

Opening Statement
General Counsel of the Department of the Air Force

Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished members of this Committee: thank you for the chance to appear here today as the President's nominee to be General Counsel of the Department of the Air Force. I am profoundly grateful to President Trump for the trust he placed in me when he chose to put my name forward to be considered by the Senate. I thank Secretary Hegseth and Secretary Meink for the opportunity to serve, as well as Senator Blackburn for supporting my nomination. But above all else, I owe my gratitude to our Lord, Jesus Christ, for the countless blessings he has bestowed on me throughout my life. Chief among them has been my wife, Katie.

She and I met in 2017 when we were working as special counsels for Chairman Grassley on Justice Gorsuch's confirmation hearing. Although Katie has an especially impressive career as an attorney—both in government and in private practice—she always places our family first. I would not be here today without her steadfast support and love. Of all her accomplishments, however, I think she would agree that her greatest is our three children, Catherine, Elizabeth, and William, who are here with us today.

For centuries, my ancestors took up arms to defend our great Republic. Both of my grandfathers served at sea in the United States Navy during the Second

World War. My father volunteered for Vietnam as a Green Beret with the Fifth Special Forces Group, during which time he fought in the Tet Offensive. My uncle followed him to Vietnam soon after as a United States Marine. One of the greatest honors of my life was to continue that tradition. As a Cavalry Officer in Iraq, I got to see first-hand why the American military is the pride of our Nation and the envy of the world.

As I learned during my time in service, perhaps the greatest bulwark standing between our nation's prosperity and those who would do us harm is the United States Air Force. Although while deployed we had to be ever vigilant of the threat Al-Qaeda in Iraq posed to our soldiers on the ground, we could always be confident that our Airmen owned the skies. There was nothing more terrifying to an insurgent fighter—and nothing more reassuring to our soldiers—than the sound of an American fighter jet. As we saw in July, America's ability to project lethal force to any spot on the globe is unparalleled. We owe a great debt of gratitude to the Airmen who make that possible.

As our Union nears its 250th birthday, however, owning the skies is not enough. Space is the next battlefield. Yielding hegemony over that theater to our adversaries would end the primacy of the American military, squandering what thousands of Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines have fought to secure as a birthright for the American people. President Trump's prescient decision to create

the Space Force in 2019 may prove to be the greatest strategic military decision in generations. In the Twenty-First Century, American security depends on owning not only the skies, but the heavens; we must be prepared to dominate space.

If confirmed as General Counsel of the Department of the Air Force, I would serve as chief legal officer to the United States Air Force and Space Force. In that capacity, it would be my duty to ensure that those leading our Airmen and Guardians receive the highest caliber advice and counsel. That means ensuring that the directives of the President are executed and statutes passed by Congress are obeyed. Above all else, my task would be to support and defend the Constitution—an oath I have taken on many occasions throughout my career.

As President Trump made clear, our country's greatness depends on the strength of our military. And a strong military depends on recruiting and retaining the very best—those who are most capable of destroying the enemy with overwhelming force. As General Counsel, I will commit to ensuring that Airmen and Guardians are evaluated solely on their ability to execute this fundamental task. That is precisely what the law and our Constitution require.

Finally, to accomplish its mission, our military deserves the greatest weapons and equipment in the world. If confirmed, I pledge to provide Air Force

and Space Force leaders with the legal tools they need to acquire the very best for our warfighters.

It was a privilege representing the United States as an attorney in the Department of Justice during President Trump's first term—it would be an honor to serve the President and my country once again as General Counsel of the Department of the Air Force. I thank the Committee for its time this morning, and I look forward to your questions.