

Robert S. Karem
Opening Statement
Senate Armed Services Committee
May 18, 2017

Mr. Chairman, Senator Reed, Members of the Committee on Armed Services – it is an honor to appear before you this morning as a nominee to become Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs.

Leader McConnell, thank you for your very generous introduction. I am tremendously grateful for the confidence you showed in me seventeen years ago – the experiences, opportunities, and lessons provided by my tenure in your office played an essential role in inspiring a career in public service that has led to my appearing before this Committee today.

I would like to thank the President of the United States and the Secretary of Defense for my nomination. If confirmed, it would be a tremendous and humbling honor to serve our country at the Department of Defense.

Let me also thank my friends, mentors, and former bosses, colleagues, and counterparts, without whose support I would likely not be here today.

I am particularly grateful some of my family could join me this morning.

My parents, Fred and Suzanne, of Lexington, Kentucky and my brother, Fred, of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, are joined by my girlfriend, Alina Polyakova.

My sister, Rebecca Hughes, of Birmingham, Alabama could not be here today, but I am immensely proud of the amazing mother my little sister has become to her four children.

The responsibilities of the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs cover the vast majority of the globe, and stretch across five combatant commands. It is impossible these days to open a newspaper without confronting bold face headlines about some conflict, crisis, or challenge with which the dedicated government servants and military personnel who work in ISA are already ably grappling.

The national security policy challenges these quiet professionals confront everyday are real, and they are sobering.

If confirmed, it would be a great privilege to serve alongside these American patriots to help rebuild America's military capabilities and readiness, bolster and modernize critical alliances such as NATO while rebalancing burden-sharing within these alliances, strengthen U.S. credibility and influence in regions of strategic interest, defeat ISIS and other terrorist groups, confront Russian and Iranian aggression, combat new cyber threats, and create conditions favorable for safeguarding our national security and promoting America's economic prosperity.

If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this Committee, and with the Congress as a whole, to address these and other national security challenges facing our country.

I am grateful for your consideration of my nomination, and I look forward to your questions.

Thank you.