

**Vice Admiral Charles B. Cooper II, USN to be Admiral and
Commander, United States Central Command
Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing, 24 June 2025
Opening Statement**

Good morning...

Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished members of this committee – as the proud son of a career Army Officer and Vietnam Veteran, and the grandson of a World War II veteran in the Pacific, I am honored ... and humbled ... by the opportunity to appear before you today.

I would like to first thank the President of the United States, the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for their trust and confidence in nominating me to serve as the next Commander of U.S. Central Command.

I am also honored to join today with Lt Gen Alexis Grynkewich. We all know him by his callsign... “Grynych.” Having served alongside him for the last 4 years, he is THE VERY BEST our nation has to offer.

I am joined today by my wife, Susan, my high school sweetheart from Montgomery, Alabama, and the anchor of our family. She was there when my parents signed a waiver so that I could attend the Naval Academy at age 17. As I prepare to mark four decades wearing the cloth of the nation next week, I know that none of it would have been possible without Susan's boundless love -- not only to our family, but to thousands of military spouses around the world. She truly has been my greatest source of strength throughout this amazing journey.

Also with us today are our daughter Katie, a cardiovascular ICU nurse, in Jacksonville, Florida, and Andrew, a fellow nurse and Marine veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Our son Bradford, a professional welder, is working on a U.S. Navy Guided Missile Destroyer in Mayport, Florida, playing his role in keeping our Navy "fit to fight."

He and his wife, Shelby, are unable to be here as they prepare for the imminent arrival of grandchild #3 – a future member of the U.S. Naval Academy Class of 2047. Our grandchildren Avery and Charlie couldn't be here today, but they remain two of our life's greatest joys.

I am also grateful for the support of my brothers and sisters-in-law who are here today. As a career Navy Surface Warfare Officer, I have spent my adult life on Navy ships, deploying all around the world, including a tour on the ground in Afghanistan, and with family moves to Germany, Korea, Japan and Bahrain. Supporting the Coopers has truly been a team sport, and I'm deeply thankful for their love these many years.

My greatest inspiration for continued service has come from those I've had the privilege to lead and serve alongside. As we sit here today, U.S. forces in the Middle East are engaged in 24/7 defensive operations in the air, on land, and at sea.

They are laser-focused on warfighting, lethality, and readiness, and they are performing superbly. I honor them and their families for the sacrifices they continue to make for the nation we all love. I just could not be prouder – and I know that this committee shares in that same pride.

Over the past four years, I've had the privilege of living in and leading across the Central Command Area of Responsibility. That time has given me a front-row seat to both the volatility and promise of the Middle East. It's also reinforced a clear-eyed understanding: the Middle East is incredibly dynamic today... there are challenges, for sure, but also real strategic opportunities.

If confirmed, I will work with this committee to shape outcomes that advance our national interests. With the right combination of resolve, innovation, and partnership with our vast network of friends, we can deter and defeat threats to our country long before they ever reach our shores.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the current Commander of U.S. Central Command, General Erik Kurilla, his wife and family for their lifetime of service to our country. Our nation and our troops in the Middle East have been blessed to have General Kurilla at the helm of Central Command for the past 39 months.

Finally, I would like to thank this Committee for your steadfast support and commitment to the oversight that makes our force stronger. If confirmed, I pledge to maintain a transparent and fully responsive relationship with this committee. I look forward to your questions today. Thank you.