

Statement for the Record (Oral Remarks)
Dr. Christopher J. Scolese
Nominee for Director, National Reconnaissance Office
Senate Armed Services Committee

June 4, 2019

Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished members of the committee – I am honored to appear before you as the first Presidential appointee requiring Senate confirmation for the position of Director of the National Reconnaissance Office.

Additionally, I am pleased to be here today with General Raymond as it is critical that US Space Command and NRO work closely together to assure the security of our country and our allies.

I was privileged to meet with members of the committee to hear your views and goals for the NRO. I would also like to thank the Committee staff, as I know there is a tremendous amount of preparation that goes into any confirmation hearing.

I am honored to have been nominated by the President. I am also grateful that Acting Secretary of Defense Shanahan and Director of National Intelligence Coats have the trust and confidence in my ability to serve in this new capacity. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and with the extraordinary women and men of the NRO.

I am profoundly grateful to have my wife of 38 years—Dianne—with me here today. Our four children and their spouses and children were not able to be with us today due to prior commitments. Their unconditional supports means the world to me.

Additionally, I want to remember my parents who passed away many years ago. My father was a typewriter repair man, and my mother was a secretary. They encouraged my sister and me to go to college so we could have more opportunities. I think about them daily, and the many sacrifices they made for me.

I was born and raised in Buffalo, New York, and it was a wonderful place to grow up. As a teenager, I was inspired by the machines that made space exploration possible and spent a lot of time building rockets and electronic devices that led to me winning the western New York Science Fair. That early passion set the trajectory for my career—a path that has led me to be here today as the nominee for the Director of the National Reconnaissance Office.

I am proud to have had 40 years of service in the nuclear Navy and at NASA. I have been fortunate to be involved with diverse systems, such as nuclear submarines and spacecraft, that have been instrumental in protecting our national security and advancing our knowledge of the Earth and the universe.

During the last three decades at NASA, I have held various positions involved in the design, development, acquisition, launch, and operation of space systems—large and small—scaled to accomplish our mission.

Under my leadership, Goddard Space Flight Center developed satellites and space systems to meet the requirements for NASA and other organizations. I also ensured that the valuable lessons we learned were incorporated into plans that have resulted in improved performance on recent missions for NASA, NOAA, and other partner organizations.

The continued advance of technology provides an opportunity to maintain our national space advantage in an increasingly competitive and contested environment. The combination of commercial capabilities, technological advancements, collaboration with other organizations, and government-developed systems provides opportunities to expand the supplier base, improve performance, reduce cost, and enhance resiliency.

An organization's people are at the heart of its success. At NASA, I have had the opportunity to lead and manage a large, diverse workforce. Nothing can be accomplished without the talented women and men who are motivated to accomplish the mission. I am proud of creating an environment at Goddard that was ranked as one of the best places to work in the federal government.

If confirmed, I am committed to fostering an environment at the NRO that welcomes diverse views, invites new concepts, and energizes its workforce every day. This includes recruiting, training, and retaining a world-class workforce, allowing the NRO to provide premier space reconnaissance capabilities.

In closing, the NRO is one of the fabled organizations of the space age, and the capabilities that it has provided have been instrumental in maintaining the United States strategic advantage. The NRO helps keep our country and the world safe from those who seek to do us harm.

If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee—and the entire Congress—to leverage our opportunities and address our challenges and to seek your support to ensure that the NRO continues developing and operating the world's premier reconnaissance satellites, delivering critical intelligence to policymakers, warfighters, and intelligence analysts.

If confirmed as Director, I will uphold the National Reconnaissance Office's obligations to Congress and the American people.

Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to answering your questions.

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