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**JAMES N. MATTIS  
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
NOMINATION HEARING STATEMENT**

Thank you Mr. Chairman. It is an honor to come before you for this confirmation hearing as the President-elect's nominee for the position of Secretary of Defense.

I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Reed, and the members of this committee for taking time to see me during my courtesy calls – and I thank you for your willingness to accommodate this hearing and consider my nomination. I have testified previously in front of this committee and I have always held it in the highest regard.

I wish to thank former Senator William Cohen for so kindly introducing me this morning. I'm grateful to the long-serving former chairman of this committee, Senator Sam Nunn, for his strong support.

It is humbling to be considered for this position, and I thank the President-elect for placing his trust and confidence in me.

I did not anticipate this request. When the call came from New York, I had a full life west of the Rockies. I was not involved in the presidential campaign and I was certainly not seeking or envisioning a position in any new administration. I relished my military career but never imagined further government service.

That said, it would be my highest honor, if I am confirmed, to lead those who volunteer to defend our country. Military service is a touchstone for American patriots of all races, genders, and creeds. The men and women of the Department of Defense – military and civilian – reflect the diverse, non-partisan, and selfless character of our national defense. They do their duty, and they honor all the previous generations of veterans and civil servants who have served and sacrificed for our country. And they return to private life as better citizens and even more grateful for what America represents in this world.

I know the Senators of this committee are well aware of the many global security challenges we face. We see each day a world awash in change; our country is still at war in Afghanistan and our troops are fighting against ISIS and other terrorist groups in the Middle East and elsewhere. Russia is raising grave concerns on several fronts and China is shredding trust along its periphery. Increasingly, we see islands of stability in our hemisphere, in Europe, and in Asia under attack by non-state actors and nations that mistakenly see their security in the insecurity of others.

We find ourselves embracing the dual reality of seeking engagement and cooperation where we can, yet defending our interests where we must. While our military maintains capable land, air, and sea forces, the cyber and space domains now demand an increasing share of our attention and investment. These realities represent the

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prominent challenges facing our military and the gravity of my leadership task if you choose to confirm me.

Our Armed Forces must remain the best led, best equipped, and most ready force in the world. There is no room for complacency and we have no God-given right to victory on the battlefield. The reset of our force has been inadequate: our military gear is heavily used and it has not been properly and fully reconstituted following 15 years of deployment and conflict. Maintenance has been insufficient: if we do not maintain our gear, the money we spend on acquisition is wasted and we will have a hollow force. Future readiness is achieved through modernization, and that too has languished and is paying the price of sequestration.

These demanding times require us to put together a strong national security team here in Washington and to work closely with our allies. If confirmed, I will lead the Department of Defense and be a forthright member of that team. I will be an advocate for our military, which is the envy of the world and represents America's awesome determination to defend herself; I will be an advocate for the President-elect's vision of a strengthened national security stance; and I recognize that I will need to be the strongest possible advocate for military and civilian personnel and their families, as we work to keep alive our experiment in democracy.

If confirmed, I will foster an atmosphere of harmony and trust at the Department of Defense and with our interagency counterparts. The defense of our country is neither partisan nor personal, rather it is collaborative; vigorous debate in private is to be expected, and the process of sorting out competing views is often untidy yet necessary to craft ultimately a coherent strategy with bipartisan support and cooperation across the government and with our allies.

We must integrate our global and regional strategies so that our response to each immediate, vexing issue does not plant the seed of a new, more dangerous problem. As swiftly as the President-elect's national security team is confirmed, I will work to make sure the strategy and military calculus are employed so that we reinforce traditional tools of diplomacy, ensuring our President and our diplomats negotiate from a position of strength. Our recent experiences have reminded us that we should engage more using all components of our national power, and use military force only when it is in the vital interest of the United States, when other elements of national power have been insufficient in protecting our national interests, and generally as a last resort.

In addition to ensuring collaboration across government and the adoption of an integrated strategy, we must also embrace our international alliances and security partnerships. History is clear: nations with strong allies thrive and those without them wither.

Strengthening our alliances requires finding common cause, even with imperfect partners; taking no ally for granted; and living up to our treaty obligations. When America gives its word, it must mean what it says. We must also promote and enlist

commensurate support from all our allies. The American taxpayer should not carry a disproportionate part of our shared defense, and all who benefit should be expected to help carry their part of the burden.

If confirmed, my watchwords will be solvency and security in providing for the protection of our people and the survival of our freedoms. My priorities as Secretary of Defense will be to strengthen military readiness, principally by increasing the lethality of the force; to strengthen our alliances in league with our diplomatic partners by collaborating with allies whenever and wherever possible; and to bring business reforms to the Department of Defense by instilling budget discipline and holding our leaders accountable. All personnel policies will be designed to bring troops home alive and victorious. I will be committed to earning the trust and confidence of the Congress – and the American people – that the Department is the best possible steward of taxpayer money.

The Department must now look across components and organizations to inform a strategic and realistic plan of potential reforms. It is imperative to disaggregate functions that add value, including those that increase the lethality of the force and help the Department achieve its aims, from functions that are duplicative and unnecessary.

If confirmed, I will support the President-elect's stated aim and work in concert with congressional leaders to invest in defense and remove the practice known as sequestration. I strongly support the Congress working to restore its active oversight role instead of continuing to rely on the non-strategic and self-destructive cuts imposed by sequestration.

Working with Congress I will endeavor to keep our unique All-Volunteer Force second-to-none. We need to open the door to all who are eligible and wish to serve; provide them with the training, equipment, and confidence that are essential to their success; and ensure all service members are treated with dignity and respect.

Our leaders at all levels of the chain of command will be accountable to ensure that each member of the Armed Forces has the opportunity to excel in an environment that maximizes their talents and has no patience for those who would degrade or diminish any person's service.

Today over 15 percent of today's active-duty force is female. Our military could not accomplish its missions without these women. As we ask more from our female enlisted members and officers, we owe them more as well.

The rate of sexual assault and harassment in the military is not acceptable. If I am confirmed, I will continue the Department's focus on sexual assault prevention and response, and I will work with the committee to deal with this problem more effectively. The Department must do more to ensure service members can report any crime, including a crime involving sexual assault, without any fear of retaliation.

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Any organization needs to get its strategic vision right, and if I am confirmed, my strategic aim will be three-pronged: we will first maintain a safe and secure nuclear deterrent – because we must ensure a war that can never be won will never be fought. Second, we will field a decisive conventional force – because as expensive as it is to sustain such a force, it is far less costly in lives and treasure than a conventional war that we are unable to deter because we are seen as weak. Third, we will retain irregular warfare as a core competency of our Armed Forces – to ensure we can fight across the full spectrum of war. We will compose our forces accordingly.

I recognize my potential civilian role differs in essence and in substance from my former role in uniform. While serving in uniform I obeyed civilian leadership while demonstrating loyalty to the U.S. Constitution. In addition to my combat, joint, and NATO roles while in uniform, I served as the Executive Secretary to Secretaries of Defense Bill Perry and Bill Cohen in the mid-to-late-1990s and Senior Military Assistant to Deputy Secretaries of Defense Rudy de Leon and Paul Wolfowitz before 9/11. Those assignments allowed me to observe and support the civilian decision-making process at the most senior levels of the Department.

Civilian control of the military is a fundamental tenet of the American military tradition. From day one service members swear an oath to support and defend the U.S. Constitution; they see photos of the nation's civilian leaders prominently displayed above their uniformed leadership; and they are imbued with the principle that our nation's elected and appointed leaders control the use of our military. It is a hallmark of America's military that service members take pride in our country's adherence to that principle, and it is a hallmark espoused by every U.S. military leader I have observed.

The President of the United States is the Commander-in-Chief and he alone is accountable to the American people for the outcomes of our integrated diplomatic, economic, and security decisions. The Secretary of Defense is the principal assistant to the President in all matters related to the Department of Defense. Both the Commander-in-Chief and the Secretary of Defense must impose an objective strategic calculus in the national security decision-making process and effectively direct its activities. They must ensure our nation takes the grave step of using force only when other non-military means have failed; when a defined and achievable political end-state is determined; and when our nation commits full resources to the fight.

Civilian leaders bear these responsibilities because the esprit-de-corps of our military, its can-do spirit, and its obedience to civilian leadership reduces the inclination and power of the military to criticize or oppose the policy it is ultimately ordered to implement. If I am confirmed, the President-elect and his national security team will receive my full support, and the support of the Department of Defense, in the formulation of policy and the development of military options to implement that policy.

If the Senate consents and if the full Congress passes an exception to the seven-year requirement, I will provide strong civilian leadership of military plans and decisions. I will insist unfiltered military advice is presented in full. And I will hold senior military and

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civilian leaders accountable for performance. I know what to expect from uniformed leadership in interactions with the Department's civilian leadership.

I recognize under the Constitution it is the Congress that raises, sustains, and supports our Armed Forces through annual authorizations and appropriations. For many years I have watched you in action and testified before you and I look forward to collaborating closely for the defense of our nation.

Having been nominated for this position, I am mindful of the extraordinary privilege it is to serve alongside so many service members and civilians of the Department of Defense. I will hold them and their families foremost in my thoughts and work to give them the best chance for victory if you confirm me.

Finally, on a personal note, I have worked at the Pentagon twice in my career. But few people may know I am not the first person in my family to do so. When, in the wartime spring of 1942, my mother was 20 years old and working in military intelligence, she was part of the first wave of government employees to move into the still-unfinished Pentagon. She had come to America as an infant and lives today on the banks of the Columbia River in the Pacific Northwest. Little could she imagine in her youth that more than 90 years after she immigrated to this country, and 75 years after she first walked through the doors of the War Department, one of her sons would be sitting here today before the Senate.