

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

April 11, 2022

General Mark Milley  
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff  
Department of Defense, Pentagon  
9999 Joint Staff Pentagon, Washington, DC 20318-9999

Dear General Milley:

We are writing to follow-up on your testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee on September 28th, 2021 and the House Armed Services Committee on September 29th, 2021.


You were questioned about controversial statements you allegedly made to the authors of several recent books.

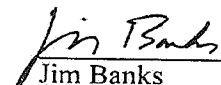
Specifically, we are gravely concerned about your alleged statements to Bob Woodward and Robert Costa that appear in their book, *Peril*. Some raise questions about your commitment to civilian control of the military, the statutory chain of command, and the command authority of the Commander-in-Chief and President of the United States. Those issues have a direct bearing on guiding principles of our democracy.

Our questions are attached.

We hope your answers will allow us to resolve these troublesome issues in prompt and satisfactory manner. We ask that your answers be provided no later than April 25, 2022. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

  
Charles E. Grassley  
United States Senator

  
Jim Banks  
Member of Congress

## Questions for General Milley

### Chain of Command

#### Background

According to the book *Peril*, you were “certain Trump had gone into serious mental decline ... and could go rogue and order military action or use nuclear weapons, without going through required procedures.” You had to “take any and all necessary precautions” to prevent that from happening. You “wanted to find a way to **inject**, if not require, that **second opinion**.” You needed to “**pull a Schlesinger ... to contain Trump and maintain the tightest possible control of ... military communication and command authority.**” To execute your plan, you summoned senior operations officers from the National Military Command Center (NMCC) to your office. You made each one take an oath not to “act” on the President’s orders without checking with you first.

#### Questions

- Is this an accurate summary of what you told the authors of *Peril*? If not, please clarify as needed.
- What exactly led you to believe President Trump might launch an unprovoked nuclear attack against China?
- Since you testified to Congress that you “were certain, guaranteed certain, President Trump did not intend on attacking the Chinese,” why would you tell the authors of *Peril* that you had to “take any and all precautions” to prevent an attack that you were certain would not happen?
- Before acting, did you take those concerns directly and immediately to the top civilian leader in the statutory chain of command, the Acting Secretary of Defense Chris Miller, or Deputy Secretary of Defense David Norquist since Miller had not been confirmed? If not, why not?
- Did you clear your order to NMCC operations officers with the top civilian command authority? If not, why?
- If the NMCC officers had called you and told you the president had issued an order to attack, were you prepared to overrule the commander-in-chief’s order to launch an attack? If not, what would you have done?
- The book *Peril* suggests you did not share your decision to “pull a Schlesinger outside the tightest possible circle.” Who was in this circle? Did anyone object?
- Are your NMCC instructions still in place, or have they been rescinded and by whom?

### Civilian Control of the Military

#### Questions

- “Pulling a Milley” is very different from “pulling a Schlesinger.” What is the difference?

- Explain why “pulling a Milley” would not jeopardize America’s sacred principle of civilian control of the military?
- You allegedly told the authors of *Peril*: You “felt no absolute certainty that the military could control or trust Trump.” Those words do not seem to be compatible with the principle of civilian control of the military. Isn’t the commander-in-chief supposed to exercise control over the military and not vice versa? Please explain.

## Contemptuous Words about Commander-in-Chief

### Background

Law and regulation prohibit military personnel from making partisan political statements to the press or making disrespectful statements about the commander-in-chief.

You appear to have made numerous statements in the book *Peril* about the commander-in-chief that could be characterized as disrespectful.

Though you testified you did not portray the President in a negative light and were not qualified to determine his mental health, the first chapter of *Peril* clearly states that “you were certain Trump had gone into serious mental decline ... is now all but manic, screaming at officials and constructing his own alternate reality ... could go rogue ... And you were uncertain the military could control or trust him.” Your concerns about the President’s mental health also surfaced in the context of a conversation with Mr. Pompeo. You “confided that you believed Trump was in a mental decline.” Portions of your private exchange with Mr. Pompeo appear in the book as direct quotes.

### Question

- Do you think it is wise and appropriate for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to (1) make derogatory remarks about the commander-in-chief that appear in the public domain and (2) allow yourself to become a centerpiece in such a partisan piece of work?