

LtGen Frank Donovan, Opening Statement for SASC, January 15, 2026

Good morning, Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished members of the Committee.

It is a true honor to appear before you today as the nominee to be the next Commander of U.S. Southern Command.

I am grateful to the President, Secretary, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps for their trust and confidence in me for this nomination.

I am privileged to be alongside Lieutenant General Josh Rudd, a friend and teammate of many years.

I'll start by recognizing Admiral Alvin Holsey and his wife Doctor Stephanie Holsey, for their 37 years of selfless service.

I also want to recognize Lieutenant General Evan Pettus, who is currently leading U.S. Southern Command.

Joining me today is Kim, my wife and best friend of over 32 years. We met on the island of Crete in 1992, where we were both assigned to a small Navy installation.

Service to our nation is in Kim's blood. She was raised in a Navy family where her father, a career Navy Chaplain, served across the globe, including tours in Korea and Vietnam, during which he was awarded a Purple Heart.

A former Naval Officer, Kim's path of service makes her a passionate advocate for our military service members and their families.

Also with us today is our daughter, Sergeant Margaret Donovan, serving at the Marine Corps' Special Operations Command.

Our son, First Lieutenant Brendan Donovan, an Infantry Officer, could not be here today as he is currently in a training course to become a Reconnaissance Marine.

Also not with us today is our daughter-in-law, First Lieutenant Holly Beske, who is in her final weeks of flight school. Kim and I are incredibly proud of Maggie, Brendan, and Holly as they have not sought the easier way, but the path less traveled by the Few and the Proud.

I'll take this opportunity to thank my parents, Frank and Martha Donovan, for their example of faith, family, and service.

Enlisting at 17, my father served for 40 years, retiring as a Vice Admiral. He and my mother raised 8 children and had 29 grandchildren.

Their legacy of service lives on with 23 of our family members having served or currently serving in the U.S. military.

In addition to my parents' example, I have been profoundly impacted by the dedication, professionalism, courage, and grit of the Joint Service members I have served with in every clime and place - in peace and at war.

Their selfless example, and more specifically, the actions and examples of the noncommissioned officers and senior enlisted leaders I have served alongside, have shaped my approach to leadership, duty, and responsibility.

Over the past 37 years, I have operated in every geographic combatant command and had the honor of leading Marine Corps, Navy, Joint, and Special Operations forces across the spectrum of armed conflict, from clandestine operations to high-intensity combat on land, air, and sea.

Most of these operations were conducted shoulder to shoulder with allies and partners.

Serving as the Vice Commander of Special Operations Command, I have developed budgeting, resourcing, and audit skills, challenged and accelerated my vision of autonomous warfare, and developed close interagency and diplomatic relationships.

It is with this foundation that I approach U.S. Southern Command.

If confirmed, I fully commit to leading a warfighting headquarters capable of joint operations at range, speed, and scale.

I will collaborate closely with regional allies and partners, fellow Combatant Commanders, and the Joint Staff to protect America's vital national interests, deter war, and if necessary, win them quickly and decisively.

If confirmed, I will provide the Secretary and President candid and clear military advice, and I commit to remaining fully transparent with this Committee.

I look forward to your questions today. Thank you.