Department of the Navy Names New Service Acquisition Executive

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ARLINGTON, Va. – Acting Secretary of the Navy Hung Cao announced today that William F. Mahan, a member of the Senior Executive Service, is now performing the duties of Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition. In this capacity, Mahan will serve as the senior acquisition executive for both the Navy and Marine Corps.

Mahan, a former submarine officer and a 2003 graduate of the United States Naval Academy, also brings a wealth of industry experience to the role. He was the founder and Chief Executive Officer of a defense engineering firm that supported the Department of War with expertise in systems engineering and integration, rapid prototyping, flight testing, and acquisition management.

“Restoring our maritime dominance requires bold leadership in warfighting acquisition,” Cao said. “Will Mahan is a proven leader who will help the Navy deliver the Golden Fleet to ensure our Sailors and Marines have what they need to fight and win when the nation calls.”

Jason L. Potter, who had been performing the duties of the assistant secretary since July 2025, returns to his original role as the Principal Civilian Deputy ASN RDA.

“Jason provided vital leadership over the past year, including the establishment of Portfolio Acquisition Executives and getting an ambitious, yet achievable shipbuilding plan over the finish line,” Cao added. “I am incredibly grateful for his steady hand and unflinching commitment to the mission, and we

are extremely fortunate to retain his expertise in our acquisition leadership team.”

Mahan assumes stewardship of the Department of the Navy’s warfighting acquisition efforts as the department undergoes foundational acquisition reforms, shifting from a compliance-based bureaucracy to a more agile, warfighter-focused organization. At the same time, the Department of the Navy is making investments with industry to invigorate the maritime industrial base and build historic numbers of ships for the Navy and Marine Corps. The recently unveiled U.S. Navy Shipbuilding Plan calls for generational investments in both manned and unmanned ships, including surface combatants, submarines, aircraft carriers, amphibious ships, and auxiliary and combat logistics ships.