

Honorable Ashton B. Carter
Nominee for Deputy Secretary of Defense
Opening Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee
Dirksen Senate Office Building
September 13, 2011

Chairman Levin, Ranking Member McCain, and all the distinguished members of this Committee, it is a privilege and a deep honor to appear before you as President Obama's nominee for Deputy Secretary of Defense. If confirmed, I look forward to the opportunity to continue to serve the President and Secretary Panetta in a new role, and to continue to work with the Chairman and Joint Chiefs of Staff, and with this Committee, to protect this great country, to serve the troops who serve us, and to leave a more secure world for our children.

I would like to thank my wife, Stephanie, and children, Will and Ava, for being here today and for their support. I would also like to thank Senator Lieberman for the kindness and honor of his introduction, for all he has done for this country, and for all he has taught me.

If confirmed, I will step into large shoes, and I would like to take this moment to express my admiration for the job Bill Lynn has done as Deputy. It has been a privilege to serve him. I have served in one way or another almost every Secretary of Defense since Caspar Weinberger, and I feel fortunate to have been a member of the Pentagon team led over these past years by Secretary Gates, Secretary Panetta, and Secretary Lynn.

As Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, I have had two overriding priorities. The first has been to wake up every morning and ask myself what my office can do to support our troops in Afghanistan, Iraq, or anywhere else in the world they are deployed – whether with better protection against improvised explosive devices, better reconnaissance and surveillance, or better logistics – on their timetable, and not on the timetable of the Pentagon's frequently ponderous acquisition and budgeting processes. My second priority has been to deliver better buying power to the taxpayers for their defense dollars, working closely with our acquisition professionals, our industry partners, and the Congress. It is an effort this Committee began in its 2009 Weapons Systems Acquisition Reform Act, and I began with Secretary Gates -- all well before the current budget crunch. But the performance of the system is in my judgment still not acceptable, and I believe that there are some additional actions we are going to need to take to get better value for the defense dollar. This is something the American taxpayer should expect no matter what the defense budget is. But it becomes even more urgent in the serious budget predicament that faces us. Like Secretary Panetta, I do not believe that we need to choose between strong fiscal discipline and strong national defense.

If confirmed as Deputy Secretary of Defense, these two priorities will continue. But many others will be added. Secretary Panetta has made it clear to me that he expects his Deputy to be prepared to act and speak in his stead at all times. He expects the Deputy to shape an orderly

deliberative process for him, so that he can make decisions and advise the President based on careful consideration of accurate management information and a full range of options. And he expects his Deputy to manage the budget process down to a finite number of key issues that he needs to decide, and to manage other Department-wide matters that require his attention only for final decisions of greatest consequence. Finally, Secretary Panetta expects all this to be done with the same heart, the same integrity, and the same dedication to our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines that he brings to the job.

In all these tasks, I pledge to the Secretary of Defense and to this Committee, if confirmed, my most earnest effort.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to appear before you.