

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 with you 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, and if confirmed, the opportunity to equip and support the finest Navy and Marine Corps in the world.

I would also like to thank my family who you see behind me; Maria, my effervescent and loving wife of 21 years of mutual support and our twin children Enrico and Isabella, both of which are BSA Life Scouts. Maria and I are immensely proud of them. Please let me also recognize my mother, sister and brothers for their love and support. 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 Navy's Acquisition Executive. If confirmed to this position, just as I have enjoyed in 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 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. In those days, I marveled

at the engineering of the boats I served on and long wanted to be a part of making something so elegantly designed. 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. I was open to other opportunities, but was drawn to being a part of something great. Shortly afterwards I was also commissioned as a Reserve engineering duty officer. This citizen-sailor pairing would serve me well for the following decade by keeping me grounded in what it took to do operations, maintenance and testing in the fleet, while also developing new systems. Starting in the 1990's, I have been especially fortunate to have been continuously involved in innovating the engineering and business models for developing and producing weapons, sensors and combat management systems that were built to change and improve over time.

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 an industrial base 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. My past experience with the Naval Enterprise, as both an acquisition professional and an academic researcher, has afforded me a view into the many domains, organizations and technologies that make up that warfighting capability. I have had an impact on the methods and outcomes spanning the acquisition of naval capabilities for ships, submarines, aircraft, weapons, combat systems and ground forces.

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. This is a particularly exciting time to be in this position. To achieve these ends, we must take advantage of things like model-based engineering and digital threads, rapid hardware design along with modern and proven development practices for evolving software capabilities – in short to use new tools to advance our practice. As you might suspect from my prior experiences and research, I am an especially big fan of using the full power of modularity and incremental improvements to advance our military capabilities as a part of a life cycle of innovation. Our enduring requirement must be to foster and embrace change – and to create mission systems that are built to change over time.

As Secretary DeToro 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.