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TRANSCRIPT

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Building Diversity and Combating Prejudice in Our Armed Forces, a Conversation with Rep. Anthony Brown (D-MD)

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Representative Anthony Brown (D-MD),

Vice Chair, House Committee on Armed Services

CSIS EXPERT

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Kathleen H. Hicks: I'm Kathleen Hicks. I direct the International Security Program here at CSIS. And I want to thank you for joining me today for this timely—or better said, regrettably overdue—discussion on building diversity and combating prejudice in our armed forces.

My guest today is Congressman Anthony Brown. He represents Maryland's fourth congressional district and is also the vice chair of the House Armed Services Committee. Congressman Brown also serves as a co-chair of the New Democrat Coalition National Security Task Force. And he's a member of the Congressional Black Caucus. Congressman Brown is a retired colonel in the United States Army Reserve. He served more than 25 years, and he earned a Bronze Star in Iraq. We're going to open our session today with some remarks from Congressman Brown, followed by a discussion on today's topic. Audience members can submit questions by clicking on the event page link, or also there should be a Q&A button inside this webinar.

Congressman Brown, welcome to CSIS and thank you for your leadership on these issues. The floor is yours.

Representative Brown: Well, many thanks to you, Dr. Hicks, and the Center for Strategic and International Studies, not only for organizing today's event but you and the fellows and all of those affiliated have been just an extraordinary resource not just to my office, to myself, and to my staff, but to members of Congress. So I really appreciate what you do to shape and support the important dialogue and discussion around security issues, national security, defense, et cetera. So thank you.

And thanks for inviting me to participate in what I believe, as you mentioned, is an overdue conversation, particularly when it comes to diversity and inclusion in the military. This country is at an inflection point. And it's an inflection point in terms of both American leadership at home and abroad. I believe that the course of actions that we take now will impact the security of generations to come. We're facing public health issues, the need to defeat the novel coronavirus and wrestle this pandemic to the ground. It's a national security issue. Cushioning the economic fallout for our families, and local businesses, and communities is a national security issue. And, yes, addressing systemic racism that has persisted in this country since its founding is a national security issue.

When the need for federal action is so great to expand health care, to keep families in their homes, to help working families crushed by student loan debt and facing the threat of eviction starting next week, some have suggested that this country must prioritize either national security issues or domestic policy. They argue that we don't have the ability to accomplish all of our goals or address the many issues facing the American people. I believe that this is a false dichotomy, a false choice that only serves to narrow our vision of what's possible. We have to recognize that domestic programs and spending bolsters our national security, and conversely that investing in our own national security and institutions will help further the necessary change we're looking for here at home.

Recent events have also highlighted and widened the existing disparities, gaps, and inequities along racial lines in America, witnessed by the many peaceful protests across the country calling for police accountability and reform, at a time when a pandemic has widened disparities in health care, education, economic opportunity and housing along racial lines. And our armed services are not and cannot be thought of as being immune to these challenges and the change that is happening in this country.

Today our military continues to grapple with the same inequities that have plagued this country since our founding. We cannot talk around this issue or pin our hopes to the changing face of this country. We need to be in a dialogue about the significance of race and the responsibility that each of us have to address the racial disparities we face as a nation.

To confront the crisis this country faces at this moment, we know that and I certainly believe that race-neutral solutions won't suffice. That's important to remember as we approach diversity inclusion and issues of race within the ranks of the armed forces. Like every institution, our military is strengthened by different viewpoints, backgrounds, and life experiences. In short, the diversity of our armed forces is one of our greatest assets. But we have fallen fall short of our expectations, the expectations that were set when President Truman ordered the integration of the armed forces in 1948.

Unconscious and conscious biases impact how Black soldiers advance, what assignments and career fields they receive, and how they're treated and assessed. Black soldiers are far too

underrepresented within military leadership and in our elite units. These issues didn't happen suddenly, but festered unchecked by a culture that included accommodation of intolerance, indifference, and ignorance.

We've made progress, and this year we've witnessed historic barrier-breaking firsts. General Charles Brown became the Air Force's 22nd chief of staff, the first African American to lead a service branch. Chief Master Sergeant JoAnne Bass was selected as the first woman to serve as the highest-ranking noncommissioned officer in a military service. And Lieutenant Junior Grade Madeline Swegle, who I had just the delightful pleasure to speak with on the phone just last week, became the Navy's first Black female tactical jet pilot. And the U.S. Army just welcomed its first female Green Beret.

But there's more work to be done. During this year's NDAA, we took important steps to create a more inclusive military that welcomes all who wish to serve our country in uniform. We built on the work of Majority Whip Jim Clyburn and former members of the House of Representatives Elijah Cummings and Kendrick Meek, who together in 2008 and 2009 worked to establish the Military Leadership Diversity Commission. And as members of the Black Caucus then, almost 12 years ago, they recognized that the military wasn't living up to that unlocked potential that was unlocked when President Truman signed the executive order.

And the diversity and inclusion provisions found in this year's NDAA, or at least in the House version, which I know we'll talk more about, put many of that commission's recommendations into action. This NDAA represents, I believe, one of the most significant steps towards diversity and inclusion that Congress itself has taken since the desegregation of the armed forces in 1948. It recognized the important role the military and the broader defense community must play as our country looks to address these challenges and emerge stronger.

The culture that we create in our armed services matters. Diversity and inclusion in our armed services matters. It enhances unit cohesion, improves military readiness. We've known that since 1950.

So I look forward to the discussion about diversity and inclusion, fairness, and equity in our military, and how, by making steps and strides towards that, we can actually enhance

our military readiness and lethality and our national-security posture.

Thanks.

Kathleen H. Hicks: Thank you so much, Congressman. And you pointed out the desegregation of the military under Truman coming out of World War II. We've all grown up being taught that the U.S. military is an engine of social mobility, an engine to counter racism. And here we are, these many years later, and as you point out, the representation at the senior levels of the military is extraordinarily low, albeit changing inch by inch.

And then you mentioned in passing the statistics on the elite units, which I know is part of your legislative package. And just to give some statistics for the audience, only 5 percent of the Army Green Berets, 2 percent of Navy SEALs, and .6 percent of Air Force Pararescue jumpers are Black today.

You've served in the military yourself. You've had essentially a full Reserve career in the military. What do you think – what's your diagnosis of what's missing or wrong? And how does the legislative package that you've put forward, along with your co-sponsors, into this NDAA help change that culture?

Representative Brown: Sure. You know, Dr. Hicks, there are a number of things going on. And on the one end of the spectrum, you do have many African American, Latino, and to a lesser extent I think women who enter the military service, and they're not inclined to go into those fields that have higher rates of promotion to the highest ranks, right? So in the Army – and I usually use the Army as an example; I'm an Army guy – you know, you're talking about infantry and field artillery, armor of course, special operations. And what you see is often a desire to go into the military and develop a very unique skill perhaps in logistics, in cyber, in finance, with an eye towards a short tour of duty, and then, you know, into the civilian sector.

So part of this is really – and this is why in the NDAA we're putting to the secretary the requirement to develop a mentoring program that begins pre-commissioning to talk to a more diverse group of pre-commissioned people or pre-enlistment about the benefits of the combat arms. Whether you make a career out of the Army or not, you know, a(n) infantry officer after five years with the kinds of responsibility that you get, you're going to be very attractive in the private sector –

whether you're interested in going into the tech world, the finance world, or any other world – because when you speak with private-sector employers, that's what they're interested in. So one of the things we've asked – we've directed the secretary to do is to come back with a mentoring program focusing on how we diversify career fields, how we diversify – to achieve – what we do to create greater diversity in the ranks that are attained.

And then the other piece is – and I can go on and on with what's in the NDAA – but in the elite sectors, as you mentioned: you know, naval aviation and navigators and aviators in the Air Force; special operations across the board. The military has to do a better job of introducing a more diverse pool of candidates to those career fields. In many ways they are self-selecting.

And let me give you one example, which, you know, I never – I didn't think about this until I spoke with an Army Ranger. I spent 30 years in the Army, but I didn't go to Ranger School. And he said, in order to go to Ranger School you've got to be able to swim because it's just one of the basics. And there is a higher percentage of young people of color who are – who don't swim, and you can go – you can have a long conversation about why that's the fact. So one of the things in my conversations with General Evans, who commands the Cadet Command – the Army Cadet Command – is they're looking at ways of introducing a swim training and, you know – and requirement for ROTC cadets. And in this way, you know, little things like that, maybe you increase the pool of people looking at Ranger School, infantry, armor, and ladders to higher ranks in the Army.

Kathleen H. Hicks: Yeah. And obviously, for the Navy and Marine Corps, same issue around swimming, you know, for the maritime forces, Coast Guard.

Also very prevalent this year, in addition to all the great work you're doing to address these core systemic problems in how the military recruits and promotes, you are also part of a bipartisan majority in the House and Senate that have come out against the Confederate base names. This is an issue on which the president has indicated he will veto the NDAA, whether it's the Senate form of it – which still has a provision against Confederate base naming but is slightly less strenuous, if you will, than the House version. Can you talk a little bit as a servicemember and somebody who has spoke to – has spoken

to a lot of servicemembers who are African American or from another minority group what the impact is of working and living on a base that is named after a Confederate soldier or member of the Confederacy? And also, maybe if you could weave into that issues around the symbolism, the flag – the Confederate flag issue.

Representative Brown: Sure. You know, let me start by saying, you know – you know, 30 or so years ago when I showed up at Fort Rucker – you know, and I graduated from Flight School first in my class and, you know, the sky was the limit. I was excited about my service in the Army in those early days. And honestly, I didn't know that, you know, Rucker was a Confederate general with an unremarkable career and his only connection to Alabama was that he was an industrialist who settled in Birmingham. When I went to advance camp at Fort Bragg and then deployed to Iraq from Fort Bragg, I didn't know that Braxton Bragg was a Confederate general who actually, historians say, was the worst Confederate general. You know, and when at the age of 43 I graduated from jump school – my wife thought I was crazy just to go to jump school at that age – you know, I didn't know that Benning was a Confederate officer, and also with an unremarkable career, and was an ardent secessionist.

But today things are different. And I think that, you know, soldiers, and sailors, and airmen, and marine are much more aware of these things, particularly now that it's been part of the public debate. The debates around symbols and monuments and who we pay homage to, and that you've got statues of Confederate officers that were erected between 1890 and 1920, as a way to really, you know, somehow recount and relive and memorialize this lost cause of the failure of the South to – you know, in the Civil War. So people are much more aware of that. And symbols do matter. It contributes to the culture of the military, to the morale, unit cohesion. So when soldiers today do show up at Rucker, Benning, and Bragg, they are very much aware of who those names belong to and what those men represented.

So I was excited that the Navy and the Marines went ahead and said, hey, no more display of the Confederate battle flag. I'm not as enthusiastic about Secretary Esper's effort. I think it's a – I think it's a way for him to try abandon the Confederate flag without saying the Confederate flag, but it's actually overly sweeping. And it will prohibit things like display of the gay pride flag. And I think that's wrong. And so – but that the

services are moving in that direction I think is important. And Congress includes that in the NDAA, as well as renaming the Confederate bases. The only difference – the major difference between the Senate and the House is they're talking about three years, we're talking about one year. It received bipartisan support. I think the president's going to be hard-pressed to veto the Defense Authorization Act over that issue. And if he were to do that, then I actually believe that notwithstanding we've been unable to override any presidential vetoes in the 115th-116th Congress, this may very well the first that we would override.

Kathleen H. Hicks: Another intersectional issue, as you mentioned the intersections between domestic and national security policy, is on justice and, in this case, military justice. Can you comment on the degree to which the changes you're proposing relate to any concerns about how the military justice system treats brown and Black people?

Representative Brown: Sure. There have been a lot of good studies done by a lot of advocacy groups that are looking at the disparate racial treatment under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. And in 2019, I believe it was Elijah Cummings and Gwen Moore – Representative Gwen Moore, they introduced an amendment to the NDAA that asked the GAO to study this issue. And what we found is very alarming, and that is for particularly the ranks of the junior enlisted, the treatment under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, judicial and non-judicial punishment, is alarmingly much higher for, you know, that young, you know, Black buck sergeant.

And I think it's a command – it's a command issue. And why I say that is because, you know, Dr. Hicks, what we see is that junior enlisted of color are referred to court martial at higher rates. But then when you look at the outcomes of the court martial, the punishments are about the same whether you're White or Black. So in many ways, you can say the system is fair, but what's going on with – what's going on with commanders. It goes back to culture. Do we value diversity and inclusion? Do we – do we invest in understanding the men and women who serve under us. And part of that is making sure we have more diverse leadership, who's leading a more diverse corps of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines, right? And you had the statistics I think you offered earlier: 43 percent of the military are people of color, servicemembers of color; yet only two of the highest-ranking, you know, four-star generals and admirals

are Black, General Garrett and General Brown. So part of it is diversifying leadership. Part of it is introducing more diversity and training on implicit bias for all commanders at every level. So this is a command problem that I think we can – we can fix.

Kathleen H. Hicks: Part of the challenge you just pointed out is the leadership pipeline. What's your estimate for how quickly, or how reasonable should we be in terms of thinking how quickly we can shift the fraction, the percent of senior leadership in the military to a more diverse profile across that leadership corps? And I just want to tack on there some people may be watching now, but certainly, you know, within the ranks will grumble that their readiness concerns, challenges that arise from trying to reach some kind of set of diversity goals. So I'd love for you to also address – that's been an argument, whether it was integration of African Americans, women, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender. This is a continuing debate over readiness. So how quickly can we really shift? And is it going to take a readiness toll?

Representative Brown: Let's start with the readiness piece because in – as early as 1950, two years after Truman's order – so you have the president saying to the military: You will integrate. Some embraced it. Many didn't. But it was an order, so they did it. Said, hey, this is going to impact readiness, morale, cohesion, effectiveness, you name it, the sky's falling. In the 1950s the DOD did a study, and they've done many studies ever since, and since that very first study what was proven is that racial integration, later, you know, sort of gender, and even along sexual orientation, that it does not impact readiness, and it enhances effectiveness because diversity by race, ethnicity, and gender, background and experience, contributes to innovation – innovative problem solving, innovation in incorporating technology.

So from the earliest days that was debunked and dispelled, and that's why I'm surprised when I – when I still continue to hear today that, oh, the military shouldn't be a social experiment, right? We don't know the impact on morale, you know. And so first of all, I think that it's been proven by credible studies that have done – been done both inside and outside the military that seeking greater diversity and inclusion does not impact readiness.

So how long is it going to take? You know, there's that story, right, of the – of the – of the granddaughter talking to the

grandma. Says, hey, grandma, when is the best time to plant a tree? And grandma says, well, you know, to plant a tree, and it grows, and it has a big canopy, and it provides a cooler environment in the summer and a warmer environment in the winter, and it provides for the regeneration of oxygen and aesthetic value – well, let me see, probably the best time, 20 years ago. The granddaughter looks at the grandma and says, wow, well, grandma, when is the second-best time? And grandma says, right now.

So we've got to act right now so that, sure, we can begin filling that pipeline to achieve greater diversity and inclusion not only at the higher ranks, but across all career fields. And that's why we have – and I truly hope, and I know hope is not a strategy; we're working hard, my team is – we're working across the aisle and across the halls to the Senate – that coming out of the conference committee are these very important provisions, whether it's we're going to require greater diversity on promotion boards, we're going to codify Secretary Esper's directive to remove photos and gender and race identifiers from selection boards – because we know that studies show you can take a selection board, given them same 20 files, and if they know race and identity you get a less-diverse pool of selectees. If they don't know it, same profiles, you get just naturally occurring greater diversity. So we're going to codify that. And a number of other provisions. So now is the time to put into the NDAA those types of things that hopefully, 15 years from now, someone's going to be saying, Dr. Hicks, why in the world are we doing a CSIS panel discussion on diversity and inclusion, other than to celebrate the accomplishments of the last 15 years.

Kathleen H. Hicks: So moving from the military piece, which itself is massive, out into the national-security sector, defense, civilian, other agencies and departments in the federal government, the research institutions, places like CSIS and Capitol Hill, how do you think about growing representation for national-security issues? You're the only member, I believe, of the Congressional Black Caucus serving at the leadership level on the House and Senate Armed Services Committees.

How do we change that so that it's an area of inquiry and interest and funding and support beyond the military itself?

Representative Brown: Sure. So we all have our roles and responsibilities. And, you know, as CSIS makes that commitment and you're developing

your interim programs where you're really focusing on, and fellowship programs, bringing in a diverse set of talent, then you're doing your part.

So what part is Congress doing? And so much of it often comes down to how we're spending our money. So I'm working with the Congressional Black Caucus. We've done a number of things, trying to create more opportunities for – in the STEM fields, some that will leave for military service, some nonmilitary service, some national security and some not, but increasing the number of men and women of color who go into STEM fields.

We've done that by making greater investments in historically Black colleges and universities and minority-serving institutions. We've doubled the amount of money that goes to those schools from the DOD to support those programs, although they're still – it's still a minuscule amount.

This year we introduced an amendment to the NDAA that would create a scholarship for students at HBCUs, historically Black colleges and universities, and minority-serving institutions who want to go into our national-security field. And by national security, we don't necessarily mean DOD or State Department. It could be state or tribal national-security fields. Because when I sit in the Armed Services Committee and I look out on the audience and I see very few women and I see very few people of color, regardless of the topics that we're talking about, it's clear to me that we need greater diversity and inclusion in the broader discussion and positions.

I've traveled to embassies, U.S. embassies, on almost every continent. And typical is the case that I go into the embassy, I get the in-country brief, and there are very few personnel of color. I am beginning to see more and more women in leadership roles, and I'm excited about that. But whether it's the State Department, the Justice Department, or the DOD, we need greater diversity. That diversity is going to contribute to much better ideas and problem-solving and representation of the United States, both at home and abroad.

Kathleen H. Hicks: Now, you mentioned that there have been previous efforts along the lines of what you all have put into this FY '21 NDAA, which really is a remarkable – we can't possibly cover all the elements that you and others have helped include in there. But this is the year where it appears to actually make progress.

How strong do you think the bipartisan support is and enduring is that support going forward for these kinds of efforts to improve diversity and reduce systemic racism in the military?

Representative Brown: I think there's a tremendous amount of support. And what I point to is the fact that there was such little debate on these issues. Put aside the Confederate naming, where there was considerable debate on that. There was no debate on the provision that barred the display of Confederate symbols. Putting aside both of those, there was no debate in committee and no debate on the House floor. Why? Because we achieved bipartisan consensus in formulating these amendments. They were then offered en bloc and without debate; you know, were supported by both Democrats and Republicans.

So that was in the House. There are fewer diversity and inclusion provisions in the Senate, but those too had little if any debate. So I think that when they go to conference, they should easily have bipartisan support. And I have had conversation with Secretaries Esper and McCarthy, as well as the Navy secretary, the CNO, the chairman, and other senior uniformed officials of the Pentagon. I said, look, guys, I know how this process works, OK? And sometimes things go into conference and you wonder why they never made it out of conference. And I'm just asking you to make a commitment to call off any effort by anybody in the Pentagon to undermine these efforts in conference. And I got a commitment from all of them that we embrace these provisions. They give us the tools to do what we know we need to do. So I'm pretty confident that we're going to see the lion's share of these provisions come out intact from the conference committee.

Kathleen H. Hicks: Great. I'm going to move to audience questions. We have a number here. Let me start on the issue of veterans preference, which is a goal for the United States Congress and the executive branch for years and years but, at times, can conflict, this audience member writes, crowd out, if you will, opportunities for women and minorities. This is about veterans preference in federal hiring, just to be clear, and it's specifically here with regard to civilian national security jobs. Have you all thought through how to reconcile these competing interests in veterans preference and growing populations that aren't well-represented, perhaps, in the veterans applicant pool?

Representative Brown: You know, it's a great question. And it also highlights how sometimes in furtherance of one goal – a very important goal, right? Veterans, men and women who put on the uniform and have taken it off. And we owe them, you know, a debt of gratitude that many say we'll never able to repay. So one part of trying to repay them is preference in contracting and hiring. And that's a worthy goal. And sometimes in pursuit of that goal it runs counter to other goals, like diversity by race, gender, and ethnicity.

And there are plenty of examples of that. And I'm going to give you one other example, and there may be disagreement on – among the participants on this, but I think this is another example. The House just recently passed a bill that would – and I'm going to try to give the simplest version as I understand it – in order to address the problems faced by for-profit colleges who are taking advantage of veterans, preying on those with federal support for education dollars – they often take their dollars and they don't give them a quality education, and they don't get a job afterwards. So we're trying to fix that.

Well, one of – an amendment that was offered this year was to – when it comes to the tuition assistance program, let's include that in the federal dollars that are counted. Here's the problem with that: So the goal is good. Let's not have schools prey on anyone, let alone veterans, military – that benefit from this. Here's the problem, a disproportionate number of military that use the tuition assistance program are women and servicemember of color, because a lot of them save their new GI Bill for their kids.

So you're now saying, OK, to fix this one problem, which is laudable, the responsibility or the burden will be more so on the shoulders of men – I'm sorry – of women and servicemembers of color. So you often are in pursuit of these goals that are worthy, but you've got to take a step back and say: Hey, how do we reconcile the two? And I think what you've got to do is you have to make a commitment. It's got to be in sort of the mission statements of agencies. It's got to be considered in every piece of legislation we pass, is what is the impact on race, gender, and ethnicity in what we do?

We're pursuing veterans? Great. What's the impact on race, gender, and ethnicity? We want to improve small business participation in something? Impact here. Much like the way that we do – or the requirement when a federal regulation is

promulgated you have to analyze the impact on small businesses and the cost of implementing the regulation. We should have a similar analysis when it comes to equity issues. What is the impact, equitably, on race, gender, and ethnicity?

Kathleen H. Hicks: That's great. We have a question also that – clearly the questioner is well-aware that you are both a Harvard Law School graduate and a former member of the Judge Advocate Corps. And their question is, there's a common thread – this is sort of the premise – there's a common thread between the way in which we frame up police violence cases and war crimes cases in which we are framing that we ask police and military servicemembers to do very hard jobs, and we shouldn't try to second guess – this theory would go – how they choose to apply force. How do you think about whether there are lessons from the military justice system that might have application on the police violence side to help reconcile this instinct to both look out for troops who are doing hard jobs in difficult environments, but make sure they're doing it within the norms and rules of law?

Representative Brown: Sure. I think for starters – and I don't know if this is – this is not necessarily directly answering the question in terms of analyzing the Uniform Code of Military Justice as part of my response or my answer. But what we need to first and foremost do is change the culture and local law enforcement from one of warrior to one of guardian and protector, and that's the – that's the real challenge.

When we do make these comparisons, it's only because for far too long we have viewed police departments as these sort of paramilitary, warlike departments. And why do we do that? Well, history shows us that, you know, back – as far back as when the fugitive slave laws were enforced, we said to sheriff departments, which were the predecessors to most police departments, said, hey, your responsibility using all means necessary: identify fugitive slaves and return them. So what does that mean? Anybody who's Black, that alone is a basis to stop them, question them, detain them if necessary, and whether you're right or wrong go ahead and try to return them to some Southern state and they'll sort it out when they get there. That was – that was what the mission was. Then you had slavery, and then post-slavery in this effort to maintain sort of some bondage and enslavement of people, the result was mass incarceration. So, you know, that's the early stages, and then the evolution of police departments ever since.

So they have this warrior mentality. And sure, we should make sure that we're protecting warriors and we're not inhibiting their ability to apply force and to defend themselves and articulate rules of engagement. But that shouldn't be the starting point to analyze how we protect law enforcement. We should protect them by changing the culture – say, hey, you're a guardian and you're a protector. When you show up on the beat, it's not to track down and pursue criminals, because they're out there, but it's to stand by law-abiding businesses and families and schools and people to make sure that they are protected.

And if you use that incident that occurred in Atlanta post-George Floyd, classic example. Law enforcement shows up at a business, good. Business says, hey, we have somebody sleeping in a car at a business, we need protection. That's good. Well, what do they do? They turn that into a very aggressive scenario. The person is actually fleeing and they pursue, which the pursuit itself was doing nothing to protect that business. And as a result, a sleeping man became a dead man.

So we've got to really change that warrior mentality within law enforcement. That will better serve the community. It certainly will serve to reduce and one day eliminate the racial disparities in that treatment and that engagement between law enforcement and the community. And ultimately, it will better protect police officers in doing their job.

Kathleen H. Hicks: We also have a question on the growth in White supremacy movements – or at least the growing outing, if you will, of White supremacists in terms of their online activity and use of violence – and a question about the degree to which your legislative proposals have addressed the military's role for military members who are part of such groups.

Representative Brown: Well, and thank you for that question. I mean, we saw just last month, in June, I think every week last month there were at least four, if not more, arrests and indictments and the initiation of criminal proceedings against current and former members of the military for plots to engage in violent activity, and linked to White nationalism and supremacy. There is no doubt – and it is widely recognized and acknowledged among military leadership – that we have a problem in the military. So this year's NDAA – it's our second run at it, because we tried it last year and it got watered down – we think an important tool

for commanders is to include in the periodic – I think in most cases they're annual – workplace climate – command-climate surveys, both for the civilian workforce and the military workforce, to include questions about, you know, your experience or observations of anti-Semitism, racism, White nationalism, supremacism, et cetera, because we know that – I think it's 73 percent of servicemembers of color and 43 percent of all servicemembers that say – I think the Military Times did a recent survey. They've witnessed, have experienced that.

So commanders need that tool. They need to know whether it's going on in our – in my ranks, the ranks of my – and we had a provision last year and it got watered down by the Senate in conference, so we're making another run at that. There's another provision that originated on the Senate side that would do much better screening during recruitment so we can identify and weed out – that helps the military; may not better help society – but to weed out those that have those type of extremist, violent views, although in some ways – I should backtrack – it actually may benefit society, because what happens is you get these young, you know, people with these bad beliefs, and then they perfect a skill to kill in the military, and then they take that back out into society.

Kathleen H. Hicks: Well, you're also demonstrating that it's disqualifying, which I think, you know, gives an opportunity – right – gives an opportunity for reform.

Representative Brown: That's right.

Kathleen H. Hicks: We have some questions that reflect back on things that we have already talked about. But I do want to read one just because the gentleman identifies himself. Brigadier General James Gorham, first and only Title 32 African American general in the North – excuse me – North Carolina National Guard. And he asks, how do we create an environment that provides a pool of qualified African American officers for consideration for promotion to the general-officer tank – I think it means rank – when all the current general officers are of the majority?

And I just want to pin onto that one thing we didn't talk about that's in your legislative package, which is the PANORAMA Act, which gets to an issue of nominations, for example, to the service academies and mandates race, gender, ethnicity and other demographic metrics for academy nominations to be collected and published. So that's one. Obviously, the

academies aren't the only path and not the majority path to accession, but welcome you talk about both the academies themselves and then this broader issue of the pool.

Representative Brown: Sure. So we have to look at these pre-commissioning programs. The PANORAMIC (sic; PANORAMA) Act sheds some light on what Congress is doing to better pursue diversity and inclusion by reporting on the demographics of those candidates who are nominated by members of Congress. I think that will go a long way. The things that are watched in government are the things that get done. So I think that's very important.

I was speaking with a retired – and by the way, General, congratulations for your achievements, and thank you for your service in the Guard and in uniform. I was speaking to some of your retired colleagues, some four-star African American generals, who said send each service academy – but we were really focusing on West Point at this point, at this time – send them 10 African American majors in the combat arms to be PSMs – PMSs – professors of military science.

You need mentors. You need role models, both at West Point and also at the ROTC programs. I've visited a number of ROTC programs, particularly at HBCUs, where they bring in a captain who's been in the combat arms to mentor some of the cadets about the benefits of selecting a combat-armed branch as a consideration.

We need to make greater investments in that – have the role models, have the information, have the mentors in both – at both the service academies and in the ROTC programs. I think that'll go a long way.

Also you've got to spend a lot of time with families, because I spoke – I've been in a lot of living rooms, and mom and dad do not want their youngsters, first of all, going into the military; and then, second of all, if they do, going into the combat arms. And you know, I've had my team work some data – we're trying to work on some data. We want to make a – we're trying to make a case to families about how dangerous the military is. And I'm going to give you these two data points. It's imperfect. It's – and I would be reckless to use it beyond this forum because we're still working it.

In Baltimore City, since 2007, 84 percent of homicides, the victim is Black. In that same time period, of the I think 6(,000)

or 7,000 combat deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan, 8 percent were Black. And that's just looking at – in Afghanistan and Iraq. If you broaden it to the entire force, the percentage of men and women of color in uniform who are dying is – it's – people die when they go to war. And that's a fact. But don't use that – and this is someone who went to war, so I – don't deprive your child, your neighbor, or anyone of the honor of military service, the benefits of military service. It is dangerous. Inform the person of the – of the hazards that they're getting into. Let them make a choice.

So long-winded response to your question. But thank you for the question.

Kathleen H. Hicks: No, that was great. And, Congressman, we have one more question. We're slightly over time. Would you indulge me to ask – go ahead and ask the question?

Representative Brown: Yeah, I'm – I think I'm good on voting here, so absolutely.

Kathleen H. Hicks: OK. Great. We have a question about the removal of photos from the promotion packets. And the question is on what's the workaround, essentially, for verifying for the board members who are reviewing those packages the professionalism and military bearing, and the examples given – obviously, there are issues around physical well-being, height, weight, et cetera. But then also that photos – it's common that the photos allow board members to ensure all medals, badges, ribbons, and other accoutrements are properly reported and worn. Welcome your thoughts.

Representative Brown: Right. And I appreciate the question. And I don't want to discount it or trivialize it. I've been through many DA photos. And those photographers are really good at shedding about 10 pounds off of everybody. (Laughter.) Number one. Number two is, show me a military photo where the ribbons and badges are improperly worn, and you will show me that one photo in probably 10,000. Men and women who go before the board spend probably too much time on the photo and make sure they get it right. So I understand the question made but, look, the question is whether I can wear my badges and ribbons in the right order. The question is, what is my record of achievement and my contribution to the service.

Oh, you've got a Bronze Star? I don't care whether you wear it or not, because regulations say I don't have to wear it anyway.

And so you've got a Bronze Star, hey, let's take a look at that. That's great. Oh, you did it while you were in command of the combat brigade team in Fallujah? Wow, that's great. And you've got great ratings and performance. That's what I need to be looking at. Regarding physical bearing and PT, that's on the form. I filled out and I've been rated a bazillion times in the military. There's a block that you check, you know? Shows – displays military bearing. And it's on there. So I just don't think that the photo is the way that you should be doing it.

In a colorblind world, I say sure. No problem. But again, I point to studies. Studies have demonstrated that with the photo and with that identifying information, if you take a selection board and you give them 50 – and I know that there's much more than 50 – whatever the number is, you're going to get a less diverse group of selectees. You give them the very same packages to the very same board, you eliminate the photo, you get a much more diverse. And why is that? It's called bias. And it's implicit. And it's subconscious. We don't know that we're doing it, but it's done. And studies show that it's done. So there are many ways that we can make sure that people have military bearing, they're physically fit, that they're not misrepresenting their record. I don't think the photo is the best tool to do that.

Kathleen H. Hicks: Well, Congressman Brown, you've been very generous with your time. Thank you so much for that. But especially thank you for your leadership. You mentioned at the beginning that this is an inflection point. I'm inclined to agree with you. But even inflection points take leadership to maximize the opportunity. So thank you for all that you and your colleagues are doing on behalf of the U.S. military and our society.

Representative Brown: Thank you, Dr. Hicks. And thank you to you and your colleagues at CSIS, and to all the participants today.

Kathleen H. Hicks: Goodbye.

Representative Brown: Bye.

(END)