

Peter Beshar Opening Statement

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, and distinguished Members of this Committee. I consider it the honor of my life to be nominated by President Biden to serve as the General Counsel of the Department of the Air Force and have the opportunity to appear before this Committee.

A moment like this is really about all those who have supported you. At the top of that list is my dear family. Mr. Chairman, thank you for recognizing my wife, Sarah, who has been at my side for 31 blessed years, and our children, Isabel, Henry and Sophie.

I would like to offer my comments within the framework of the three priorities set by Secretary Austin for the Department of Defense.

First, defend the nation.

Non-kinetic attacks pose a significant threat to our national security. As the Air Force develops the next generation air dominance program, modernizes its nuclear enterprise and communication systems, and builds out the Space Force, cybersecurity and technological innovation will be critical priorities.

Over the past decade, I have developed domain expertise in cybersecurity, with a particular focus on public-private partnerships to protect our critical infrastructure. I have had the privilege of testifying before many of you in prior appearances before the Senate Homeland Security, Banking and Commerce Committees about ways in which government and industry must come together to protect our critical assets against cyber threats.

Second, take care of our people.

The brave men and women of our armed forces represent the best of America. To honor their commitment and sacrifice, society has a solemn responsibility to equip them properly and care for them - as well as their families and our veterans. As recent reports have shown, there is important work that needs to be done to fully honor this commitment.

Early in my career, I had the great privilege of serving as the Special Assistant to former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance in the peace negotiations in the Balkans. It was my first exposure to war, and it sparked a profound respect for our military and an abiding interest in our national security.

As Chair of the Veterans' Committee at John Jay College for Criminal Justice and executive sponsor of our veterans' program at Marsh McLennan, I spearheaded a series of initiatives, under the banner "We've Got Your Six," to provide veterans with job opportunities and enhanced benefits.

If confirmed, one of my top priorities would be to support Secretary Kendall and the rest of the Department's leadership in implementing the sexual assault reforms recently adopted by Congress and fostering a culture of integrity and inclusion.

Third, succeed through teamwork.

In this era of strategic competition, the security challenges before our country require close collaboration – across the Executive branch, with Congress, with industry and with our allies.

For the past 17 years, I have served as the General Counsel of Marsh McLennan, a global professional services firm that specializes in risk management. With the support of my colleagues, I have built a world-class, and diverse, legal and compliance team. I have also developed the project management skills to drive policy change across an organization of more than 80,000 employees in 100 countries.

If confirmed, I look forward to partnering with the civilian and military lawyers within the Department to provide sound and pragmatic advice to support the mission articulated by Secretary Kendall:

"One Team. One Fight."

I want to thank each of the members of this Committee for your consideration.

I look forward to your questions.