

OPENING STATEMENT OF AUSTIN J. DAHMER

TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF WAR FOR STRATEGY, PLANS, AND FORCES

BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES, U.S. SENATE

Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished members of the Committee on Armed Services, good morning.

It is an exceptional honor to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee for Assistant Secretary of War for Strategy, Plans, and Forces. I am profoundly grateful for this opportunity to continue to serve our nation.

I want to express my deep and abiding gratitude to President Trump for nominating me for this critical role, and to Secretary Hegseth, Deputy Secretary Feinberg, and Under Secretary Colby for their trust and leadership. I am fully committed to implementing the President's agenda for American defense strategy, focused on putting Americans' interests first and realizing the President's vision of Peace Through Strength.

To my family, who are here today and those watching from afar – your unwavering love and support have been my constant foundation throughout my career. Especially to my remarkable wife Ellie, herself a veteran of the United States Marine Corps, and to my darling daughter Sutton, thank you for your endless understanding, encouragement, and love. I could not do this without you, and I thank God for you every day.

Members of the Committee, the role of Assistant Secretary of War for Strategy, Plans, and Forces to which President Trump nominated me comes with genuinely profound responsibilities, especially at such a critical time for our national security. Peace and the protection of American interests cannot be assumed. We must ensure our military coheres under a sound defense strategy; that it has the forces, plans, and posture to execute the strategy; that our efforts to arm allies and partners strengthen and do not detract from our ability to execute our strategy; and that, ultimately, the Joint Force is able to deter our rivals, and if deterrence fails, give the President the best possible military options to prevail in conflict.

My career has been dedicated to grappling with these precise challenges. President Trump appointed me to the Department on January 20th and for the last nine months, I have had the opportunity to lead various parts of the Policy organization ensuring that the Department's strategic approach is aligned with the President's Peace Through Strength agenda.

My tenure in Congress as a Senate National Security Advisor provided me invaluable experience. My work here for the Article I branch of government has given me a deep appreciation for the vital role this body plays in our national defense. During this time, I traveled extensively across the United States and the Indo-Pacific, gaining firsthand insights into the strategic and operational challenges facing our warfighters, especially in the face of China's extraordinary military buildup.

My other work prior to my time on Capitol Hill has also provided me with extensive experience relevant to the role to which President Trump has nominated me. My academic and research background underscores my commitment to rigorous, fact-based thinking on defense strategy and force planning issues of the type that is required in this role. My work in the defense industry on a broad array of strategic and military-technical issues provides a range of insights on which to draw. I also continue to leverage my experience as a ground intelligence officer in the United States Marine Corps, for what it taught me as a leader and for the direct experience it affords me of operational planning, military forces and capabilities, readiness, and related issues. This blend of strategic thinking and practical experience is what I assess is needed to meet the moment in this role, and if confirmed, I pledge to leverage every ounce of my experience to ensure our strategy is sound and our forces are optimized to execute it.

I pledge to be a faithful partner to this Committee, actively supporting your critical oversight responsibility, and seeking your input, as we work together toward the common goal of securing our nation and protecting our freedoms.

Thank you again for this tremendous honor. I look forward to your questions.