

Good morning Chairman Wicker, Ranking member Reed, ladies and gentlemen of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

I would like to thank President Trump for trusting me and nominating me as Undersecretary of the Navy. This is the absolute honor of my life.

I am joined today by my beautiful wife of more than 26 years. April is the mother of our five children: MIDN 2/C Gabriel Cao, Grace, Claire, Evelyn and Liam.

Like so many military spouses, April endured multiple moves across the country and overseas. She gave birth to our first child while I deployed for the invasion of Iraq. During my deployments, she was both mother and father, handyman, nurse, teacher and coach. And like all military spouses, she prayed each time the phone rang or with every knock at the door. Thank you, honey for standing by my side all these years as we served our nation. You are the love of my life.

I would like to give praise and glory to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, without whom I would not be here today.

April 30th marks the 50th anniversary of the fall of Saigon, when my family fled Vietnam. America gave us hope and opportunity and I have tried to repay that debt my entire life.

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I commissioned as a Special Operations Officer from the Naval Academy. As a Navy diver, I led underwater missions across the world. As an EOD technician, I defused bombs for our SEAL teams and Special Forces teams in Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia.

I spent several tours in the pentagon writing requirements and later programing the Navy's budget. I saw firsthand the breakdown of our acquisition process which precludes us from outpacing our enemies.

We are facing the biggest threat since the Cold War. While we were fighting terrorists in the desert, the Chinese have spread across the globe. But their biggest objective is the United States. One thing will stand in their way: Our Navy and Marine Corps. We are America's 911 force, capable of being anywhere at any time as a carrier strike group or a Marine Expeditionary Unit.

The American people have given President Trump a clear mandate: To protect our nation, against all enemies, foreign and domestic. President Trump has empowered everyone in the Department of Defense, from Secretary Hegseth down, with one clear task: to achieve Peace through strength.

If confirmed, I will deliver to the Combatant Commanders the most lethal Navy and Marine Corps the world has ever seen.

But we have a lot of work to do. Years of neglect and mismanagement have resulted in ships that cannot get underway, aircrafts that cannot fly and submarines that cannot dive because we have deferred maintenance requirements as a cost cutting tool. Military bureaucracy in the acquisitions process have slowed down the production of not only ships and submarines, but also bombs, missiles and torpedoes.

Recruiting and retention fell because we chose to prioritize the individual instead of unit cohesion. We must restore the warrior spirit that my generation relied on as the core of our ethos. We must restore America's fighting force.

Senators, we have a generation eager to serve and sacrifice for this nation. They grew up in the digital age where technology evolved at quantum speed. They deserve the best training and weapons available. Their intrinsic desire to solve problems using technology should not be stifled by red tape.

I ask this Congress to embrace bold new ideas and be ready to move forward with a purpose. We cannot solve the problems of tomorrow with the solutions of the yesterday.

Take it from this warrior: War must be the last resort, but if war comes, let it be swift and decisive. If confirmed, I will work with industry to build capacity in ship, aircraft and submarine production; and where capacity falls short, our capabilities in electronic warfare and hypersonic weapons will overcome. Our military families deserve the dignity of safe and healthy housing and responsive medical care. We must find a solutions to the 22 veteran suicides a day including the use of alternative treatments and therapies. If confirmed I will honor the sacrifices of America's sons and daughters by ensuring they have every tool necessary to be the deadliest threat to our enemies.

To my fellow Sailors and Marines, I'm never above you, never below you, I'm always beside you. Semper Fi and Hooyah!