

STATEMENT OF
MATTHEW P. DONOVAN
SASC CONFIRMATION HEARING TO BE
UNDER SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE
JULY 18, 2017 at 2:30 PM

Senator Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished members of the committee. Thank you for your determined support and encouragement for the greatest asset our Nation possesses ... America's sons and daughters who continue to raise their right hands and serve their country during a time of war. If confirmed, it will be my great honor to assist Secretary Wilson and General Goldfein in leading the over 660,000 Active, Guard, Reserve, and Civilian Airmen as Under Secretary of the Air Force. I thank President Trump, Secretary Mattis, and Secretary Wilson for their confidence, and for this humbling opportunity to continue in service to our nation. I have been blessed by a family tradition of service; both my mother and father wore Air Force blue during the Korean War, and my father-in-law served in the Air Force during the Vietnam War. All have since passed on, but I am sure are watching from above.

The tradition continues; with me today is Katherine, my bride of 22 years, who is a lieutenant colonel in the Air Force Reserve. My daughter, Kelsey, is a rising senior at Ole Miss and will receive her commission through Air Force ROTC next spring. Finally, my son Matthew, who will start at Auburn University this fall, and because he has been asking me questions about flying the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, I suspect he will help keep the tradition alive.

Four decades ago this year, I boarded an airplane, for the first time in

my life, to fly off to Air Force basic training. The world security environment was different then, characterized by competition and proxy conflict between the world's two superpowers, with the U.S. military in the midst of a post-Vietnam drawdown that would continue several more years.

For the last 26 of those forty years, our Air Force has been in continuous deployed combat operations. These operations began with the air campaign of Operation DESERT STORM in 1991, and have continued non-stop through today's operations in Afghanistan, and in Iraq and Syria in the campaign against ISIS.

Also in 1991, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War, the world looked forward to a period of peace and stability; defense budgets were slashed, procurement of weapons of war reduced to a fraction of the Reagan defense buildup, and the world breathed easier that great power conflict had receded in our fears. However, conflicts continued to flare around the globe, with the horrors of terrorism becoming all too frequent and deadly.

Despite experiencing significant reductions in end strength and force structure, the extraordinary men and women of your Air Force performed admirably through those past 26 years, taking what tools Presidents, the Congress, and the American people have given them, and gotten the job

done, rising to overcome every challenge with enthusiasm and aplomb. But the Air Force has shrunk too small to do everything the nation expects it to do in today's dangerous world. The challenges the Air Force faces today are many, and reversing its capacity shortfalls in people, aircraft, and funding lies at the heart of the solution to maintaining America's dominance in the air, space, and cyberspace domains.

If confirmed, I look forward to assisting Secretary Wilson in her focus areas of restoring readiness, modernizing the force, developing leaders, and innovating for the future. I also look forward to working with this committee and the Congress to smartly increase the necessary resources for the Air Force, while remaining good stewards of hard-earned American taxpayer dollars.

In November 1934, when advocating for increased funding for the Royal Air Force, Winston Churchill warned: "To urge preparation of defense is not to assert the imminence of war. On the contrary, if war were imminent, preparations for defense would be too late." Today's opposition to increased defense preparations is represented by the limitations placed on defense spending by the 2011 Budget Control Act and its arbitrary spending caps. The BCA must be repealed, or the caps raised significantly, if the Department of Defense is to have sufficient funding to improve its capability and capacity

to “provide for the common defence.”

If confirmed, it will be my honor to work every day with Secretary Wilson and General Goldfein, and the Congress, to ensure your Air Force sustains the ability to fly, fight, and win our nation’s wars in air, space, and cyberspace. Thank you for this opportunity and I look forward to your questions.