

**OPENING STATEMENT OF U.S. SENATOR JACK REED
CHAIRMAN, SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**ROOM SD-G50
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Tuesday, March 22, 2022**

*To conduct a confirmation hearing on the nominations of
Honorable William LaPlante to be Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and
Sustainment;*

*Mr. Erik Raven to be Under Secretary of the Navy;
Ms. Tia Johnson to be a Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Armed
Forces;*

*Dr. Marvin Adams to be Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs, National
Nuclear Security Administration*
(As prepared for delivery)

REED: The Committee meets this morning to consider the nominations of Dr. William LaPlante to be Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, Mr. Erik Raven to be Under Secretary of the Navy, Ms. Tia Johnson to be a Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces, and Dr. Marvin Adams to be Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs for the National Nuclear Security Administration. On behalf of the Committee, I want to thank each of you for your willingness to return to public service.

I would also like to welcome the guests and family members who are present today. I am pleased to recognize Secretary Ash Carter, who will introduce Dr. LaPlante; Senator Jon Tester, who will introduce Mr. Raven; Secretary Jeh Johnson, who will introduce Ms. Johnson; and Ambassador Linton Brooks, who will introduce Dr. Adams. Additionally, Dr. LaPlante, I welcome your brother, John; Mr. Raven, I welcome your wife, Ann; and Ms. Johnson, I welcome your husband, Al. We are grateful to each of you for your support.

Dr. LaPlante, you are well qualified to be Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, or USD(A&S). You have decades of technical expertise from your current role as President and CEO of the Charles Stark Draper Laboratory, as well as your previous service as the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition during the Obama administration.

The USD(A&S) has a wide range of duties, including delivering timely, cost-effective capabilities for the armed forces; supervising all elements of the defense acquisition enterprise and the defense industrial base; overseeing the modernization of our nuclear forces; and serving as the principal advisor to the Secretary on acquisition, sustainment, and core logistics.

If confirmed, streamlining and expediting the acquisition process must be one of your highest priorities. We need to field equipment to our warfighters quickly while also ensuring acquisitions remain on budget. Although some progress has been made in recent years, the Defense Department's acquisition process still remains on the Government Accountability Office's "High Risk List."

Similarly, the Department must improve the operation and sustainment of weapons systems over their life cycles—a cost that is often overlooked in the acquisition process. Dr. LaPlante, I would like to know how you would plan to address these challenges.

Mr. Raven, you are nominated to the second highest position in the Department of the Navy. Your experience on the Senate Appropriations defense subcommittee will serve you well in this role. If confirmed, you will face a number of critical issues that confront the Department of the Navy.

The Navy and Marine Corps have historically had to deal with the day-to-day strains of deployment and high operating tempos. With concerns about the readiness of our deployed and non-deployed forces, the next Under Secretary's efforts in managing improvements in the force and its supporting structure will be crucial. In addition, the Navy is tested to meet today's priorities while also shifting investments to support our long-term strategic competition with China and Russia. Mr. Raven, I look forward to your testimony on how we can best balance these challenges.

Ms. Johnson, you are nominated to be a Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces. If confirmed, you would serve a 15-year term on the court. You bring a distinguished career of service as an Army judge advocate, national security counsel in the Obama Administration, and Professor of Law at Georgetown University.

The Court of Appeals of the Armed Forces is the senior appellate court with exclusive jurisdiction over the Uniform Code of Military Justice, sometimes regarded as the "Supreme Court of military law." Ms. Johnson, based on your uniformed and civilian career experiences, I would like to know what you view as

the key strengths and weaknesses of the military justice system, including the fairness and effectiveness of the system.

In addition, the FY22 NDAA implemented extensive changes to the UCMJ, including a statute that would criminalize sexual harassment under some circumstances. I hope you will share your views on the Court of Appeal's role in reviewing challenges and issues with the recent Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment statutes, including your view on defendants' rights under the UCMJ.

Dr. Adams, you are nominated to be Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs for the National Nuclear Security Administration, or NNSA. You have had a distinguished career at Texas A&M University conducting research on nuclear science, serving on numerous advisory boards at the NNSA, and recently helping Los Alamos National Laboratory develop its plutonium manufacturing operations.

If confirmed, you will assume an expansive range of duties. You will oversee more than 50,000 contractors and NNSA federal employees, with a budget of \$16 billion, while simultaneously meeting the Defense Department's construction and stockpile requirements.

Dr. Adams, I would like to know your views on how to meet the Defense Department's requirements while at the same time preserving the core scientific capabilities at our national laboratories.

Thank you, again, to our nominees. I look forward to your testimonies.

I understand that Senator Tester has an engagement beginning shortly, so I would ask that he deliver his introduction immediately following Senator Inhofe's opening statement.

Let me now turn to Ranking Member Inhofe.