soviet nuclear attack. If the Soviets could do that, then, during some future crisis

when all alternatives may appear undesirable to Soviet leadership, a risk that is unacceptable to them during peacetime may become the best of a bad set of choices and they might launch that attack to take advantage of our vulnerability. Guarding against this possibility must be our central concern in designing nuclear weapon systems.

Today, with the current and near-future characteristics of our nuclear forces and the Soviets', we have a number of such vulnerabilities. A freeze on United States and Soviet nuclear forces at the current status quo would freeze in these vulnerabilities, too, and perpetuate the increased risk of war that they pose. I intend to work to insure that as we modernize our forces we make them much more survivable.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared statement. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have.

Senator WARNER. Dr. Wagner, we ask each of the President's appointees to the Department of Defense the following: If you are confirmed by the Senate, does this committee have your assurance that you and your staff will respond to all questions submitted by the committee in a forthright and expeditious manner?

Dr. WAGNER. You do, sir.

Senator WARNER. Dr. Wagner, this is one Senator's view of what is going to occur on the floor here shortly, but in the years past the budget requests of the Department of Energy have gone through expeditiously. Last year we had one perturbation and Chairman Tower and others rescued it. I think this year the budget will be the focal point for the freeze proponents. Therefore, I hope you and the witnesses today will keep in mind that the Senate debate will occur in the next 6 weeks.

While we have to put the necessary technical data in the record to substantiate the presumed expenditure of these funds, let us start thinking of how we can prepare a record which will properly inform the Senate and the American public, in language that is readily understandable by the people.

I am optimistic that we can prevail, but again the forces to reduce the defense budget are going to apply severe pressure. The buildup of nuclear weapons, in my judgment, will be the focal point for all that pressure.

In looking through your very well-prepared statement, I made a few check marks as you went along. On page 4, "Second, in my opinion, there is now just beginning the development of a new generation of nuclear weapons whose characteristics can be much more precisely tailored to military needs." You and I know exactly what that means, but for the public it can be interpreted three different ways. Let us work today on how we can break that sentence down and make it more understandable.

Dr. WAGNER. Senator, I think that there has been a shocking lack of accurate factual information in this debate so far, not only in this round but also in previous decades when it has come up. I think there is a good deal we can say on an unclassified basis, such things as even the approximate size of the stockpile—Mr. Roser and I this morning are prepared to address that—and what one reads in the papers is very different from what the actual facts have been.

Senator WARNER. I have unsuccessfully thus far pleaded with various Senate leaders to schedule a hearing to try to resolve that, but maybe we can use this as a threshold and make that beginning.

Many of my colleagues in the Senate recognize that I spend a considerable portion of my time, disproportionately, in this area, and am presumably knowledgeable. Therefore, they often come to ask me the most basic of questions.

Actually, what is needed is a handbook to be used as a reference document. While it may contain a varying number of opinions on a particular subject, at least the basic knowledge is there from which to draw your own opinions. I am going to do whatever I can to prepare such a handbook, and this hearing will be very helpful in that respect.

We all come back to, you know, "We each have four or five times as much as we need to blow up the whole world. Why do we need a new generation of weapons?" You and I know why but they don't. We have to help them understand.

Then, of course, you quite properly say, "To revitalize the nuclear weapon technology base to support both the advanced development and near-term production, many things need to be done, ranging from more nuclear tests to training more nuclear qualified officers in the services." That is correct, but it is almost inflammatory, so we have to be cautious as to how we state these things.

We will get into the hearing.

Dr. Wagner, you may introduce your wife to the subcommittee at this time. I think she bears a measure of great responsibility in your being able to take this mission.

Dr. WAGNER. Thank you. Here she is. Why don't you stand up?

Senator WARNER. We welcome you today.

[Applause.]

Senator WARNER. Having had some experience in this building, all I can say to you, Mrs. Wagner, is that short of the need to decide whether or not we go to war, I don't think anything of a constructive nature happens in the Pentagon after 7:30 at night.

I know what tremendous sacrifices you and the other wives and families make for these courageous men who come from the private sector to offer their services and talent for the Federal effort, and particularly in the Department of Defense. I am grateful, as one individual, that a person such as you has come forward. You are an accomplished nuclear scientist. You come here to an area with the highest cost of living in the United States, or one of them, bringing your family. We are grateful.

The subcommittee will be polled on your nomination. At some date in the near future the subcommittee will make recommendations to the full committee for nomination. You know you will have my support.

I have enjoyed our brief professional and personal relationship and look forward to further strengthening of both of those ties.

We will now adjourn until such time as the clerk assures the chairman that the room is cleared.

[Whereupon at 10:20 a.m., the subcommittee adjourned.]

[The nomination of Dr. Richard L. Wagner was reported to the Senate by Senator Tower on May 20, 1982, with the recommendation that the nomination be confirmed. The nomination was confirmed by the Senate on May 21, 1982.]

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