

Mr. Nickolas Guertin
Nomination Hearing for
Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition
Opening Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished members of the Committee, it is a privilege to be here today. I am honored to be before you as the President's nominee to serve as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition. I would like to thank President Biden, Secretary Austin, and Secretary DelToro for their confidence in nominating me. I would also like to thank my family who you see behind me; Maria, my loving wife of 21 years and our children Enrico and Isabella. Please let me also recognize my mother and the rest of my family including my brother Pierre and Cousin Greg who are also here today. Lastly, I would also like to thank the many great mentors and teammates, across Government, industry and academia that have helped me continue to learn and grow throughout my career.

I am especially grateful to this committee to have afforded me the greatest job I've ever had, my current role as the Director for Operational Test and Evaluation, and to be in a position, if confirmed, to take on the greatest job I've ever dreamed of – to be the Naval Acquisition Executive. Just as I have enjoyed my time as DOT&E, I look forward to having an open and frank conversation with you about how to transform the way the Navy and Marine Corps acquires and sustains our sea-going fighting capabilities.

I take this renewed commitment to continue to serve our Nation both very seriously and with great enthusiasm. It has been about a year and-a-half since I last introduced myself to you, but please indulge me a moment for a short recap. I spent the past four decades working on, developing, testing, fielding, and researching the improvement of acquiring military systems. I started my career as an enlisted nuclear power plant operator on submarines. Having completed my active duty service, I immediately transitioned to the Navy Reserves while attending college, and after graduating landed a job as a Navy civilian engineer. This citizen-sailor pairing would serve me well for the following decades by keeping me grounded in what it took to do operations, maintenance and testing in the fleet, while also developing new systems.

There is so much vital work to do on behalf of our Navy and Marine Corps team. It is not lost on me the enormous challenge ahead. As I look across the Department, I see an aging force in need of modernization, I see existing industrial base

challenges exacerbated by, and still recovering from the pandemic, and I see a need to develop innovative solutions to affordably develop and field systems that provide our Sailors and Marines an advantage in any conflict. Accordingly, I believe we need to think and act differently in order to field the Naval capabilities that protect and enable our Nation's strategic interests and economic prosperity.

I have made a career centered around acting thoughtfully to change the way we field excellence in warfighting systems. I have had an impact on the methods and outcomes spanning the acquisition and testing of naval capabilities for ships, submarines, aircraft, ground vehicles and the weapon systems that go in them.

I am committed to fulfilling the duties of this office – to lead a great team dedicated to designing and building excellence that works and can be delivered and maintained in the quantities needed for the Naval force to be effective well into the future. As a part of that, I intend on collecting their intellect and enthusiasm to accelerate and streamline the delivery of innovation needed to provide an unparalleled warfighting advantage – at scale. Our enduring requirement must be to foster and embrace change – and in doing so, create mission systems that are also built to change over time.

As Secretary DelToro stated recently we must: “empower our Navy and Marine Corps acquisition professionals to aggressively develop promising technologies into capabilities our warfighters need to maintain maritime dominance”. If confirmed, it is my objective is to live up to that charge and provide for the best trained, best equipped, and most capable Naval force in the world. It would be an honor to contribute to that mission, and to serve as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today, I look forward to your questions.