

ORAL ARGUMENT SCHEDULED FOR MAY 7, 2026
No. 26-5070

**IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

MARK KELLY,
Plaintiff-Appellee

v.

PETE HEGSETH, *in his official capacity as Secretary of Defense, et al.*,
Defendants-Appellants

**On Appeal from the United States District Court
For the District of Columbia
(The Honorable Richard J. Leon)**

**CORRECTED BRIEF OF *AMICI CURIAE* FORMER SERVICE
SECRETARIES, RETIRED SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS, AND VET
VOICE FOUNDATION IN SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFF-APPELLEE AND
AFFIRMANCE OF DECISION BELOW**

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CERTIFICATE AS TO PARTIES, RULINGS, AND RELATED CASES

Except for the additional *amici* represented in this brief, all parties, intervenors, and *amici* appearing before the district court and in this Court are listed in the Brief for Plaintiff-Appellee.

The ruling under review is an order granting Plaintiff-Appellee's Motion for Preliminary Injunctive Relief. References to the ruling at issue appear in the Brief for Plaintiff-Appellee.

Undersigned counsel is unaware of any related cases within the meaning of D.C. Circuit Rule 28(a)(1)(C).

/s/ Beau C. Tremiere
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CORPORATE DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Pursuant to Fed. R. App. P. 26.1, *amicus curiae* Vet Voice Foundation is a nonprofit corporation. It has no parent corporation, and no publicly held corporation owns 10 percent or more of its stock. *Amici* Former Service Secretaries and Retired Senior Military Officers are individuals.

/s/ Beau C. Tremitiere

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CERTIFICATE OF SEPARATE BRIEF

Pursuant to D.C. Circuit Rule 29(d), Counsel states the following as to why a separate *amicus* brief for *amici* Former Service Secretaries, Retired Senior Military Officers, and Vet Voice Foundation is necessary. *Amici* Former Service Secretaries, Retired Senior Military Officers, and Vet Voice Foundation offer a unique, coherent perspective on issues in this case drawn from their experience working in or with the U.S. military. Those views, and the weight they should be afforded given their source, do not overlap with legal perspectives that might be offered by other *amici* in this case, nor do they overlap with the views of persons or organizations that do not have similar deep military experience. A separate *amicus* brief allows *amici* to present their views in as clear and concise a fashion as possible. As a result, *amici* believe that a separate brief is justified, and also serves the Court.

/s/ Beau C. Tremitiere
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GLOSSARY

VVF	Vet Voice Foundation
UCMJ	Uniform Code of Military Justice
MCM	Manual for Courts-Martial
R.C.M.	Rule for Courts-Martial

IDENTITY AND INTEREST OF *AMICI*¹

Individual *amici* are seventy-two former secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force and retired senior military officers. They have extensive experience in leadership roles and demonstrated commitment to and expertise in promoting a disciplined and strong military and ensuring the security of our nation. Collectively, they served under each president from Dwight Eisenhower to Donald Trump.

Amicus Vet Voice Foundation (“VVF”) is a veteran-led, non-profit, non-partisan organization representing almost two million veterans, military family members, and their supporters. VVF represents veterans and military families across the political spectrum and across the country. It strives to support them and their interests, including by championing policies and actions that protect our country’s freedoms and advance our national security.

Like Senator Kelly, nearly all *amici* are veterans who, according to Defendants, remain subject to the jurisdiction of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (“UCMJ”). Like Senator Kelly, *amici* believe it is their duty to speak—as they do here—with care and candor on matters of public import. They are concerned by government actions that could deprive the public of the experienced wisdom of

¹ All parties have consented to the filing of this brief. No party’s counsel authored this brief in whole or in part; no party or party’s counsel contributed money intended to fund the brief’s preparation or submission; and no person other than *amici* contributed money to fund this brief’s preparation or submission.

those who served in uniform by chilling their participation in public debate.

Individual *amici* are identified below, with biographies in the Appendix.

- Former Secretary of the Army Louis E. Caldera
- Former Secretary of the Navy John H. Dalton
- Former Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro
- Former Secretary of the Air Force Michael B. Donley
- Former Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James
- Former Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall III
- Former Acting Secretary of the Navy James E. McPherson
- Former Secretary of the Navy Sean C. O’Keefe
- Former Secretary of the Air Force F. Whitten Peters
- Former Secretary of the Army Christine E. Wormuth
- Admiral C. Steve Abbot, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- Admiral Thad W. Allen, U.S. Coast Guard (Ret.)
- Admiral Dennis C. Blair, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- General George W. Casey, Jr., U.S. Army (Ret.)
- General Peter Chiarelli, U.S. Army (Ret.)
- Admiral William E. Gortney, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- Admiral John C. Harvey, Jr., U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- General Michael V. Hayden, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)
- Admiral Gregory G. Johnson, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

- Admiral Samuel Jones Locklear, III, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- Admiral John B. Nathman, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- Admiral Robert J. Natter, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- Admiral William A. Owens, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- Admiral Gary Roughead, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- Admiral Scott Swift, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- Admiral Henry G. Ulrich III, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- General Anthony Zinni, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.)
- Vice Admiral Donald C. Arthur, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- Vice Admiral Michael T. Franken, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- Lieutenant General Walter E. Gaskin, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.)
- Lieutenant General Russel L. Honoré, U.S. Army (Ret.)
- Lieutenant General Claudia J. Kennedy, U.S. Army (Ret.)
- Lieutenant General Jan-Marc Jouas, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)
- Lieutenant General Charles P. Otstott, U.S. Army (Ret.)
- Rear Admiral (Upper Half) William D. Baumgartner, U.S. Coast Guard (Ret.)
- Rear Admiral (Upper Half) Kelvin Dixon, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- Major General Richard T. Devereaux, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)
- Major General Paul D. Eaton, U.S. Army (Ret.)
- Rear Admiral (Upper Half) Albert Garcia III, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

- Rear Admiral (Upper Half) F. Stephen Glass, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- Major General Jonathan S. Gration, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)
- Rear Admiral (Upper Half) Donald J. Guter, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- Major General Richard S. Haddad, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)
- Major General Irving L. Halter, Jr., U.S. Air Force (Ret.)
- Rear Admiral (Upper Half) Janice Hamby, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- Rear Admiral (Upper Half) John D. Hutson, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- Major General Steven J. Lepper, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)
- Rear Admiral Thomas G. Lilly, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- Major General Randy E. Manner, U.S. Army (Ret.)
- Major General Frederick H. Martin, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)
- Rear Admiral (Upper Half) David R. Oliver, Jr., U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- Major General Gale S. Pollock, U.S. Army (Ret.)
- Major General Patricia S. Rose, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)
- Major General Linda Singh, U.S. Army (Ret.)
- Major General Antonio Taguba, U.S. Army (Ret.)
- Major General F. Andrew Turley, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)
- Brigadier General Steven M. Anderson, U.S. Army (Ret.)
- Rear Admiral (Lower Half) Michael S. Baker, M.D., F.A.C.S., U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- Rear Admiral (Lower Half) James A. Barnett, Jr., U.S. Navy (Ret.)

- Rear Admiral (Lower Half) Jay A. DeLoach, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- Brigadier General Stephen A. Cheney, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.)
- Brigadier General John W. Douglass, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)
- Brigadier General Robert J. Felderman, U.S. Army (Ret.)
- Rear Admiral (Lower Half) Charles D. Harr, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- Brigadier General David R. Irvine, U.S. Army (Ret.)
- Brigadier General David McGinnis, New York National Guard (Ret.)
- Brigadier General Joseph V. Medina, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.)
- Rear Admiral (Lower Half) Harold L. Robinson, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
- Brigadier General John M. Schuster, U.S. Army (Ret.)
- Brigadier General Paul G. Smith, U.S. Army (Ret.)
- Brigadier General Allyson Solomon, U.S. Army (Ret.)
- Brigadier General Robin B. Umberg, U.S. Army (Ret.)

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

Defendants have taken the unprecedented step of punishing a U.S. Senator and retired Navy Captain for accurate statements of law and criticisms of federal policy. No retired servicemember could be lawfully sanctioned for these statements, least of all one whose public office requires that he speak on these issues.

Amici explain below why discipline for protected, political speech violates the First Amendment and, if permitted to stand, would chill public participation by veterans everywhere. Diverse viewpoints are critical to a free marketplace of ideas, and silencing veteran voices would be especially harmful—depriving the public of experienced and informed views on critical matters of national security. This Court should therefore affirm the district court’s preliminary injunction.

* * *

Given the gravity of this case and the implications for millions of active-duty and retired members of the military, *amici* believe it is their duty to share their perspective—notwithstanding a recognition that such views, and the mere fact of the submission of this brief, may be viewed with disfavor by the Secretary. This decision is not made lightly: the attempt to punish Senator Kelly suggests that public disagreement with the Secretary—even if made in good faith and supported factually—invites retaliation.

Amici are aware of many fellow veterans who would participate in public debate, but are declining to do so today, fearing official reprisal. This chilling effect risks silencing dissent from those who served in uniform—a critical ingredient in American self-governance dating back to those who fought for our independence.

ARGUMENT

I. Veteran Participation in Public Life is Essential to Democratic Self-Government

The Constitution broadly protects the right to speak on issues of public concern because deliberation is essential to decision-making in a democracy. In a system of government where the people govern themselves, there must be wide latitude for differing views on public controversies so issues can be robustly debated. “[S]peech concerning public affairs is more than self-expression; it is the essence of self-government.” *Garrison v. Louisiana*, 379 U.S. 64, 74–75 (1964).

This is especially true when the speaker is a retired member of the military. By virtue of their service, retired servicemembers have distinct perspectives and specialized expertise that contribute uniquely to the public discourse. They also populate all walks of public life, including holding elected public office—like Senator Kelly—and other prominent civic roles. To chill the speech of retired servicemembers would not only infringe on their individual First Amendment rights, but also impoverish public debate on critical issues relating to our military and its role in domestic and foreign affairs.

Nearly one hundred sitting members of Congress are veterans.² The Vice President is a veteran, as is a Justice on the Supreme Court. State and local governments, businesses, media, and universities all employ veterans in important, public-facing roles. Civic organizations led by veterans, from the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars to the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, have long been pillars of civil society and leading voices on matters of public policy. Dating back to the 19th century, veterans have routinely occupied prominent speaking roles during the national conventions of both parties.

To restrict the ability of these individuals to speak candidly on issues of public importance through the threat of discipline or loss of retirement benefits would chill debate at all levels of government, across a broad swath of civil society, and in critical moments of the political process. And it would jeopardize the speech rights, and the corollary rights of the public to hear that speech, of members of both political parties. The Constitution provides strict protection for speech—especially political speech—because of the critical role it plays in a democracy. *McCutcheon v. FEC*, 572 U.S. 185, 228 (2014) (Thomas, J., concurring) (“Political speech is ‘the primary object of First Amendment protection’ and ‘the lifeblood of a self-governing

² Leo Shane, *Breaking Down the Number of Veterans in the 119th Congress*, *Military Times* (Jan. 2, 2025), <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2025/01/02/breaking-down-the-number-of-veterans-in-the-119th-congress>.

people.” (citation modified)). This role is no less critical when the speaker is a retired servicemember.

II. The Duty to Disobey Illegal Orders is a Critical Matter of Public Concern

The speech principally at issue here—statements addressing how servicemembers should respond to illegal orders—concerns a topic of great interest to the American people. Individuals who served in uniform, like Senator Kelly, are uniquely qualified to explain this concept in the public discourse.

In truth, it is a settled principle of military administration and federal law that servicemembers have a duty to obey lawful orders and a corresponding duty to disobey orders when they know, or should know, that the ordered actions are unlawful.³ The latter obligation derives from the lesson of World War II and the Nuremberg Trials that it is no defense to illegal conduct for a servicemember to claim he was acting pursuant to the illegal order of his government or superiors.⁴

In *United States v. Calley*, the U.S. Court of Military Appeals affirmed this principle, holding that where the substance of an order is clearly illegal, such that “a man of ordinary sense and understanding” would know the order was illegal, the

³ *E.g.*, Anthony J. Ghiotto, *(Un)lawful Orders*, 27 N.Y.U. J. Legis. & Pub. Pol’y 283, 288 (2024) (“[W]hile military members have a legal obligation to follow lawful orders, they have a similar obligation to disobey unlawful orders.”); *United States v. Huet-Vaughn*, 43 M.J. 105, 114 (C.A.A.F. 1995).

⁴ Agreement for the Prosecution and Punishment of the Major War Criminals of the European Axis, Charter of the International Tribunal, art. 8, Aug. 8, 1945, E.A.S. No. 472, 82 U.N.T.S. 280, 288.

order is no defense to a crime committed under its instruction. 48 C.M.R. 19, 28 (C.M.A. 1973) (citing *United States v. Schultz*, 39 C.M.R. 133 (C.M.A. 1969)). The Department of Defense has also consistently upheld this standard, directing that “[m]embers of the armed forces must refuse to comply with clearly illegal orders to commit law of war violations.”⁵ And the Manual for Courts-Martial (“MCM”) clearly explains that while a servicemember may assert as a defense to any offense that the member was acting pursuant to orders, this defense is not permitted where the servicemember knew, or a person of ordinary sense and understanding would have known, the orders to be unlawful. Manual for Courts-Martial, United States, R.C.M. 916(d) (2024). This ethic is reflected in the oath undertaken by all servicemembers, requiring a commitment to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States,” to “bear true faith and allegiance to the same,” and to “obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice.” 10 U.S.C. § 502; 5 U.S.C. § 3331.⁶

⁵ *Dep’t of Defense*, Dep’t of Defense Law of War Manual § 18.3.2 (June 2015, updated July 31, 2023), available at <https://perma.cc/VRD3-Y6TK>; see Memorandum from Paul C. Ney, Jr., Gen. Couns., Dep’t of Def., to the Heads of the DoD Components, § 1.4 (Aug. 6, 2020), available at <https://perma.cc/GBG9-LP5P> (“All servicemembers must . . . refuse to comply with clearly illegal orders to commit violations of the law of war (DoD [Law of War Manual] § 18.3)”).

⁶ The oath for enlisted personnel includes the explicit reference to obeying orders, though this language is not included in the oath for military officers.

As prior Attorney General Pam Bondi explained in a filing before assuming office, “[t]hrough rigorous instruction and tragic lessons from history, military officers are trained not to carry out unlawful orders . . . servicemembers are required not to do so.”⁷ Not only is her statement true, but it—like Senator Kelly’s speech—highlights issues of great importance to the public.

III. The Limited Restrictions on Speech Authorized by the UCMJ Are Irrelevant Here

It is undisputed that “military necessity” can justify otherwise impermissible speech restrictions for active personnel in military settings. *Parker v. Levy*, 417 U.S. 733, 758 (1974). In close cases, courts may need to weigh competing interests: “the essential needs of the armed services and the right to speak out as a free American.” *United States v. Wilcox*, 66 M.J. 442, 447 (C.A.A.F. 2008) (quoting *United States v. Priest*, 45 C.M.R. 338 (C.M.A. 1972)).

This is not a close case. The speech at issue—a retired officer’s restatement of a settled principle of military law and his expression of opinions about appropriate military policy and the safeguarding of its personnel and reputational standing—bears no resemblance to the enumerated actions that may trigger discipline for an active-duty servicemember under the UCMJ.

⁷ Brief for Three Former Senior Military Officers and Executive Branch Officials as *Amici Curiae* Supporting Petitioner at 10–11, *Trump v. United States*, 603 U.S. 593 (2024) (No. 23-939), 2024 WL 1256194, at *10–11.

For example, the Secretary’s letter of censure alleges that Senator Kelly’s speech constitutes “conduct unbecoming an officer.” JA63–64. Yet, to punish speech as “conduct unbecoming an officer” in violation of Article 133, UCMJ, courts have required a showing that the words at issue present a “clear and present danger,” of “dishonoring or disgracing” the officer, or “seriously detract[ing] from his character” or “standing.” *United States v. Voorhees*, 79 M.J. 5, 15 (C.A.A.F. 2019); *United States v. Hartwig*, 39 M.J. 125, 129–30 (C.A.A.F. 1994). Moreover, the conduct itself must be “more serious than slight” misbehavior that is “of a material and pronounced character.” *Voorhees*, 79 M.J. at 15; *Parker*, 417 U.S. at 754.

The Secretary also alleged that Senator Kelly’s speech “bring[s] discredit upon the armed forces” and “prejudices good order and discipline.” JA64. Yet, a violation of Article 134, UCMJ’s prohibition on “service discrediting” speech to the detriment of “good order and discipline” requires a finding of a nexus between the speech “and the military mission or military environment.” This nexus requires a showing of an actual negative effect on the mission or environment, a so-called “direct and palpable connection.” *Wilcox*, 66 M.J. at 448–49. As the Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces explained, “[i]f such a connection were not required, the entire universe of servicemember opinions, ideas, and speech would be held to

the subjective standard of what some member of the public, or even many members of the public, would find offensive.” *Wilcox*, 66 M.J. at 449.

The speech targeted for punishment here fails to meet these standards. A retired officer no longer serving in the military or occupying a position in the chain of command does not dishonor or disgrace himself, or undermine mission, command structure, and the execution of orders by reiterating well-settled statements of American law or by speaking his mind on national security policy—even if others may reasonably disagree with his positions. The recitation of existing legal obligations and expression of views as to where and how troops should be deployed in no way imply that servicemembers should refuse to perform their lawful duties. Nor is there any “direct and palpable connection” to any cognizable harm.

Further, the government cannot justify sweeping restrictions on a retiree’s speech based on the hypothetical threat of recall to active duty. *See* Appellants’ Br. 40–43. Recall for the clear purpose of retaliating against a retiree for their protected speech would likewise violate the First Amendment. Lawful recalls are extremely rare, serving as “a manpower source of last resort after other sources are determined not to be available or a source for unique skills not otherwise obtainable.” U.S. Dep’t of Def., Instr. 1352.01, *Management of Regular and Reserve Retired Military Members* ¶ 1.2(c) (Dec. 8, 2016). A recall like the one hypothesized by the government would be, in our understanding, without precedent. For good reason: the

government's power to address legitimate staffing exigencies does not authorize a perpetual gag order over every retired military member's political speech. The First Amendment guarantees as much.

Finally, if the targeted speech may serve as a lawful basis for punishing retired servicemembers, it is unclear what constitutional protection remains for veterans wishing to express disagreement with Administration policy. Indeed, that Senator Kelly was punished even though his speech receives heightened protection under the Speech and Debate Clause makes Defendants' actions even more chilling as to veterans outside of Congress who do not enjoy special protection for their speech.

CONCLUSION

Defendants' attempt to punish protected speech jeopardizes a cherished tradition of veteran participation in public discourse that dates to the earliest days of our republic. The district court was right to issue a preliminary injunction and *amici* respectfully request that this Court affirm its decision.

Dated: April 28, 2026

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CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

This amicus curiae brief complies with the word limit of Fed. R. App. P. 29(a)(5) because it contains 2,965 words, excluding the parts of the brief exempted by Fed. R. App. P. 32(f) and Circuit Rule 32(e)(1). This filing complies with the typeface requirements of Fed. R. App. P. 32(a)(5) and the type-style requirements of Fed. R. App. P. 32(a)(6) because this brief has been prepared using Microsoft Office Word in Times New Roman 14-point font.

Dated: April 28, 2026

/s/ Beau C. Tremiere
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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Beau C. Tremitiere, hereby certify that on April 28, 2026, I electronically filed the foregoing Brief of *Amici Curiae* Former Service Secretaries, Retired Senior Military Officers, and Vet Voice Foundation with the Clerk of the Court for the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia by using the CM/ECF system. A true and correct copy of this brief has been served via the Court's CM/ECF system on all counsel of record.

Dated: April 28, 2026

/s/ Beau C. Tremitiere
Beau C. Tremitiere

APPENDIX: List of *Amici*

Former Secretary of the Army Louis E. Caldera graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1978 and served in the Army on active duty from 1978 to 1983. He served in two Senate-confirmed positions in the Clinton Administration, including Secretary of the Army, and as an Assistant to the President and Director of the White House Military Office in the Obama Administration.

Former Secretary of the Navy John H. Dalton served as the 70th Secretary of the Navy. Before his appointment, he served as a member and chairman of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board and President of the Government National Mortgage Association of the Department of Housing and Urban Development after working at an investment banking firm. He graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1964 and served aboard submarines in various roles following nuclear power training.

Former Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro immigrated to the U.S. with his family as refugees in 1962. Raised in the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood of New York City, he received an appointment to the United States Naval Academy and commissioned as a Surface Warfare Officer upon his graduation in 1983. His 26-year naval career included a series of critical appointments at sea and ashore, including command as the Commissioning Commanding Officer of USS BULKELEY (DDG 84) and service in a combat zone during Operation Desert Storm. After retiring from active-duty service, in 2004, Secretary Del Toro continued to support a range of government and private sector programs by founding SBG Technology Solutions, Inc., an engineering services company. Sworn in as the 78th Secretary of the Navy and Marine Corps on August 9, 2021, Secretary Del Toro led the nearly one-million-person Department through the largest modernization effort in half a century concurrent with the longest sustained surface-to-air naval combat operations since World War II in the Red Sea. Under his leadership, the Department of the Navy sought and commanded the largest budget in recent history, growing it over twenty-five percent over four years from \$210B to \$261B. Today, Secretary Del Toro is also President & CEO of Del Toro Global Associates, LLC.

Former Secretary of the Air Force Michael B. Donley served as the 22nd Secretary of the Air Force, following his nomination by President George W. Bush. He has more than thirty years of national security experience, including his tenure as director of defense programs and deputy executive secretary at the National Security Council under President Reagan.

Former Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James served as the 23rd Secretary of the Air Force, appointed by President Obama in 2013. Before this appointment, Ms. James worked as an assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs, before being appointed by President Clinton and confirmed by the Senate in 1993 to work in the Pentagon as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. Ms. James has 30 years of senior homeland and national security experience in the federal government and in the private sector, including as President of Science Applications International Corporation's Technical and Engineering Sector, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at Business Executives for National Security, and Vice President of International Operations and Marketing at United Technologies.

Former Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall III served as the 26th Secretary of the Air Force. He previously served as Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics and Deputy Director of Defense Research and Engineering for Tactical Warfare Programs in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy and served 11 years as an officer in the U.S. Army.

Former Acting Secretary of the Navy James E. McPherson served as the Acting Secretary of the Navy, Under Secretary of the Army, and General Counsel for the Army under President Donald Trump. He retired as a Rear Admiral in the U.S. Navy after several decades of service, including time as Judge Advocate General of the Navy under President George W. Bush.

Former Secretary of the Navy Sean C. O'Keefe began his public service career in 1978 at the Department of Defense and as U.S. Senate staff until his appointment as the Department of Defense Comptroller and Chief Finance Officer in 1989. President George H.W. Bush later named him the 69th Secretary of the Navy. Secretary O'Keefe also served in President George W. Bush's Administration as Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget and the 10th Administrator of NASA.

Former Secretary of the Air Force F. Whitten Peters served as the 19th Secretary of the Air Force. Before his appointment, he served as the Principal Deputy General Counsel of the Department of Defense where he worked on a wide range of issues, including acquisition reform, countering domestic terrorism, and protecting the Department's information systems. Before serving as a senior executive in the federal government, he served as an officer in the U.S. Navy.

Former Secretary of the Army Christine E. Wormuth served as the 25th Secretary of the Army. Before her appointment, she served in a variety of defense and national security roles as a career civilian and as a presidential appointee, including as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy; Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Forces; and Principal Deputy Under the Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense. She also served as the Director of the International Defense and Security Center at the RAND Corporation, providing research and analytical support to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff and other organizations, and as a Senior Fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Admiral C. Steve Abbot, U.S. Navy (Ret.), graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1966, after which he was deployed to Vietnam and began a 34-year career with the U.S. Navy. His final active-duty tour was as Deputy Commander-in-Chief, U.S. European Command from 1998 to 2000. Following his retirement, Admiral Abbot served as Deputy Homeland Security Advisor to President George W. Bush from 2001 to 2003.

Admiral Thad W. Allen, U.S. Coast Guard (Ret.), retired in 2010 as the 23rd Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard. Admiral Allen led the federal responses to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. He led Atlantic Coast Guard forces in response to the 9/11 attacks and coordinated the Coast Guard response to the Haitian earthquake of 2010.

Admiral Dennis C. Blair, U.S. Navy (Ret.), entered active military service upon graduation from the U.S. Naval Academy. Prior to his retirement in 2002 after 34 years of service, Admiral Blair served as the Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Command and Director of the Joint Staff. Following retirement, he served as the Director of National Intelligence.

General George W. Casey, Jr., U.S. Army (Ret.), enjoyed a 41-year career in the U.S. Army. He is an accomplished soldier and an authority on strategic leadership. During his tenure as the Army Chief of Staff, he is widely credited with restoring balance to a war-weary Army and leading the transformation to keep it relevant in the 21st century. Prior to this, General Casey commanded the Multi-National Force – Iraq, a coalition of more than 30 countries.

General Peter Chiarelli, U.S. Army (Ret.), was the Deputy G3, Operations, Training, and Mobilization, commanding the Army Operations Center in the Pentagon during the 9/11 terrorist attacks and for the first two years of the wars in

Afghanistan and Iraq. He commanded at all levels, deploying and commanding the 1st Cavalry Division in Iraq in 2004–2005 and Multinational Corps Iraq in 2006. General Chiarelli was Senior Military Assistant to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and served as the 32nd Vice Chief of Staff of the Army for almost four years before retiring in 2012 with almost 40 years of service.

Admiral William E. Gortney, U.S. Navy (Ret.), commissioned into the U.S. Navy following graduation from Elon College. Over the course of his career, Admiral Gortney commanded forces in the U.S. Central Command area of operations, providing support to Maritime Security Operations and combat operations for Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom on three different occasions. These assignments included Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command; Commander, Carrier Strike Group 10, and Commander, Carrier Air Wing 7.

Admiral John C. Harvey, Jr., U.S. Navy (Ret.), commissioned into the U.S. Navy following graduation from the U.S. Naval Academy. In the Navy, he specialized in naval nuclear propulsion, surface ship and carrier strike-group operations, and Navy-wide manpower management and personnel policy development, serving in a variety of operational command positions at sea. In 2012, Admiral Harvey retired as Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command after a 39-year career.

General Michael V. Hayden, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), entered active military service in 1969. During his career, he rose to the rank of four-star general and served as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency. General Hayden also served as Commander of the Air Intelligence Agency and held senior staff positions at the Pentagon, Headquarters U.S. European Command, and the National Security Council.

Admiral Gregory G. Johnson, U.S. Navy (Ret.), served as Commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Europe, and Allied Forces, Southern Europe. He previously served as Commander, U.S. Sixth Fleet and before that Commander, Theodore Roosevelt Battle Group. Other assignments include serving as Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, William S. Cohen and earlier as Executive Assistant to General Colin L. Powell, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. He retired in 2004 after 36 years of service.

Admiral Samuel Jones Locklear, III, U.S. Navy (Ret.), graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1977. He served for 39 years and retired as commander of U.S. Pacific Command. His prior commands include Commander, U.S. Naval Forces

Europe, U.S. Naval Forces Africa, and Allied Joint Force Command Naples; Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet; and Commander, Nimitz Strike Group.

Admiral John B. Nathman, U.S. Navy (Ret.), entered active military service following graduation from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1970. During his career, Admiral Nathman served in a variety of sea, shore and joint assignments, and flew over 40 different types of aircraft. He retired in 2007 as Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command.

Admiral Robert J. Natter, U.S. Navy (Ret.), enlisted in the Naval Reserve at age 17. Following one year of enlisted service and graduation from the U.S. Naval Academy, he eventually achieved the rank of Admiral. After 36 years of active commissioned service, Admiral Natter completed his Navy career as Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet, the first Commander of U.S. Fleet Forces Command, and the Commander-in-Chief of the NATO Western Atlantic Command.

Admiral William A. Owens, U.S. Navy (Ret.), retired in 1996 as the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He began his career as a nuclear submariner, spending a total of 4,000 days aboard submarines, including duty in Vietnam. Admiral Owens was a senior military assistant to two Secretaries of Defense and served as commander of the U.S. 6th Fleet during Operation Desert Storm.

Admiral Gary Roughead, U.S. Navy (Ret.), retired in 2011 as the Chief of Naval Operations, the most senior officer in the U.S. Navy. Throughout his 38-year career, he held six operational commands and is only one of two officers in the history of the U.S. Navy to have commanded the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets. He currently serves, among other roles, as a fellow at the Hoover Institution, on the board of directors of the Northrop Grumman Corp. and Maersk Line Ltd., and as a trustee of the Johns Hopkins University.

Admiral Scott Swift, U.S. Navy (Ret.), served in the U.S. Navy for more than 40 years, rising from his commission through the Aviation Reserve Officer Candidate program to become a Navy light attack and strike fighter pilot. He held command seven times, completing his uniformed career as the 35th Commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet in 2018.

Admiral Henry G. Ulrich III, U.S. Navy (Ret.), graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1972 and served 35 years in the U.S. Navy. He served in a broad range of sea and shore assignments. Admiral Ulrich completed his career as Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Commander, Allied Joint Force Command Naples in 2007.

General Anthony Zinni, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.), commissioned into the U.S. Marine Corps following graduation from Villanova University. In his final tour of duty after a 39-year career, General Zinni served as Commander in Chief of the U.S. Central Command. Following his retirement from the U.S. Marine Corps, he continued to serve his country in numerous diplomatic roles, including as U.S. special envoy to Israel and the Palestinian Authority and in missions to Pakistan, Somalia, Eritrea, and Ethiopia.

Vice Admiral Donald C. Arthur, U.S. Navy (Ret.), served as 35th Surgeon General of the Navy. He was Commander of the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, and the Naval Hospital in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. He deployed and served with the hospital ship USNS Mercy.

Vice Admiral Michael T. Franken, U.S. Navy (Ret.), served as the Deputy Commander, U.S. Africa Command and the initial director of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency among many other roles ashore and at sea. His formative operational assignments were in guided missile destroyers. He was the first commanding officer of USS Winston S. Churchill (DDG 81) and served in USS King (DDG 41), USS Dahlgren (DDG 43) and USS Barry (DDG 52). As commodore, he commanded Destroyer Squadron 28 and Task Group 152.0 for the Eisenhower Strike Group.

Lieutenant General Walter E. Gaskin, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.), commissioned in 1974 and retired in 2013 as the Deputy Chairman of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Military Committee. His other assignments as a General Officer included service as the Commanding General of the 2nd Marine Division; Commanding General of II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) in Iraq; Vice Director of The Joint Staff; Commanding General of Marine Corps Recruiting Command; Chief of Staff, Naval Striking and Support Forces-Southern Europe; and Commanding General, Training and Education Command.

Lieutenant General Russel L. Honoré, U.S. Army (Ret.), is a decorated 37-year Army veteran and a global authority on leadership, disaster management, and climate preparedness. At the request of the Speaker of the House, the General led

Task Force 1-6 Capitol Security Review to improve Capitol security following the attacks on January 6, 2021. As the commander of Joint Task Force Katrina, he became known as the “Category 5 General” for his leadership in coordinating military relief efforts in post-hurricane New Orleans.

Lieutenant General Claudia J. Kennedy, U.S. Army (Ret.), served for 32 years as an officer in the Women’s Army Corps and then in Military Intelligence. When she retired in 2000, the Army intelligence staff, in collaboration with other intelligence services and agencies published a study projecting future international security threats 25 years into the future. This laid the foundation for decisions around force structure, modernization and strategic policy shifts.

Lieutenant General Jan-Marc Jouas, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), is a command pilot who served on active duty over 35 years, during which he commanded at squadron, group, and wing levels. He culminated his career as Commander, Seventh Air Force, and Deputy Commander, U.S. Forces Korea.

Lieutenant General Charles P. Otstott, U.S. Army (Ret.), is a graduate of West Point and the National War College. He is a former Deputy Chairman of the NATO Military Committee. He commanded the 25th Infantry Division and was awarded the Silver Star for service in Vietnam.

Rear Admiral (Upper Half) William D. Baumgartner, U.S. Coast Guard (Ret.), had a variety of operational and legal assignments during his 33-year career. As a flag officer, he served as the Judge Advocate General (TJAG)/Chief Counsel of the Coast Guard and then as the Commander of the Seventh (Southeast) Coast Guard District.

Rear Admiral (Upper Half) Kelvin Dixon, U.S. Navy (Ret.), served over three decades in the U.S. Navy as a surface warfare officer, holding command positions including Vice Commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/Fifth Fleet and Deputy Commander for U.S. Navy Region Northwest, with deployments spanning Operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm, and Iraqi Freedom. His decorations include the Defense Superior Service Medal and Legion of Merit, and he currently serves as Corporate Vice President of Risk Management for Matheson Gas, Inc.

Major General Richard T. Devereaux, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1978 and went on to serve 34 years in the Air Force. During his career he logged more than 3,500 hours piloting the C-5 Galaxy, KC-135 Stratotanker, and several other aircraft, and commanded five organizations from the

squadron level to the USAF Expeditionary Center. After retiring from the Air Force in 2012, General Devereaux worked as a defense industry consultant and served on several non-profit boards including Chairman of the National D-Day Memorial, Chairman of the Salvation Army of Asheville, President of the Rotary Club of Asheville, and Chairman of Blue Ridge Public Radio.

Major General Paul D. Eaton, U.S. Army (Ret.), served over thirty years as an Infantry officer, including combat and post-combat tours in Somalia, Bosnia and Iraq. He commanded the force to recreate the Iraqi Armed Forces after the fall of Saddam, served as Chief of Infantry for the American Army and helped create the Stryker-based Infantry divisions.

Rear Admiral (Upper Half) Albert Garcia III, U.S. Navy (Ret.), held various command positions throughout his 33-year career including Commanding Task Force Charlie in Iraq in 2003. He is a licensed Professional Engineer and has been active in capital project planning and execution in Latin America since his retirement.

Rear Admiral (Upper Half) F. Stephen Glass, U.S. Navy (Ret.), served in the U.S. Navy for twenty-nine years, serving as Staff Judge Advocate and Force Judge Advocate billets advising flag rank commanders regarding military law and procedures, culminating his career as the reserve Judge Advocate General of the Navy. He was awarded the Navy Marine Corps Distinguished Service Medal.

Major General Jonathan S. Gration, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), retired in 2006 after a 32-year career in the U.S. Air Force as a fighter pilot and senior officer. During his military service, he logged over 5,000 flight hours, served as a White House Fellow, commanded several operational units in war, and flew 274 combat missions. As a U.S. diplomat, he served as the Presidential Special Envoy to Sudan and the U.S. Ambassador to Kenya.

Rear Admiral (Upper Half) Donald J. Guter, U.S. Navy (Ret.), served on active duty in the Navy for 29 years, first as a surface warfare officer and then in the Judge Advocate General Corps, ultimately serving as the Judge Advocate General of the Navy from 2000–2002. After retiring from active duty, he served as Dean of Duquesne Law School and subsequently Dean of South Texas College of Law Houston.

Major General Richard S. Haddad, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), was the Vice Commander of the Air Force Reserve Command, responsible for the daily operations of approximately 70,000 citizen Airmen and 300 aircraft among three numbered air forces, 33 flying wings, 10 flying groups and one space wing.

Major General Irving L. Halter, Jr., U.S. Air Force (Ret.), is an Air Force Academy graduate and former fighter pilot, serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, in the Pentagon with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and as Vice Superintendent of the Air Force Academy. He is the recipient of two Bronze Stars.

Rear Admiral (Upper Half) Janice Hamby, U.S. Navy (Ret.), served on active duty from 1980 until 2012. Dr. Hamby's service included assignments at sea and in war zones, in command, on the Joint Staff, and as a Deputy Department of Defense Chief Information Officer on the staff of the Office of the Secretary of Defense. After retirement she became the Chancellor of National Defense University's College of Information and Cyberspace. She completed her federal service in 2018.

Rear Admiral (Upper Half) John D. Hutson, U.S. Navy (Ret.), served in the U.S. Navy for thirty years, including time as the Judge Advocate General of the Navy. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit (with three gold stars), Meritorious Service Medal (with two gold stars), Navy Commendation Medal, and Navy Achievement Medal.

Major General Steven J. Lepper, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), served for 35 years in the United States Air Force as a judge advocate in a variety of roles including Deputy Legal Counsel to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, commander, and military judge. He culminated his service as Deputy Judge Advocate General of the Air Force.

Rear Admiral Thomas G. Lilly, U.S. Navy (Ret.), was commissioned in the Navy Supply Corps in 1955 and served on active duty aboard USS Betelgeuse supporting the Sixth Fleet, before joining the Naval Reserve while attending law school. Promoted to Rear Admiral in March 1981, he played a central role in developing the Navy Cargo Handling Force, ultimately serving as its Commander over a coordinated fifteen-command structure. He retired from the Naval Reserve in 1988 and was awarded the Legion of Merit for his service.

Major General Randy E. Manner, U.S. Army (Ret.), served over 36 years in the U.S. Army in positions such as the Acting Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau overseeing the readiness and deployment of over 450,000 Guardsmen, the Deputy

Commanding General of the U.S. Third Army, responsible for all Army forces in combat in the Middle East, and as the Acting and Deputy Director of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, responsible for overseeing the safety of all U.S. nuclear and chemical weapons and developing DoD procedures to respond to pandemics.

Major General Frederick H. Martin, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), served 36 years on active duty, culminating in senior command and staff assignments across the global joint force. A command pilot with more than 5,000 flight hours in over a dozen aircraft, he led organizations from squadron- through numbered Air Force-levels. His staff assignments included service on the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Pentagon, political-military affairs at U.S. Central Command, a key role in standing up U.S. Africa Command in Stuttgart, Germany, and Director of Operations for Air Mobility Command at Scott Air Force Base.

Rear Admiral (Upper Half) David R. Oliver, Jr., U.S. Navy (Ret.), served as the Chief of Staff of the Seventh Fleet while on active duty and later held appointed positions in the Pentagon under Presidents William J. Clinton and George W. Bush.

Major General Gale S. Pollock, U.S. Army (Ret.), served in the Army for 36 years culminating her career as the first female, non-physician to serve as the Acting Surgeon General for the Army, Commander of the Army Medical Department and the 22nd Chief of the Army Nurse Corps. Since retirement, her focus has been improving quality of life for those struggling with vision loss and providing strategic vision and focus for small businesses.

Major General Patricia S. Rose, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), served more than three decades in the U.S. Air Force, where she held key leadership roles in logistics, engineering, and security across the Air Force and joint commands. Commissioned in 1984, she began her career as an aircraft maintenance officer and went on to command the 36th Aerial Port Squadron at McChord Air Force Base. She later directed joint logistics in Southwest Asia in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom and served as a senior logistics leader for U.S. Pacific Command and Air Force Materiel Command.

Major General Linda Singh, U.S. Army (Ret.), the first African American and first woman to serve as Maryland's Adjutant General, deployed to Kosovo and completed a combat tour in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Her numerous decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, and Army Commendation Medal, and she is a graduate of the U.S. Army War College.

Major General Antonio Taguba, U.S. Army (Ret.), served in the U.S. Army for more than 34 years, including time as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for readiness, training and mobilization in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs and as acting director of the Army Staff, Headquarters, Department of the Army.

Major General F. Andrew Turley, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), served in the U.S. Air Force for more than 27 years, in a wide variety of active duty, Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard judge advocate positions at the wing, major command and Air Staff levels, culminating in his appointment as the Ninth Air National Guard Assistant to The Judge Advocate General. As a federal civilian lawyer, he held senior level legal positions with several federal agencies, including the Department of Justice, the White House, and Department of the Air Force, and served as the general counsel of a small DoD agency. He is a retired member of the Senior Executive Service.

Brigadier General Steven M. Anderson, U.S. Army (Ret.), served a 31-year career in the U.S. Army, specializing in logistics across key command and staff assignments in Korea, Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Germany, Hawaii, and the Pentagon. His most significant role was as Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics to General David H. Petraeus during the Multi-National Force in Iraq from 2006 to 2007, where he oversaw critical sustainment operations during the height of the conflict. A 1978 graduate of West Point with a master's degree from the Naval Postgraduate School, Anderson retired in 2010 and was recognized with numerous awards, including the Distinguished Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster and the Bronze Star.

Rear Admiral (Lower Half) Michael S. Baker, M.D., F.A.C.S., U.S. Navy (Ret.), is a retired admiral and trauma surgeon with a distinguished dual career in medicine and military service. Board certified in General Surgery with fellowship training in cardiovascular surgery, he served as a surgery department chair for more than 20 years and was on the clinical faculty at two medical schools. Retiring after 30 years of service in the U.S. Navy, Dr. Baker specialized in combat casualty care, triage, trauma, operational medicine, and disaster response.

Rear Admiral (Lower Half) James A. Barnett, Jr., U.S. Navy (Ret.), was a Surface Warfare Officer and attorney. He served as Deputy Commander of the Naval Expeditionary Warfare Command during the height of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. He later served as Chief of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau of the Federal Communications Commission.

Rear Admiral (Lower Half) Jay A. DeLoach, U.S. Navy (Ret.), graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1978, served on submarines, and retired as a rear admiral. He earned three master's degrees (Management; Nuclear Engineering; and National Security & Strategic Studies) and was an adjunct professor for the Naval War College. As a member of the Senior Executive Service, he served as the 12th Director of the Naval History & Heritage Command.

Brigadier General Stephen A. Cheney, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.), was the Inspector General for the Marine Corps and later was the Commanding General of the Marine Corps Recruit Depot at Parris Island, South Carolina. He also commanded at every level from Lieutenant to Colonel in the Marines. A former military fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, upon retirement from the Marines he spent ten years as CEO and President at the American Security Project, a national security think tank in Washington, DC.

Brigadier General John W. Douglass, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), commissioned in 1963 as a procurement officer. He served on the National Security Council as director of defense programs and as the deputy U.S. military representative to the NATO Military Committee in Brussels, Belgium. Following his retirement from active military service, he served as Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Research, Development, and Acquisitions) from 1995 to 1998.

Brigadier General Robert J. Felderman, U.S. Army (Ret.), served as the United States Deputy Director and Principal Advisor to the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and as the Deputy Director of Plans, Policy, and Strategy Directorate (DJ5) at the U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM).

Rear Admiral (Lower Half) Charles D. Harr, U.S. Navy (Ret.), retired in 2013 as the 18th Medical Officer of the Marine Corps, former Commanding Officer of the 4th Medical Battalion. He is a Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgeon currently practicing in Raleigh, North Carolina, and serving as the Chief Medical Officer of WakeMed Health and Hospitals.

Brigadier General David R. Irvine, U.S. Army (Ret.), is an attorney in private practice. He previously served four terms as a Republican member of the Utah House of Representatives. He enlisted as a private in the 96th Infantry Division in 1962. He received a direct commission as a strategic intelligence officer in 1967. He retired in 2002 as a Brigadier General, and his last assignment was Deputy Commander of the 96th Regional Support Command, U.S. Army Reserve.

Brigadier General David McGinnis, New York National Guard (Ret.), is a combat veteran who served in and out of uniform for 59 years, retiring from the Army in 1995 as Brigadier General, New York National Guard, and last served as the Principal Deputy and Assistant Secretary of Defense, March 2009 to September 2012.

Brigadier General Joseph V. Medina, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.), graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1976 and served for three decades. His command assignments included Commander of Expeditionary Strike Group THREE, Commander of the Marine Corps' installations in Asia, and Commanding General of 3rd Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB)/Deputy Commanding General III Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) in Okinawa, Japan.

Rear Admiral (Lower Half) Harold L. Robinson, U.S. Navy (Ret.), commissioned as an Ensign in the U.S. Naval Reserve in 1971 and served for 36 years before retiring in 2007. He is a Fleet Marine Force Qualified Officer, selected for Flag rank in 2003; in 2004 he was assigned as Deputy Chief of Chaplains for Reserve Matters and Director of Religious Programs, Marine Force Reserve. He also served as Vice President and President of the COMNAVRESFOR Policy Board FY 2004–2005, the first staff corps officer so assigned. He served in numerous overseas assignments around the world and is a recipient of the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal, the Naval Commendation Medal with two Gold Stars, the Fleet Marine Force Service Ribbon, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, and the Navy and Marine Corps Overseas Deployment Ribbon.

Brigadier General John M. Schuster, U.S. Army (Ret.), commissioned as an Infantry Officer in 1968 and held a variety of command and staff positions. He retired as Deputy Commanding General, United States Army 88th Regional Support Command, Fort Snelling, Minnesota.

Brigadier General Paul G. Smith, U.S. Army (Ret.), is a retired Massachusetts National Guard officer whose more than three-decade career included command at the company, battalion, and brigade levels, culminating as Assistant Adjutant General – Army. He also served as Commander of the Land Component Command and as a Dual-Status Commander, where he led Army force development initiatives in suicide prevention, drug abuse reduction, sexual assault prevention, resiliency, and diversity. General Smith also directed the State Partnership Program with the Republic of Paraguay, supporting the development of United Nations peacekeeping forces, and represented Massachusetts on the Military Interstate Children's Compact

Commission as well as the National Guard Bureau Joint Diversity Executive Council.

Brigadier General Allyson Solomon, U.S. Army (Ret.), served nearly 36 years in the National Guard. She was the Commander of the Maryland Air National Guard and the Assistant Adjutant General for Air, Maryland Air National Guard. Since retirement, she has served as President of the National Guard Youth Foundation and holds board and fellowship positions with the Armed Forces Benefits Association, Women in Military Service for America Memorial, and the American College of National Security Leaders.

Brigadier General Robin B. Umberg, U.S. Army (Ret.), began her Army career at 18 and was commissioned in 1977 after earning a nursing scholarship at Walter Reed. Over 36 years of active and reserve service, she held command and staff roles across the U.S. and overseas, including deployments during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and earned high honors such as the Legion of Merit and the Civilian Humanitarian Service Medal. As Chief of Professional Services for the 3rd Medical Command, she advised on readiness and career management for more than 27,000 medical personnel, and in 2006 was inducted into the Military Order of Medical Merit. Following her military retirement in 2010, she continued serving veterans as Undersecretary of California Department of Veteran Affairs, where she modernized long-term care for aging, disabled, and homeless veterans. Appointed to the board of visitors at West Point, she has dedicated her career to service, leadership, and advocacy for veterans. She earned the Lifetime Achievement Award for her service to veterans.