

OPENING STATEMENT OF U.S. SENATOR JACK REED
RANKING MEMBER, SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

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To conduct a confirmation hearing on the expected nomination of:
General James N. Mattis, USMC (ret) to be Secretary of Defense

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I join you in welcoming General James Mattis to this morning's hearing. I thank him for his many decades of selfless military service to his country and the Marine Corps, and I appreciate his willingness to return to public service, this time in a civilian capacity. In addition, I want to welcome Senator Sam Nunn and former Senator and Secretary of Defense Bill Cohen to this hearing.

General Mattis began his long and distinguished career in the United States Marine Corps as a second lieutenant commissioned through the ROTC program at Central Washington University. He has served at the highest echelons of the Marine Corps and capped his service as the Commander of U.S. Central Command.

General Mattis, if you are confirmed as Secretary of Defense, you will lead the Department during a time when the United States faces many complex and multifaceted challenges that do not offer quick or easy solutions. Some of these challenges involve traditional nation-state tensions, while others cross international boundaries.

Also, you will help oversee national security policy for a President who lacks foreign policy and defense experience, and whose temperament is far different from prior presidents. I think many Americans, and many in this body on both sides of the aisle, are rightly concerned about how he may respond when he is tested by Russia, Iran, North Korea, and other transnational threats such as cyber.

Considering some of these hot spots in detail, I would like to start with Iran, which remains a top concern for this Committee. Their behavior with respect to proxy forces across the region has not improved, and Iran's unsafe and unprofessional actions in the maritime arena continue. However, I continue to believe that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, is the most effective way to prevent Iran from resuming their nuclear weapons program. General Mattis, while you raised concerns about the JCPOA when it was being negotiated, you stated during a Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) forum in April 2016 that "there's no going back...absent a real violation." I agree with that assessment, and I look forward to hearing your thoughts on how we can build upon the JCPOA to address other Iranian threats, including its malign influence in the region and ballistic missile programs.

The threat posed by violent extremist groups remains a persistent and, likely, a generational problem. Our actions to support local partners on the ground in Iraq and Syria have made

significant gains in recapturing areas once held by ISIL, including operations directed at Mosul and Raqqa. However, ISIL continues to find new ways to terrorize innocent civilians and recruit new members. In the long term, successful military action against ISIL, al Qaeda, and other violent extremist groups must be complemented by non-military efforts by the international community to address the circumstances that led to the rise of such groups.

In North Korea, Kim Jong-un has destabilized the Korean Peninsula, and recent nuclear tests and ballistic missile developments further threaten the region. Regimes as authoritarian and insulated as North Korea's are brittle and prone to collapse, and how we deal with North Korea's missile capabilities and its potential for collapse will be an ongoing debate and challenge for the Department of Defense.

Russia has perpetrated aggressive actions against its neighbors and has roundly rejected the post-Cold War international order that is whole, free, and at peace. Furthermore, Russia's employment of hybrid warfare tactics in an effort to undermine democracy and to destabilize neighboring countries cannot be ignored. In light of the Intelligence Community's recent assessment that President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign designed to undermine our presidential election, this committee will be interested to hear your views regarding the best posture with regard to Russia going forward, both in the cyber realm and on the ground in Eastern Europe.

In addition to these broad strategic challenges, we must also grapple with issues specific to the Department of Defense. For instance, this committee has done its best to allocate extra funding to support full spectrum readiness including additional home station training, flying hours, steaming days, depot maintenance, and installation sustainment. General Mattis, given your extensive military experience, I would welcome your assessment of current readiness levels and your thoughts on what else can and should be done.

Our men and women in uniform remain this Committee's top concern. Recruiting and retaining a sufficiently sized, trained, and equipped military, with the necessary character and talent to meet national defense requirements, is a paramount goal. To that end, I strongly support Secretary Carter's decision to develop gender-neutral occupational standards for all military occupations, and to open service in all occupations to those who can meet those standards, regardless of their gender, to include service in ground combat units. For the first time, highly talented and motivated female Marines and soldiers are being assigned to units that were previously closed to them. Successful implementation of this decision requires strong leadership to ensure the individual success of the service member, and the collective success of their units and Service. I expect you to provide that leadership.

I remain concerned that too often our service members and their families fall victim to financial problems and predators. A deployed sailor, soldier, airman or marine hearing from a spouse back home about unscrupulous financial companies is unacceptable, and so I hope you pay particular attention to the Military Lending Act which I, and the Chairman, have made a very strong priority.

Defense budgets should be based on our long-term military strategy. However, defense spending is subject to the Budget Control Act spending caps, and the investments the Department has made to rebuild readiness and modernize platforms and equipment are in jeopardy. In addition, we must be aware that simply adding additional funding to OCO, or increasing defense spending at the expense of all other government agencies, creates other problems and is not an effective long term solution. One of your first tasks of the new Administration will be to submit a Fiscal Year 2018 budget that addresses these issues.

General Mattis, if confirmed, you will manage a Department of Defense grappling with many extraordinarily difficult challenges and it will require strong civilian leadership. In order to serve as the Secretary of Defense, Congress must provide an exception to the statutory requirement that currently prohibits individuals from being appointed if they are within seven years of their military service. Earlier this week, this Committee held a hearing on civilian control of the Armed Forces, which was illuminating and instructive. I hope you will candidly share with the Committee this morning the actions you would take to ensure your tenure reflects, and protects, the principle of civilian control of the military.

When he assumes office, President Trump will become Commander-in-Chief of our Armed Forces. I continue to hope that the gravity of the Office of the President, and the magnitude of the challenges our country faces, would encourage him to be more conscientious and thoughtful with his comments.

However, in the two months since his election, President-elect Trump has made a number of defense-related policy statements addressing North Korea's ICBM capability; our trade relations with China; and an expansion of U.S. nuclear weapons. Most troubling is the President-elect's repeated praise for the leadership of Vladimir Putin and his seeming indifference to Russia's efforts to influence the Presidential election. Many have supported the waiver legislation and your confirmation because they believe you will be, to paraphrase Thomas Jefferson, the saucer that cools the coffee. I look forward to hearing how you intend to manage the relationship of the Department of Defense with the NSC and the President.

Again, I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the Committee's careful process in considering this nomination, and I look forward to hearing from our nominee.