

**Opening Statement on Nomination of Eric K. Fanning**  
**Chairman John McCain**  
**Thursday, January 21, 2016**

The Senate Armed Services Committee meets this morning to consider the nomination of Eric Fanning to be Secretary of the Army. We understand that your mother Kathy is joining you this morning. As is our tradition, Mr. Fanning, we hope you will take the opportunity to introduce her and any other family and friends joining you today.

The United States Army is at war. Tested by fifteen years of war, the Army is confronting growing threats and increasing operational demands with shrinking and less ready forces and aging equipment.

By the end of the next fiscal year, the Army will be cut down to 450,000 Active-Duty personnel soldiers, down from a wartime peak of 570,000. These budget-driven force reductions were decided before the rise of ISIL or Russia's invasion of Ukraine. And if mindless sequestration cuts are allowed to return, the Army will shrink to 420,000 troops, increasing the risk that in a crisis, we will have too few soldiers who could enter a fight without proper training or equipment.

Readiness must be the first priority of the Army. As global instability increases, the Army must be able to maintain an uncommitted force in readiness to respond to unforeseen contingencies. Yet as our Army shrinks, readiness suffers. Just over one-third of the Army's brigade combat teams are ready for deployment and decisive operations.

Meanwhile, the Army is woefully behind on modernization. The Army must modernize for the harsh realities of 21st century warfare. Our soldiers must be trained and equipped for an increasingly diverse and complex range of threats. They must be able to win against peers in highly lethal, combined arms maneuver; near peers in hybrid warfare conditions; and determined, unconventional insurgents.

Yet our Army is essentially organized and equipped as it was in the 1980s. The main difference is that it is smaller. In fact, many key enabling forces like artillery, armored cavalry, and engineers have been reduced to levels that compromise the Army's ability to field campaign-quality forces.

Part of that is the legacy of the Army's acquisition record, which Secretary McHugh has said is "too often a tale of failure...too many underperforming or cancelled programs, too few successful fieldings of developmental designs, and far too many taxpayer dollars wasted."

The Army must learn the lessons of the failed acquisition programs of recent years. Together with the experience of more than a decade of war, these lessons must guide critical acquisition programs including the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle and Armored Multi-Purpose Vehicle. New acquisition authorities passed into law in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 open opportunities for both the Secretary and Chief of Staff to lead positive change.

This will not be easy, but it has been done before. Army leaders like General Abrams transformed the Army before. They restored the discipline and morale of the force in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. They transitioned the Army to an All-Volunteer Force while revolutionizing training doctrine. And they built an Army that won the Cold War and removed Saddam Hussein from Kuwait.

We need this kind of transformation again today. I am deeply concerned about the dangerous choice we are forcing upon our Army. The increasing velocity of instability combined with continued reductions in defense spending will inevitably lead to depleted readiness, chronic modernization problems, and deteriorating morale.

These are just some of the major challenges the United States Army faces. One Army Secretary will not tackle them alone. Mr. Fanning, if confirmed, you will take office with less than a year remaining in this administration. Some may question what you can realistically hope to achieve. But just as you have been patient waiting for this day to testify on your nomination, I challenge you to be impatient if confirmed as secretary. Our nation's soldiers do not need a secretary to mark time. They need a strong secretary that recognizes there is much to be done and not a minute to be wasted.