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The Honorable James M. Inhofe
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member Reed:

As always, thank you for your bipartisan leadership of the Senate Armed Services Committee. I appreciate your commitment to ensuring a fair and thoughtful confirmation process for all Department of Defense nominees, and I am grateful for your support toward our shared goal of ensuring that the most qualified candidates are confirmed to Pentagon positions. I write to share my concerns regarding Ambassador Barrett's hearing testimony with respect to Air Force expenditures at Trump properties, and inform you of my intent to block her nomination unless she commits to issuing a service-wide prohibition policy prior to her confirmation vote.

During the September 12, 2019 confirmation hearing to consider the nomination of the Honorable Barbara M. Barrett to be Secretary of the Air Force, I raised the recently-launched Air Force global investigation into how the service selects overnight accommodations for servicemembers. This review was initiated in response to reports that air crews stayed at President Trump's Scotland resort, Trump Turnberry.

As you know, I have raised the issue of Department of Defense spending at Trump-branded properties at previous confirmation hearings, and there is increasing cause for alarm as we obtain new information about expenditures made by civilian Pentagon employees and servicemembers at Trump-owned properties.

During my questioning, Ambassador Barrett agreed to provide the Committee with the Air Force investigation upon completion, and a thorough accounting of Air Force expenditures at Trump-branded properties. But she did not commit to issuing a service-wide policy to prohibit Air Force personnel from using Trump properties for military travel, whenever operationally feasible.

At the hearing, I requested that Ambassador Barrett provide a clear commitment to this Committee prior to her confirmation, and submitted additional Questions for the Record to this effect. In response, Ambassador Barrett sent the enclosed letter in which she only committed to provide "guidance to the Air Force that ensures we follow all laws and guidance from the Senate and Department of State regarding lodging and transportation."

Given my concerns regarding the Commander-in-Chief profiting from Department of Defense expenditures and potential violations of the domestic emoluments clause of the United States Constitution, I write to inform you that I intend to hold Ambassador Barrett's nomination on the Senate floor if she does not pledge that she would – if confirmed – implement a policy to prohibit Air Force spending at Trump-owned properties. Ambassador Barrett additionally lacks many of the traditional credentials expected of the Secretary of the Air Force, and I was disappointed by her responses to questions during her office visit and public testimony – factors that have also contributed to my uncertainty about her ability to lead the Air Force.

I look forward to working with you as the Committee considers Ambassador Barrett's nomination, and I appreciate your consideration of my views regarding her confirmation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Richard Blumenthal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Richard" and last name "Blumenthal" clearly legible.

RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate