

Opening Statement of John C. Rood
Nominee for Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
Senate Armed Services Committee
November 16, 2017

Mr. Chairman, Senator Reed, and Members of the Committee, it's an honor to appear before you today as the nominee for Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

I would like to thank the President of the United States and the Secretary of Defense for my nomination. If confirmed, it would be an honor to again serve my country at the Department of Defense at this consequential time.

I'd also like to thank my friends and family who are here to support me, especially my wife Sandy, and my children Sydney and Jacob. I'd also like to thank my parents, Whei-Chu Chen and Jim Rood, as well as my sister Audrey Rood, who are at home in my hometown of Phoenix, Arizona. Without the love and support of my friends and family, I would not be before you today.

Mr. Chairman, in my view, today the United States faces the most complex and uncertain security environment that we have seen in my lifetime. We are faced with the rapid pace of change, the rise of threats from transnational groups, and new policies and approaches to competition by potential adversaries using all instruments of national power, be it military, economic, and political. These factors have made the security landscape more dynamic and unpredictable for which we must be more flexible and function at the speed of relevance in addressing our national security concerns.

The specter of potential conflict among the world's great powers has returned with attempts by Russia and China to carve out spheres of influence and to dominate their neighbors. Russia and China have taken an aggressive posture and shown a willingness to confront the United States and our allies, while building some very concerning military capabilities. These states have also challenged the international system put in place over the course of the 20th century that has yielded enormous benefits to the United States and the international community by providing free access and trade through the global commons, including in the sea, air, space, and cyber domains, while also providing many years of stability and security.

We are confronted with more severe threats from a longtime potential adversary, North Korea, including threats from its young leader to use long-range missiles armed with nuclear weapons against the United States. These bellicose threats serve to punctuate with an exclamation point the concerns we have had for several decades about North Korea's pursuit of missiles and weapons of mass destruction with which to threaten the United States and our allies.

In the Middle East, Iran and its proxies are engaged in military operations across a swath of territory from Tehran through Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon to the Mediterranean, as well as in Yemen. Iran's malign activities extend throughout the region and its missile and nuclear

programs and support of terrorism remain a serious threat to the United States and an existential threat to our allies in the region.

We face a continuing threat from terrorist groups and a violent extremist ideology that continues to metastasize in many regions. America's military forces remain engaged around the globe as we speak combatting this threat from groups like ISIS and Al Qaeda in places like Afghanistan and Syria.

In addition, our potential adversaries are growing their technical capabilities and we face increased threats from cyber attack; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including greater nuclear capabilities; and threats to our critical space-based capabilities.

This complex and concerning security environment compels us to act as Secretary Mattis has testified to improve the readiness and capabilities of our military, strengthen our alliances, and bring business reforms to the Department of Defense.

Our defense strategy, policies, processes, and the capabilities of the force that we field must be adapted to meet the challenges we face in the 21st century. We must rebuild America's military and reverse the erosion of the edge we have possessed over our potential adversaries.

From my past experience serving for over 20 years at the Defense Department, Central Intelligence Agency, National Security Council, State Department, and as a Senate staffer, I know the importance of using the range of U.S. diplomatic, military, intelligence, and economic capabilities in a whole-of-government approach to address these challenges. I also know the importance of maintaining and building strong relationships with friends and allies as the United States cannot do it alone.

Mr. Chairman, I have valued and enjoyed working over the past nine years in the aerospace and defense industry supporting the U.S. Government and partner nations, but my heart is drawn by patriotism to seek to serve my country again alongside the dedicated government servants and military personnel in the Department of Defense.

If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this Committee. From my time as a Senate staffer, I fully appreciate the critical role played by this Committee and the Congress as a whole in addressing the national security challenges facing our nation.

Thank you for your consideration of my nomination. I look forward to your questions.