

Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT

Event

2026 Global Security Forum, America at 250: A Defining
Moment for American Statecraft and Military Power
Welcome & Opening Remarks

DATE

Tuesday, June 30, 2026 at 8:30 a.m. ET

FEATURING

John Baylouny

President and Chief Executive Officer, Leonardo DRS

CSIS EXPERTS

General Joseph F. Dunford Jr., USMC (Ret.)

Chief Executive Officer, CSIS

Dr. Heather Williams

Director, Project on Nuclear Issues, CSIS

Transcript By

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Dr. Heather
Williams:

I'm really honored and very excited to kick off today's discussions. We are just days away from the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and America's founding, and we wanted this year's Global Security Forum to reflect on this consequential moment in American power.

Intensified rivalry and competition, and new technologies are just some of the challenges that American military and statecraft are facing right now. But this is also a moment for optimism and for looking forward. At the height of the revolution in 1780, Abigail Adams wrote to her son John Quincy: "These are the times in which a genius would wish to live. It is not in the still calm of life or the repose of a pacific station that great characters are formed. Great necessities call out great virtues."

Today's discussions will bring together thought leaders from across Congress, the military, industry, finance, and academia to talk about American homeland defense and resilience, military leadership, the industrial base, leveraging new tools of finance, and what America must defend – the future of American statecraft. At CSIS we pride ourselves on being a place where we can foster thoughtful discourse and debate, exchange ideas, and also shape solutions. We are problem solvers.

Thank you to everyone for joining us today, both in person and online. This is going to be a really rich day of discussion, I think, and very looking forward to getting it started.

Before I turn it over to General Dunford to kick us off, I do want to share some brief safety and housekeeping remarks with you all. In terms of our building safety precautions for your awareness, overall we feel secure in our building but as a convener we have a duty to prepare for any eventuality. I will serve as your responsible safety officer at this event. Please follow my instructions should the need arise. Also, just for your awareness, we do have a security officer on the floor, in the lobby, and across the building. And, finally, please take a moment to familiarize yourself with our emergency exit, which might be the door you came in or it might be the doors behind me.

Just a few other additional housekeeping items, and this one's really important: Please do keep your name badges and lanyards on throughout the day. If you take them off, someone might come up and just ask you to put them back on. And that will be a big help for all of us. The one exception when you can take your lanyards off, and when we would like you to take your lanyards off, is if you do leave the building for lunch. We'll ask you to leave them with the desk, and then you'll just have to check back in when you come back at the end of lunch.

CSIS staff will be around all day. They have on yellow lanyards. You have probably seen them. There's a couple of them in the room. Thank you all very

much. They're also out there. They are there to help you with anything. If you have any logistical question, any programmatic question, please feel free to come up to any of us.

There will be several breaks throughout the day, and we want to encourage you all to take advantage of that time to network, exchange ideas, and continue to engage in these important conversations. I particularly want to extend that engagement invitation to early career experts and next-generation leaders in the room. This is going to be a really full day. There are some really exciting panelists and speakers who are going to be here. Please do use this time to go up and talk to them and engage with them.

And on the topic of engagement, throughout the day you will be able to submit your questions via the QR code. If you got a – well, you should have all gotten a brochure. On the back of the brochure, there are two QR codes. The white QR code you can submit to ask questions, and then they will – the moderator will be asking them.

The additional QR code is a gold one, and this is for an additional opportunity for engagement that we're really excited about. We would love to hear your perspectives on America's enduring strength and strategic advantages. We will be filming some brief interviews on the theme of America at 250 for a video series that will be released following the conference. So if you are interested in participating in that one, please use your phone to scan the gold QR code and somebody from the team will be in touch with you to set that up.

Wi-fi login is also on the back of the brochure.

And so, again, just to really stress, this is about engagement, this is about discussion, and I really hope everybody can take advantage of that for what is promising to be a very exciting day.

With that, I am pleased to turn it over to CSIS CEO and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford. (Applause.)

General Joseph F.
Dunford JR.
(RET.):

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome once again to our Global Security Forum. And, Heather, thanks for the introduction. Appropriately enough, Heather is a descendant of John Adams, so our event this week was opened up by a descendant of John Adams. So beat that. (Laughter.)

As Heather mentioned, this week we're going to celebrate the extraordinary day when the Continental Congress formally adopted the Declaration of Independence, establishing in the 13 American colonies as a new independent nation. And that's why we've named – why we've named the

conference America at 250: A Defining Moment for Statecraft and Military Power.

Our history has been defined by adapting and overcoming challenges. Our Founding Fathers established a durable framework that steadily expanded representative democracy in our country. And for the last eight years, we've been the most economically prosperous, secure, and politically influential country in the world. And we can also take pride of our major scientific, technological, and cultural achievements. And all of that is reason to celebrate this weekend.

But we all know we get no credit tomorrow for what we did yesterday. And as we celebrate our 250th, we're confronted by a number of significant challenges in a period of extraordinary geopolitical and technological change. Successfully prevailing over current and future challenges is going to be a test of our leadership, our capacity to innovate at scale, and our will.

Today at the Global Security Forum, we've brought together leaders to frame our strategic challenges but more importantly to develop and maintain our competitive advantage to come up with the solutions to those challenges. We've got a superb lineup of speakers and panels. We're honored to welcome the secretary of war for acquisition and sustainment, Michael Duffy; members of Congress Rob Wittman, Jeff Crank, and George Whitesides. Our panelists include former House Armed Services Committee Chairman Mac Thornberry; the NFL's chief of security, Cathy Lanier; a number of industry CEOs; and some of our nation's most accomplished military leaders, Generals Dave Goldfein, Scott Miller, Admiral Grady, and Admiral Aquilino. They're joined by two world-class journalists, Jennifer Griffin from Fox News and Morgan Brennan from CNBC, to expertly guide discussions.

Over the next few hours we're going to cover topics including homeland defense, defense industrial base reform, and leading change. We'll end the day with former House Speaker Paul Ryan; and entrepreneur, philanthropist, and veteran Vinnie Viola sharing their thoughts on what America must defend, the future of American statecraft. To those in attendance, as Heather said we encourage you to engage – to ask questions and to engage.

And before we begin, I want to thank our sponsors. And first I want to thank John Baylouny, CEO of Leonardo DRS, and his team. John and his team have steadfastly supported the Global Security Forum for now 26 years. Their technology is built into the systems that our warfighters rely on every day. Their contributions include active protection systems for armored vehicles, aircraft survivability systems, counter-drone capabilities, and combat systems in ground vehicles. Leonardo DRS is also a leader in naval propulsion and power systems, space technology, and advanced sensing. CSIS is truly appreciative of the partnership, John. Their support reflects in the

caliber of the speakers at today's forum, which is free to a wide domestic and international audience.

I also want to thank two additional sponsors for their support.

Hadrian and their CEO, Chris Power. Is Chris here? He'll be here later today. His team are transforming manufacturing to deliver the next generation of key defense systems at scale.

We're also appreciative of support from Washington Harbour Partners and Mina Faltas, their founder and CEO. They're using private capital to accelerate the path of capability development.

And in this event wouldn't be possible without the CSIS team, and particularly the leadership of Seth Jones, who's sitting right here; Heather; Kari Bingen; and probably most importantly, Caroline Covey and Christina Nordby, who are behind the scenes pulling it all together. And they've done a phenomenal job, and I just want to thank them upfront as well.

And with that, I have the privilege of introducing John Baylouny. John, if you'd please step up. (Applause.)

John Baylouny: Thank you, General Dunford, for that very kind introduction. And good morning, and welcome to the 2026 Global Security Forum.

I'm excited to be here to represent DRS for this important event, where critical national security issues are debated with some of the best minds in the business. At DRS, we've coined the phrase "accelerate," or "xlr8." We are accelerating our investments, our product development, and support to the warfighter at the time when change must be rapid yet precise and thoughtful. The panels on today's agenda reflect the same urgency, from defending our homeland to broadening our national defense industrial base through refining our leadership approach as our nation addresses a rapid, evolving set of global threats.

We started our relationship with the Global Security Forum at its inception in 2010 with the goal of establishing an event that drew thought leaders from around the world. Through the incredible leadership at CSIS, that goal has become a reality.

I hope you enjoy the day's discussion. And again, thank you for – General Dunford, Seth Jones, Kari Bingen, and the entire CSIS team for their tireless work in organizing another fantastic Forum.

At this point, it's my pleasure to start the program by handing the program over to Tom Karako, who will take it from here. Thank you. (Applause.)

(END.)