

Opening Statement of Frank Kendall

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as the nominee to be Secretary of the Department of the Air Force. I am honored and humbled to have this opportunity. I'd like to thank President Biden and Secretary Austin for having the confidence in me to forward my nomination for this position.

I'm joined today by my spouse, Beth Halpern and my niece, Sophie Kendall. I want to specifically thank Beth for her love and support. When I returned to government in 2010, Beth and I had been married for six years and she had no idea what she was getting into. This time is different, and I am especially grateful for her support in what we both know will be a challenging role should I be confirmed. I'd also like to acknowledge my six-year-old son James, who is quite excited about his Dad potentially having something to do with the Space Force. James is a big Star Wars fan, and his reaction when being told about his Dad's possible new job was "There's really a Space Force?" There certainly is a Space Force, and it is a critical contributor to our national security. If confirmed, I'll be honored to have a role in making it a success. I'd also like to acknowledge my grown up sons Scott and Eric, who have supported me throughout my career. I'm very proud of them and of their wives Amy and Jennifer and of my five grandchildren; in alphabetical order - Caroline, Mackenzie, Madison, Holden, and Jackson.

I'd like to briefly outline for the committee my reasons for seeking one more chapter in a long career of public service, and also to lay out some of my priorities, if this Committee and the Senate see fit to confirm my nomination. My career in national security started with a year of ROTC followed by attendance at West Point, all during the war in Vietnam. I spent ten years on active duty at the height of the Cold War, including serving in West Germany commanding an air defense unit assigned to the Fourth Allied Tactical Air Force. As a civil servant, I served in engineering positions and program management oversight roles, first for missile defense and then for all DOD tactical warfare programs. For over a decade I worked to ensure that America had the necessary weapons to deter and defeat a peer competitor – the Soviet Union. I was still in this role during the First Gulf War, when we demonstrated to the world how much conventional military dominance the US had achieved. I then spent about 15 years working in the defense industry before returning to the Pentagon in 2010. It was in 2010 that I discovered how much our potential adversaries had advanced their capabilities. China had studied our success in the First Gulf War and had embarked on an ambitious military modernization program with the clear goal to defeat the ability of the United State to project power near China. Russia was also modernizing its forces and had increased its emphasis on tactical nuclear weapons. We have made progress against these threats, and our adversaries should never doubt the United States. But there is much still to be done. My hope is that, if confirmed, I will be able to lead the Department of the Air Force in organizing, training, and equipping our nation's air and space forces so that the United States can continue to deter, and if necessary, fight and win, against all adversaries.

If confirmed, my priorities would be straightforward and mirror precisely those articulated by Secretary of Defense Austin as they apply to the Department of the Air Force; taking care of our people, mission performance, and building teams. Our military is people first and foremost. The Air and Space Forces aren't just equipment and concepts of operation. At its heart, they are the people who operate, create, and support those things. We have to do everything we can to ensure that our people have the training, the equipment, and the support they need to do their jobs, and we have to ensure that they

can do those jobs in an environment that treats everyone with dignity and respect and maximizes their potential to grow and serve the nation. With regard to mission performance, I believe the range and severity of the threats that we face and will face, the rapid pace of technological innovation, and the need to rapidly harness that technology in new operational concepts demands a sense of urgency and a laser like focus on getting our choices right. Finally, teamwork is critical, and it covers a lot of territory. Every member of a military family, every member of the total force, active, guard and reserve, the civil servants, and the industry that supports our military are all part of the team. America has an enormous strategic asset in our alliances and partnerships and one of the key roles of our armed forces is to support American diplomacy.

If I am confirmed, and with your help, I hope to move the Department of the Air Force forward in each of these areas. They are strongly interdependent and all our essential for our success. I look forward to your questions and thank you again.