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**Mr. Joe Kent  
Nominee for the Position of  
Director of the National Counterterrorism Center  
Statement for the Record  
Before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence  
April 9, 2025**

Chairman Cotton, Vice Chairman Warner, and distinguished members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today as the nominee for the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC). It was a pleasure meeting with many of you recently.

I want to thank President Trump and Director Gabbard for their confidence in my leadership. I am humbled that they chose me to lead our country's counterterrorism enterprise. And I would be proud to do my part to regain the American people's trust in our Intelligence Community.

To my family and friends, you truly embody the meaning of support, sacrifice and American determination. I am honored that you are standing by me, once again, as I tackle my next challenge. I didn't get here by myself, so let me take a moment to introduce the team that I am blessed to call my family. With me today is my loving wife Heather, who is also a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan. Thank you for standing by me and loving our sons, Colt and Josh. It is for their future that we fight. My late wife Shannon's parents are also here. Shannon's father, Steve, is a retired Colonel in New York State Troopers. Shannon's mother is a retired schoolteacher. Shannon's sister, Mariah, is working as a 9-1-1 dispatcher in New York. As you can see, they are a family of service. Following the attacks of September 11, Steve served as a ground zero first responder and Shannon and her younger brother Mike immediately enlisted and spent decades fighting our nation's longest war. Both would ultimately lose their lives in this fight. I'm honored to have Steve and Mary here with me today. My wife Heather's parents are here too. Both Terri and Jerry Kaiser spent over two decades in uniform defending our nation. And, as always, my parents are behind me today. Thank you, Mom and Dad, for standing by me as I enlisted at age 18, ran off to war every chance I could, and helped me pick up the pieces after we lost Shannon. To my late wife Shannon, who gave her last full measure for our nation, it is her legacy and spirit that drives me forward each day.

In fact, it is a similar tenacious spirit that brings me here today. I have 20 years of military service in the war on terror, including 11 combat deployments. I have served with the 75th Ranger Regiment, Army Special Forces, and other special operations units. I also served as a CIA paramilitary operations officer. In every assignment, I partnered directly with the Intelligence Community, leveraging real-time information to lead counterterrorism operations in some of the most dangerous environments in the world. That said, out of everything that I have done, I am most proud of being Colt and Josh's Dad. This, above all else, has taught me what true commitment and patience means, especially as a Gold Star Family.

If confirmed, I will harness this experience as Director of NCTC. And I will harness the same grit that I brought to every Special Forces mission, making high-stake decisions under pressure with a deep understanding of how to turn intelligence into action. This is critical because our nation is in peril due to the negligence of the Biden administration. Fortunately, the American people recognized this and elected President Trump with a decisive mandate to restore our nation's security.

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We have our work cut out for us; our southern border previously offered an open door to individuals eager to wreak havoc in our country. Brutal, drug-trafficking cartels fueled a deadly fentanyl crisis across the United States. And the unchecked flow of migrants allowed other violent extremists to find their way into our country as well. For example, a Mauritanian migrant shot a Jewish man on his way to synagogue in Chicago last October after crossing into the United States at San Ysidro and spending more than a year-and-a-half in our country illegally. In June 2024, eight Tajikistan nationals were arrested following the discovery of the group's potential links to ISIS, after having all crossed into our country illegally at the southern border. As DNI Gabbard recently noted while at the border, there was much more to this story. While eight illegals with ties to ISIS were arrested, another several hundred illegals used the same ISIS smuggling network and were released into our nation by the Biden administration despite NCTC doing their job and accurately identifying these potential terrorists.

And our southern border wasn't the only avenue open to terrorists to access the United States. Again, just last October, an Afghan man was arrested in Oklahoma for plotting to carry out an attack on behalf of ISIS on election day. He, like many other Afghans, came to the United States following the Biden administration's debacle of a withdrawal from Afghanistan. This is just one terrorist we were able to stop. The professionals of the NCTC identified over a thousand Afghan refugees that had ties to terrorists that the Biden administration let into our nation. If confirmed, I promise that we will not allow known or suspected terrorists to freely enter our nation.

American citizens inside our own borders and U.S. military personnel stationed abroad face a growing, not diminishing, terrorist threat. Terrorists across continents and ideologies are now more energized than they have been years. The Israel-HAMAS conflict, associated terrorist messaging, and other traditional terrorist narratives continue to drive an elevated threat. Meanwhile, our brave men and women in uniform remain in harm's way in the Middle East as Iranian-backed militant proxies continue Iran's bidding across the region as they have for decades. And we have an al-Qaida offshoot governing Syria more than twenty years after the start of our own war against al-Qaida.

We need clear priorities and efficient resource management going forward so that American taxpayers know their dollars are supporting real measures of success in the fight against terrorism. We need this to ensure the safety, security, and freedom of the American people. We need this to drive intelligence operations that will keep our military out of endless wars. We need this to prevent useless deaths.

If confirmed, I will focus the National Counterterrorism Center on its core mission of protecting the nation against our most pressing terrorist threats. I will emphasize the basics: integrating and consolidating all available terrorism-related information; sharing terrorism analysis with policy makers, war fighters, and law enforcement customers; and leading strategic operational planning for the entire counterterrorism enterprise. I will bring the Center's power to bear against all the designated foreign terrorist organizations, or FTOs, threatening U.S. safety, security, and freedom, including the eight cartels and gangs recently designated as FTOs in February.

If confirmed as Director, I will also commit to holding the entire counterterrorism enterprise accountable for success and transparent communication to all stakeholders. I will commit to leading with integrity and without bias or political influence. I believe this is the only way the Intelligence Community can regain the trust of our ultimate customers, the American people. I view

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this Committee, along with other Congressional committees, as key partners in this goal. If confirmed, I promise to work with Congress on all matters of legislative interest related to terrorism and Intelligence Community oversight. It is this accountability and transparency that the American public deserves.

In closing, Senators, it would be an honor for me to return to the fight against terrorism and a privilege to once again serve our country. Thank you for your time and for your own service to this great nation. I look forward to your questions.

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