

By kempr on Jun 10, 2025

Department of Defense  
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## **Statement of Benjamin Kohlmann**

### **Nominee to be Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs**

#### **Senate Armed Services Committee**

#### **Date TBD**

Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and Distinguished  
Senators of the Armed Services Committee:

It is an honor and a privilege to appear before you as President  
Trump's nominee to be Assistant Secretary of the Navy for  
Manpower and Reserve Affairs. If confirmed, I am excited and eager  
to once again serve the Department of the Navy and the American  
people.

I am deeply grateful to President Trump, Secretary Hegseth, and  
Secretary Phalen for their confidence and trust.

I also want to thank my parents, Michael and Carrie Kohlmann. All  
of their children have sacrificed and served our country – including  
my brother who is a Navy Foreign Area Officer, currently living in  
Africa, and my sister, who was married to a twice-deployed Army  
National Guard officer and active US Marshall.

Most of all, I want to thank my wife Jamie and our three elementary  
aged children who are with us today. They are the earthly foundation  
of all I do.

Senators, America is worth defending.

That defense requires men and women who volunteer their vocation  
and their lives.

This truth dawned on me as a young boy. I was enamored by World War II and military Aviation was in my blood.

My grandfather was a carrier pilot who flew Hellcats and Corsairs off the USS Wasp and USS Hornet in the Pacific.

My great uncle was an Air Force pilot who flew from WWII through the end of the Cold War, including time as a Prisoner of War.

Their stories defined my childhood and set me on an inevitable path. This led me to experience the highs and lows of military service as an active duty and reserve navy officer.

As an F/A-18 pilot, I flew 32 combat missions over Afghanistan.

I was stationed for 2 years as an exchange instructor pilot with the Marine Corps at Miramar, San Diego.

I worked closely with Navy civilians and Lab Scientists at Navy Warfare Development Command when I was empowered to build and lead the Chief of Naval Operations Rapid Innovation Cell.

I saw the inner workings of the Navy Reserve for 9 years when I helped stand up the Defense Innovation Unit in Silicon Valley in 2015 and then served in the Voluntary Training Unit.

I experienced the pain of loss when squadronmates lost their lives flying high performance aircraft.

I saw firsthand the burden of military service on families as I watched my sister endure the first three years of her marriage away from her Army husband while he was deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan on back to back pumps.

In my civilian career, I've spent the past five years deeply immersed in the startup ecosystem, building a dual use company, and most recently investing in exceptional founders focused on building for the National Interest.

The common theme in all those endeavors was the importance of people – military, civilian, and families.

If confirmed, I am committed to leveraging this career of service to ensure our sailors, Marines, civilians, and families are ready for a possible confrontation with the People's Republic of China.

Our goal is to deter conflict, but if necessary, to fight and win whatever our enemies send our way. Both cases require our best and most qualified to be ready to boldly lead.

To do so, our Navy must reinvigorate a warfighting ethos, promoting exceptional warfighting ability and agile leaders.

We must bolster an improving recruiting and retention picture, showing the American people why Seapower is critical to national flourishing.

Finally, if confirmed, I'm committed to finding ways to modernize our Reserve forces, to facilitate fast, large-scale mobilizations when called up, while creating streamlined pathways for exceptional civilian talent to serve.

To paraphrase my favorite military philosopher:

Technology doesn't win wars. Men and women do, and they use their minds to do so.

If confirmed, I'm committed to making sure our department of the Navy personnel are ready to deter, fight, and win.

America is worth defending.

In closing, I reiterate my appreciation to the Chairman, Ranking Member, and committee staff for your intentionality throughout the confirmation process.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.