

Opening Statement by the Honorable Marcel J. Lettre II
Nominee for
Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence
Before the Senate Armed Services Committee
December 9, 2015

Chairman McCain, Senator Reed, Members of the Committee, I am honored to be before you here this afternoon as you consider my nomination as Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence.

To begin, I'd like to introduce my family and guests in attendance today and recognize several individuals who shaped my life toward a role in public service.

I'm privileged to introduce:

- My wife Simmons;
- My daughters McKinley, age 13, and Amelia, age 11;
- My brother, Peter Lettre;
- My mother-in-law, Millie Ravenel, who drove up from Raleigh, North Carolina;
- My mother, Mary Lettre, a proud Army wife and teacher;
- And my father, Marcel Lettre, Sr., a retired Army Colonel, Airborne Ranger and Vietnam combat veteran – who, I might add, successfully avoided a Pentagon tour during his 27 years of service.

I am also pleased that a number of other friends and colleagues are in attendance today – thank you for being here.

And, finally, I would like to thank the defense leaders I have had the privilege to work for over the last seven years -- including Secretary Ash Carter, Deputy Secretary Bob Work, former Secretaries Bob Gates, Leon Panetta, and Chuck Hagel, and former Under Secretaries Mike Vickers, Michele Flournoy, and Jim Miller.

I am honored that President Obama has nominated me as Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence.

If confirmed, I will be proud to serve the men and women of the U.S. military and the defense intelligence enterprise. Our people – their dedication to mission, their skills, their agility and innovative spirit – are our true strategic advantage.

Mr. Chairman, I believe we are facing one of the most complex geostrategic landscapes we have seen in several decades, and the need for integrated, informed, cutting edge intelligence has never been greater. If confirmed, I intend to focus on three priorities.

First, fostering jointness and integration across defense intelligence – a critical source of our strategic advantage. In this regard, I look forward to a continued partnership with Director of National Intelligence Jim Clapper and the leaders of the 17 organizations that make up the Intelligence Community. I also applaud this committee’s efforts to review the record of defense and intelligence reform spurred by the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act and other subsequent reform initiatives. I welcome a dialogue on further initiatives that we can undertake to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, and agility of defense intelligence.

Second, providing intelligence support to current operations. We must bring the powerful capabilities of defense intelligence to bear on a range of pressing current operational challenges – most notably, countering ISIL, countering Russian aggression, operationalizing the Asia-Pacific rebalance, providing intelligence support to cyberdefense, countering proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and ensuring stability in Afghanistan.

Third, investing in innovative future capabilities. As the Department pursues technologies and operational concepts that will ensure a strong advantage over adversaries for decades to come – what Bob Work has called the “Third Offset” – five investment areas are particularly important for ensuring an enduring and innovative defense intelligence advantage – capabilities that ensure: global coverage; operating in anti-access, area-denial environments; counterterrorism and counterproliferation; cyberdefense; and countering insider threat. Even as resources remain constrained, we must sharpen the impressive capabilities that keep America’s superior technological edge and protect its advantages over its adversaries.

This committee’s oversight and guidance steers these efforts. I look forward to contributing to a close partnership shaped by strong and regular dialogue between defense intelligence leaders and this committee in order to further this committee’s oversight responsibilities.

We must implement our priorities in defense intelligence while being ever vigilant about the need for vigorous protection of the principles, rights and freedoms from which America gains its strength.

Our intelligence analysts must also always hear from our leaders that we expect them to speak truth to power, to call it as they see it.

And, above all, those of us privileged to serve in these positions of responsibility recognize that we owe our citizens and our families our full focus and our full energy on keeping the nation safe and secure.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

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