SECDEF Nominates Next INDOPACOM, PACFLEET Commanders



Adm. John Aquilino, commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, speaks with Sailors assigned to Nimitz-class nuclear aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) in early February 2021. He has been nominated as commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. *U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Apprentice Mason Congleton*

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III announced March 5 that the president has made the following nominations:

Navy Adm. John C. Aquilino for appointment to the grade of admiral, and assignment as commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Aquilino is currently serving as commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

Navy Vice Adm. Samuel J. Paparo Jr. for appointment to the grade of admiral, and assignment as commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Paparo is currently serving as commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Central Command; commander, Fifth Fleet; and commander, Combined Maritime Forces, Manama, Bahrain.

If confirmed by the Senate, Aquilino, a naval aviator, would succeed Adm. Philip Davidson, a surface warfare officer. Paparo also is a naval aviator.

Below are excerpts from the official biographies of both nominees:

Adm. John Aquilino is a native to Huntington, New York. He graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1984, earning a Bachelor of Science in Physics. He subsequently entered flight training and earned his wings in August 1986.

Operationally, he has served in numerous fighter squadrons flying the F-14 A/B Tomcat and the F-18 C/E/F Hornet. His fleet assignments include the Ghost Riders of Fighter Squadron (VF) 142 and the Black Aces of VF-41. He commanded the World Famous Red Rippers of VF-11, Carrier Air Wing 2 and Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 2. He has made several extended deployments in support of Operation Deny Flight, Deliberate Force, Southern Watch, Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Ashore, Aquilino’s assignments include duties as an adversary instructor pilot flying the A-4, F-5 and F-16N aircraft for the Challengers of VF-43; operations officer of Strike Weapons and Tactics School, Atlantic; flag aide to the vice chief of naval operations; special assistant for Weapons Systems and Advanced Development in the Office of the Legislative Affairs for the Secretary of Defense; director of Air Wing Readiness and Training, for Commander, Naval Air Forces, Atlantic Fleet; and executive assistant to the commander, U.S. Fleet Forces

Command.

His flag assignments include director of Strategy and Policy (J5), U.S. Joint Forces Command; deputy director, Joint Force Coordinator (J31), the Joint Staff; commander, CSG-2, director of Maritime Operations, U.S. Pacific Fleet (N04); deputy chief of naval operations for Operations, Plans and Strategy (N3/N5) and most recently, as commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, U.S. 5th Fleet, Combined Maritime Forces.

Aquilino graduated from the Navy Fighter Weapons School (TOPGUN), the Joint Forces Staff College and completed Harvard Kennedy School's Executive Education Program in National and International Security.

Aquilino assumed duties as commander, U.S.Pacific Fleet, May 17, 2018. He is the 36th commander since the fleet's Pearl Harbor headquarters was established in February 1941.

Vice Adm. Sam Paparo, a native of Morton, Pennsylvania graduated from Villanova University and was commissioned in 1987. He is the son of a former enlisted Marine and the grandson of a World War 2 enlisted Sailor. He has earned a Master of Arts in International Studies from Old Dominion University and a Master of Science in Systems Analysis from the Naval Postgraduate School. He is also a graduate of the Air Command and Staff College, the Air War College, the Naval War College and the Joint and Combined Warfighting School. A U.S. Naval Aviator, he is a TOPGUN graduate and has flown over 6,000 hours in the F-14, F-15 and F/A-18 and 1,100 carrier landings.

Operational command tours at sea include Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 195 in the Forward Deployed Naval Forces, Yokosuka, Japan, deploying in Kitty Hawk Strike Group; Commander, Carrier Air Wing 7, embarked in Dwight D. Eisenhower Strike Group and Commander, Carrier Strike Group Ten. On the ground, he commanded Provincial Reconstruction

Team, Nuristan Province, Afghanistan with the 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division and the 173rd Airborne Brigade. Other operational assignments at sea include Fighter Squadron (VF) 14, flying the F-14 Tomcat with USS John F. Kennedy and USS Dwight D. Eisenhower Strike Groups and VFA-15, flying the F/A-18 Hornet with USS Theodore Roosevelt and USS Enterprise Strike Groups. He served also on exchange duty with the U.S. Air Force flying the F-15C Eagle with the 71st Fighter Squadron, deploying multiple times to Saudi Arabia and Keflavik, Iceland. In joint operational service, he was Battle Director at the Combined Air and Space Operations Center, Al Udeid, Qatar.

His shore assignments include the staff of Commander, Naval Air Forces, as F/A-18 training, readiness and requirements officer. He served as commanding officer of VFA-106. He was Programming Division (OPNAV N80), Strategy and Resource and Requirements Review Board branch head. Executive staff tours include service as executive assistant to Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, and executive assistant to the 31st Chief of Naval Operations.

Paparo’s most recent assignment was Director of Operations, J3, U.S. Central Command from April 2018 to July 2020. He assumed command of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/U.S. 5th Fleet/Combined Maritime Forces on August 19, 2020.