

**STATEMENT OF OWEN WEST  
NOMINEE TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR  
SPECIAL OPERATIONS / LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT  
BEFORE THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed and distinguished Senators of this committee, thank you for considering my nomination which I owe to the President and Secretary Mattis. The secretary expects a lot of his team, as do our citizens. There is no more trusted institution than our military. If confirmed, I am fully committed to a wartime effort.

No one gets a tryout before this committee without being inspired by hundreds along the journey. At the top of the list is my wife, Susanne. Everyone in this room knows that when it comes to government service, it is the spouse who typically sacrifices most. Thank you for stepping up again, Suz. I love you.

Gavin and Ryan, we're very proud of you because you have heart and drive.

Next I'd like to introduce Alex Conner. Alex served as the interpreter for my advisor team in Iraq, losing his brother as a result of his service. He is here today because of the Special Immigrant Visa Program that this committee has consistently sponsored. No immigrant is more carefully vetted than the interpreter who patrols alongside our troops.

Nigel and Dianne Jones are here with their young politicians. Nigel represents all the patriotic wolves who raised me from age 13.

Neither my siblings Patrick, Alexandra and Kaki, nor my mother, Kate, could attend today, but through the magic of YouTube I want to thank them for holding me to a high standard. Mom, when I was struggling in middle school you pushed me onto an entirely different track.

Finally, my dad, Bing, had his confirmation hearing before this committee in 1981. Among the many inspirational lessons he imparted: government service is the ultimate end state; a military officer's lifetime responsibility is to take care of our fighting men and women.

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Many of our volunteers have been at war for almost sixteen years. The highest tempo has been borne in the Special Operations Command, founded thirty years ago over the objections of the DoD. Today its return on investment is indisputable. Because congressional founders looked past the Cold War, America's special operations forces were able to seize the initiative in Afghanistan just a month after 9/11.

Soon they were ordered into Iraq, honing skills that would safeguard Americans and our allies as terrorism spread across the Middle East into intercontinental outbreak. Our transnational force has built up a huge competitive advantage. General Thomas's first priority is winning the current fight. SOCOM is doing just that.

Our traditional forces are also the world's best, demonstrating conventional battlefield supremacy. So our adversaries have reacted. From cyber mayhem to territorial expansion via militia, our enemies have moved into the gaps.

SOCOM's second priority is transformation. As was the case thirty years ago, congress has also signaled change. If confirmed, I will join this effort while following Secretary Mattis's requirement that policy changes increase the lethality of the force.

Success requires a close relationship with this committee. The ASD SOLIC office and its founders have a mutual obligation to help SOCOM build the competitive advantage it has earned in counter-extremism across the burgeoning spectrum of conflict where special operations forces thrive, from suspicious peace to limited warfare.

Finally, if confirmed I will continue the current focus on SOCOM's greatest asset: its people. In November of 2001, ASD SOLIC's principal deputy, Mark Mitchell, was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for actions in Afghanistan while on horseback. Sixteen years later, his daughter Caroline will attend West Point, a 5<sup>th</sup> generation soldier. A year from now, post 9/11 babies will begin to enlist. 80% of them will have an immediate family member who served. Members of this committee have sons, daughters and spouses who have served in these wars. Some have themselves served. Modern military service isn't wide, but it is deep. We must widen the net to meet an expanding threat head on. We will prevail.

Thank you for your consideration.

