Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished Members of the Committee – thank you for the opportunity to appear before you with Acting Secretary of the Army Ryan McCarthy. I appreciate your exceptionally fast attention to our nominations. I am grateful to have met with many of you, and I hope to build a relationship with each of you.

I would like to thank the President for his nomination and the Secretary of Defense for the possibility that I may again serve our great Nation.

I would like to recognize my family who are here today. My husband, Craig . . . the love of my life and the kind of guy you would want your son to grow up to be…also, my sisters, Jill and Patty, and sister-in-law, Lori, who all travelled from western Pennsylvania to be here.

Senator McSally, thank you for your kind introduction. As the first woman to fly an aircraft engaged in combat, and also the first woman to lead a squadron in combat, you know, firsthand, what is required of our Airmen. I am grateful for your confidence and friendship.

This Committee profoundly understands the threats great power competition presents to our national interests, as properly prioritized in the National Defense Strategy. China and Russia continually challenge free and open international order, impose their authoritarian model beyond their borders, and attempt to undermine longstanding alliances.

A recent independent, bipartisan Strategy Commission appointed by Congress concluded, that the Air Force will be at the forefront of any future conflict. We cannot afford to lose our competitive edge.

If confirmed, I would work with Congress and the Administration to build upon our manpower resources to meet our national defense needs. The Air Force must not only retain its technical edge over potential adversaries, but we must expand it. If confirmed I will continue investments in modernization and advanced capabilities to better equip our Airmen to prevail in the high-end fight.

While attending to readiness, modernization, and reform, I will also work closely with our allies and deepen global partnerships.

If confirmed, standing up a Space Force would be a key imperative . . . I believe we need the Space Force, in fact, in my opinion, a domain-specific service to organize, train, and equip space forces is overdue.

Most Americans use space before their first cup of coffee in the morning. Space controls our electricity, water, financial transactions and of course, navigation, information, and communication. While space is ubiquitous, it is also invisible, and therefore often under-appreciated. American national power depends upon space and our potential adversaries know it. We must be prepared to defend critical space assets, increase the resilience of our space enterprise, and be prepared to fight and win should deterrence fail.

Finally, as we focus on organizing, training, and equipping for combat, we cannot ignore the readiness challenges close to home. We must support our airmen by addressing suicides, sexual assault, housing, and quality of life matters. Much work has been done to address these serious issues and, if confirmed, I would support and fortify those efforts.

Most Americans tuck their kids in bed at night without a thought about any foreign threat because brave men and women in uniform stand ready. It is because of their sacrifices that we all sleep well.

As an aviator I have a deep love and respect for the Air Force and the men and women (uniformed and civilian) who serve . . . and their families.

My dad, Robert Harvey McConnell, was a cowboy when he enlisted in the Army Corps of Engineers during World War II. He instilled the importance of public service in us from an early age. So I have always felt a duty to serve when called.

I would consider it a supreme privilege and responsibility to lead our Airmen and serve as the 25th Secretary of the U.S. Air Force. I look forward to your questions.