

STATEMENT OF CHRISTOPHER P. MAIER
NOMINEE TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS
AND LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT
BEFORE THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, and distinguished Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear today as President Biden's nominee for Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict. I appreciate your consideration of my nomination, and thank you to Senator Manchin for his kind introduction.

This Committee has long supported the people of our nation's Special Operations enterprise and the essential missions they conduct in our defense. I am humbled to be nominated to serve alongside the women and men of our special operations forces who continue to inspire us through their commitment to excellence in executing our nation's most challenging military missions. We must not lose sight of the sacrifice that they, as well as their families, continue to make on our behalf.

I have been blessed with a large and loving family, who have challenged me throughout my life to seek a calling of service to others. To my parents, Donna and Paul, your careers of service to others set the example for all of us. To my wife Emily, I thank you for all your support, for your two decades of service as a Naval officer, and for the mother you are to our son. I also would like to acknowledge the unsung national security professionals with whom I have served in the Intelligence Community and the Defense Department over my career, and my fellow airman in the West Virginia Air National Guard—all of you have modeled the commitment to service that inspires me today.

I appreciate the confidence of President Biden and Secretary Austin in nominating me at such a dynamic and strategically important time for the Special Operations community. Congress created the position of ASD(SO/LIC) in 1986, and this Committee's leadership and continued support for the organization have been instrumental in strengthening civilian oversight of Special Operations. The Department's recent reforms further bolster the roles and responsibilities of ASD(SO/LIC) through a unique direct-reporting relationship to the Secretary of Defense, while ensuring special operations and low-intensity conflict policy is integrated with the Under

Secretary of Defense for Policy. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this Committee to continue to implement these reforms.

As the security challenges facing our nation grow increasingly complex, Special Operations Forces (SOF) will remain critical to U.S. efforts in conducting sustainable counterterrorism, competing for influence with near-peer rivals, and responding to crises. To meet these new and evolving missions, the Special Operations enterprise is undertaking its most comprehensive transformation in a generation. Broadening of skills, rapid fielding of technology, creative adaptation of tactics, and partnering for outsized effects will be even more essential. If confirmed, I will work every day to ensure ASD(SO/LIC) provides the essential leadership and guidance to evolve the force and missions.

As part of this transformation, we must redouble our commitment to ensuring SOF can recruit, develop, and retain the diversity of talent necessary to compete globally. A more diverse force integrates new skills, learned experiences, and perspectives that I believe is an operational imperative. I am committed to ensuring we are providing the necessary role models and resources to recruit and retain that talent in our formations.

We also must ensure that SOF represent the values and ideals of the nation we serve. If confirmed, I will work closely with USSOCOM in implementing the recommendations from its comprehensive review of SOF culture and ethics. Sexual assault and harassment, extremist behavior, and criminal activities violate our oath and corrode the force.

Fundamental to the success of SOF is, and will remain, its people. USSOCOM is the standard bearer for caring for its personnel, from the Preservation of the Force and Family, to the Warrior Care program. As we continue to learn of new challenges across the physical, psychological, cognitive, cultural, and spiritual domains, I am committed, if confirmed, to ensuring that every member of the SOF community receives the best possible care, and is ready to compete, deter, and win in a changing global landscape.

I look forward to your questions and thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today.