



NEWS RELEASE

ORRIN HATCH

United States Senator for Utah

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Media Contact(s): Mark Eddington or Jared Whitley, (202) 224-5251

HATCH SAYS AIR FORCE LEADERS HAVE THE RIGHT STUFF **Senator Praises Secretary Wynne and Gen. Moseley**

Washington – Sen. Orrin Hatch today defended Air Force leaders in a speech on the Senate floor.

Dismayed by what he termed misrepresentations in some corners about Air Force Secretary Michael Wynne and Gen. Michael Moseley of the Joint Chiefs of Staffs, Hatch praised the pair for exemplary leadership.

“These are leaders to be proud of,” Hatch said. “They are leaders to have confidence in. They exemplify the Air Force’s unofficial motto ‘Nothing comes close.’ They are the rightful heirs to the title: The Right Stuff.

Hatch’s complete speech follows:

Mr. President, we live in cynical times, and today I rise to address that cynicism, namely a small number of media reports that, some have suggested, call into question the command abilities of the senior leadership of the United States Air Force.

In addition, I was dismayed to learn that a Member of the Senate has compounded these misrepresentations by recently authoring a letter that makes inaccurate assertions about matters that have already been dealt with by the proper military authorities and investigated by the Department of Defense’s Inspector General.

Let me address the underlining matter directly. It has been my privilege and honor to represent the people of Utah in this august body for more than 31 years. During that time, I have had the pleasure to meet many of our nation’s senior military leaders. However, I can say without reservation that the current generation of Air Force leaders is among the finest I have ever known.

Under the steadfast and capable leadership of Secretary Michael Wynne and General Michael Moseley, the leaders of our Air Force are resolute in the defense of this country, tenacious in their support and care for the young men and women who serve under them, and dedicated to modernize the aging equipment of their force.

These are leaders to be proud of. They are leaders to have confidence in. They exemplify the Air Force’s unofficial motto “Nothing comes close.” They are the rightful heirs to the title: The

Right Stuff.

This does not mean that faults do not occur. In any organization, especially one with more than 350,000 service members, some will make mistakes, a few will veer from the straight and narrow; and, sadly, a tiny minority might even betray the public trust.

That said, I believe the true measure of military leadership is not to wipe away every possible temptation and sin of mankind. It is to create a culture where malfeasance, once identified, is dealt with firmly, swiftly, and justly.

For example, the current Air Force leadership met this standard when it was recently tested by the wrong doing of a civilian official during the initial attempt to replace our nation's aerial tankers that are, on average, 47 years old. The Air Force responded by holding accountable those responsible. These individuals were prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

Yet, from that troubled time, the current Air Force leadership rallied and conducted one of the most transparent, open and fair procurement competitions in recent memory. That is stuff of which real leaders are made.

Mr. President, I was also disappointed to read the characterizations of some press reports regarding the speech given by the Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, during his trip on Monday to the Air War College. When one reads some of these reports one could only conclude that Secretary Gates was issuing a rebuke to the Air Force's leadership. This is most perplexing, Mr. President. Though I have not spoken to Secretary Gates about his speech, I have read a transcript provided to me by the Air Force. My impression of his address was that Secretary Gates was not issuing an admonishment.

Not at all.

In fact, I believe that the Secretary was seeking to do what all good Secretaries of Defense strive to obtain: a more effective and efficient force through new and creative thinking.

This conclusion is ironically bolstered by later reports from the same news service that published the initial reports that I find so puzzling. These later reports quote the Pentagon press secretary as saying one of the major alleged reproaches was not directed at the Air Force as a service but to "the military as a whole."

As I said earlier, Mr. President, we live in cynical times. Unfortunately, it has become customary for many in political circles to hurl unfair and even untrue criticisms at one another. One could argue that this is the price of a vibrant democracy. However, this sort of behavior is unbecoming when it wrongly distracts our military leadership, especially during a time of war.

The Air Force leadership under Secretary Wynne and General Moseley has done an extraordinary job of protecting our nation, and supporting our nation's other armed services in the War on Terrorism.

I, for one, am thankful that we have such leaders in positions of such heavy responsibility.

So today, Mr. President, I rise to thank them -- a thanks that I believe they deserve from the entire United States Senate.

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