

Senate Confirms Braithwaite as Next SECNAV



Braithwaite said in his confirmation hearing that the Navy was in “troubled waters” due to failure of leadership. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Apprentice Travis Baley
WASHINGTON – The U.S. Senate confirmed retired admiral and current ambassador Kenneth J. Braithwaite to be the 77th Secretary of the Navy. Braithwaite’s nomination was approved on a voice vote May 21 before the Senate left for a weeklong Memorial Day break.

Braithwaite, who was nominated to the top civilian job in the Navy Department by President Donald Trump in November, is a retired Navy rear admiral and current U.S. ambassador to Norway. A 1984 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, Braithwaite is a former P-3 naval aviator who became a public affairs officer. He left active duty in 1993, resuming service in the Navy Reserve until 2011. He worked in the private sector and government after leaving active duty.

At his May 7 confirmation hearing before the Armed Services Committee, Braithwaite pledged to restore good order and discipline in the Navy, which he said was in “troubled waters” after being rocked in recent years by the “Fat Leonard” corruption scandal, fatal at-sea collisions in 2017, recent judicial missteps and the COVID-19 crisis aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt.

“It saddens me to say the Department of the Navy is in troubled waters due to many factors, primarily the failure of leadership,” Braithwaite told the panel. “Successful organizations have a strong culture, which always starts with leadership,” he said, adding that his No. 1 priority, if confirmed, would be “to restore the appropriate culture in the United States Navy.” The Navy’s culture wasn’t broke,

he noted, but "I think it's been tarnished."

Trump tapped Braithwaite for the Navy job after Richard Spencer abruptly left last November following the president's decision to intervene in the discipline of a Navy SEAL convicted in the military justice system of posing with the corpse of an ISIS fighter. Thomas Modly, who replaced Spencer, serving as acting Navy Secretary, resigned in the midst of the Roosevelt COVID-19 crisis, which grew into a political imbroglio after Modly relieved the aircraft carrier's captain. Army Undersecretary James McPherson, a retired Navy admiral, was appointed acting Navy secretary until a permanent secretary could be confirmed.