

James G. Mazol

Nominee for the Under Secretary of War for Research and Engineering

Opening Statement

Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to come before you as the nominee for Deputy Undersecretary of War (USW) for Research and Engineering (R&E) and Chief Technology Officer (CTO).

Chairman Wicker: after many years of sitting behind you on the dais – as your National Security Advisor, Commerce Committee Policy Director, and Armed Services Committee Policy Director – it’s a bit surreal to be on this panel. Thank you for taking a chance on a young House LD eight years ago. It was an honor to serve you and I’m grateful to you, Mrs. Wicker, and Team Wicker – past and present.

Thank you to President Trump and Secretary Hegseth for giving me the chance to continue implementing the Peace through Strength agenda.

I am grateful to my family, friends, and colleagues for your support. Today, I am joined by my mother, Toni, wife, Deborah, and our 5-year-old son, Jack. Capitol Hill brought Deborah and me together 10 years ago. She is an outstanding wife and mother and her daily sacrifices have enabled me to continue to pursue a career in public service, including this potential role.

I am grateful to Secretary Hegseth for selecting me to Perform The Duties Of (PTDO) the Under Secretary of War for(R&E) and CTO during the first four months of the administration, and then PTDO Deputy Under Secretary for R&E until my nomination in July. In addition to my congressional roles, performing these senior R&E leadership roles provided significant insight into, and experience shaping, R&E’s budget and programs. Perhaps more important, they have given me a greater appreciation for the technological challenges facing the Department of War.

Make no mistake – the United States is running a race against China for 21st century technological supremacy. As the Department’s CTO, R&E plays a critical role for ensuring the Department helps the U.S. win this race.

Congress has charged R&E with establishing policy on, supervising, and unifying all Department research and engineering, including technology development and transition.

In support of Under Secretary Michael's leadership, this congressional mandate shapes what I believe constitute four significant focus areas for R&E and the Deputy Under Secretary position.

- First, ensuring the Department's R&D budget is wisely invested and aligned to Departmental priorities, including the Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance and Defense Planning Guidance. From basic research to developmental test, R&E faces the formidable task of overseeing and vectoring in the right direction roughly \$150 billion spread across hundreds of programs and thousands of projects.
- Second, in alignment with President Trump's "America's Artificial Intelligence (AI) Action Plan," making the Department an "AI-First" organization from the enterprise level to the tactical edge.
- Third, improving the speed of technology development and transition into operational capabilities. R&E plays a key role in closing the so-called "Valley of Death." We cannot miss the opportunity to transition the innovative capabilities into supporting the warfighter which continue to be produced by the explosion of private capital invested in defense.
- Fourth, and finally, serving as the trusted source of unbiased, deep technical expertise for the Secretary. R&E should be the office Secretary Hegseth and Deputy Secretary Feinberg continue to turn to when needing to make informed decisions and hard choices

At the macro-level, I view the role of Deputy Under Secretary in simple terms: help the Department catch up and surpass China in critical technology areas where we have fallen behind and widen our lead in the areas where we remain ahead. That's "Peace through Strength" defined in terms of technological overmatch.

If confirmed, I look forward to assisting Under Secretary Michael carry out his duties in concert with Secretary Hegseth's vision.

Thank you again for this opportunity and look forward to your questions.