

# A SACRED OATH

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MEMOIRS OF A  
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE DURING  
EXTRAORDINARY TIMES

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**MARK T. ESPER**



WILLIAM MORROW

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# APPENDIX A

## THE ARMY VISION



### THE ARMY VISION

The United States Army is the most lethal and capable ground combat force in history. It has proven this in multiple conflicts, across a broad spectrum of operations, in various locations around the world, defending the Nation and serving the American people well for over 240 years. The key to this success has been the skill and grit of the American Soldier, the quality of its Leaders, the superiority of its equipment, and the ability of the Army – Regular, National Guard, and Reserve – to adapt to and dominate a complex and continuously changing environment as a member of the Joint Force.

As we look ahead, near-peer competitors such as China and Russia will increasingly challenge the United States and our allies in Europe, the Middle East, and the Indo-Pacific region. At the same time, we should expect these countries' arms, equipment, and tactics to be used against us by others, including threats such as North Korea and Iran, failed states, and terrorist groups. Our adversaries' ambitions and the accelerating pace of technological change will create challenges and opportunities for the Army's battlefield superiority.

Meanwhile, the many demands on the Nation's resources will put downward pressure on the defense budget in the future, forcing the Army to continue making difficult choices about how it spends scarce dollars to meet national objectives and compelling us to become ever more efficient. A continued commitment to strengthening our alliances and building partnerships will help offset these challenges.

**The Army Mission**—our purpose—remains constant: *To deploy, fight, and win our Nation's wars by providing ready, prompt, and sustained land dominance by Army forces across the full spectrum of conflict as part of the Joint Force.* The Army mission is vital to the Nation because we are a Service capable of defeating enemy ground forces and indefinitely seizing and controlling those things an adversary prizes most – its land, its resources, and its population.

Given the threats and challenges ahead, it is imperative the Army have a clear and coherent vision of where we want to be in the coming years so that we retain our overmatch against all potential adversaries and remain capable of accomplishing our Mission in the future. As such, the **Army Vision**—our future end state—is as follows:

*The Army of 2028 will be ready to deploy, fight, and win decisively against any adversary, anytime and anywhere, in a joint, multi-domain, high-intensity conflict, while simultaneously deterring others and maintaining its ability to conduct irregular warfare. The Army will do this through the employment of modern manned and unmanned ground combat vehicles, aircraft, sustainment systems, and weapons, coupled with robust combined arms formations and tactics based on a modern warfighting doctrine and centered on exceptional Leaders and Soldiers of unmatched lethality.*

To achieve our Vision, the Army must meet the following objectives in the coming years:

- **Man.** Grow the Regular Army above 500,000 Soldiers, with associated growth in the National Guard and Army Reserve, by recruiting and retaining high quality, physically fit, mentally tough Soldiers who can deploy, fight, and win decisively on any future battlefield.
- **Organize.** Ensure warfighting formations have sufficient infantry, armor, engineer, artillery, and air defense assets. Units from brigade through corps must also have the ability to conduct sustained ground and air Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance; Electronic Warfare; and cyber operations to shape the battlefield across all domains. Aviation, additional combat support, and robust logistical support must be readily available to units.

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- Train. Focus training on high-intensity conflict, with emphasis on operating in dense urban terrain, electronically degraded environments, and under constant surveillance. Training must be tough, realistic, iterative, and dynamic. Continuous movement, battlefield innovation, and leverage of combined arms maneuver with the Joint Force, allies, and partners must be its hallmarks. This training will require rapid expansion of our synthetic training environments and deeper distribution of simulations capabilities down to the company level to significantly enhance Soldier and team lethality.

- Equip. Modernize the force by first reforming the current acquisition system and unifying the modernization enterprise under a single command to focus the Army's efforts on delivering the weapons, combat vehicles, sustainment systems, and equipment that Soldiers need when they need it. This modernization includes experimenting with and developing autonomous systems, artificial intelligence, and robotics to make our Soldiers more effective and our units less logistically dependent.

- Lead. Develop smart, thoughtful, and innovative leaders of character who are comfortable with complexity and capable of operating from the tactical to the strategic level. We will build a new talent management-based personnel system that leverages the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and preferences of its officers and noncommissioned officers. This system, when coupled with more flexible career models, will enable the Army to better attract, identify, develop, and place these leaders to optimize outcomes for all.

To achieve and sustain these objectives given the uncertainty of future budgets, the Army must continually assess everything we do, identifying lower value activities to discontinue and ways to improve what we must do, in order to free up time, money, and manpower for our top priorities. Trusting and empowering subordinate leaders will facilitate both reform and greater performance.

In all these efforts, we will ensure that our Soldiers, civilian workforce, and their Families enjoy the professional opportunities and quality of life they deserve. From the top down we must also remain committed to the Army Values. The Army is at its best when we work and fight as one team, and our Army Values, coupled with our Warrior Ethos, will guide and serve us well as we face the challenges ahead.

Since 1775, the United States Army has proven itself absolutely vital to protecting the American people, safeguarding the Nation, and advancing our interests abroad. This fact remains true today. Our ability to do so will be even more critical in the future as threats continue to emerge and evolve, becoming ever more dangerous and more complex. To remain ready to accomplish our Mission of fighting and winning the Nation's wars, the Army must fulfill the future Army Vision outlined herein. We are confident that with the right leadership, the proper focus, sufficient resources, and sustained effort the U.S. Army will achieve our Vision, remain the world's premier fighting force, and serve the Nation well for decades to come.



Mark A. Milley  
General, United States Army  
Chief of Staff



Mark T. Esper  
Secretary of the Army

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### JUNE 24, 2019, INITIAL MESSAGE TO THE DEPARTMENT<sup>1</sup>



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

6/24/19

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EMPLOYEES

SUBJECT: Initial Message to the Department

It is the honor and privilege of a lifetime to serve alongside you as the Acting Secretary of Defense.

Since rejoining the Department nearly two years ago as the Secretary of the Army, my confidence in the incredible skill, professionalism, and commitment of our military and civilian workforce has grown even stronger.

As we continue to advance the Nation's security, let me reaffirm our path forward. The National Defense Strategy remains our guiding document and everything we do should support its stated objectives. The Department's priorities remain unchanged. We will continue to expand the competitive space through three mutually reinforcing lines of effort:

- *Build a More Lethal Force* – The surest way to deter adversary aggression is to fully prepare for war. We must continue to build readiness to fight tonight should the Nation call, while modernizing key capabilities for future conflict.
- *Strengthen Alliances and Attract New Partners* – Our Allies and Partners play an essential role in helping us deter conflict and defend freedom around the world. Through continued engagement we will grow these relationships and deepen our interoperability.
- *Reform the Department for Greater Performance and Affordability* – Reform is the means by which we free up time, money, and manpower to reinvest into our top priorities. Look for smarter, more effective ways to do business, and empower your teams to innovate and take prudent risk where necessary.

Having previously served in the Regular Army, National Guard, and Reserve, I understand well the sacrifices our Service Members, Civilians, and their Families make to protect this great country. This is why I am committed to taking care of Families and ensuring they have the resources they need to thrive.

Lastly, I place great importance on a commitment by all – especially Leaders – to those values and behaviors that represent the best of the military profession and mark the character and integrity of the Armed Forces that the American people admire.

I am proud of the great work our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Civilians do each and every day around the world. Stay focused on your mission, remain steadfast in your pursuit of excellence, and always do the right thing. Together, we will remain the most ready and capable military force in the world, which is what our Nation expects and deserves.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mark T. Esper".

Mark T. Esper  
Acting

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### JUNE 2, 2020, MESSAGE TO THE DEPARTMENT— SUPPORT TO CIVIL AUTHORITIES<sup>1</sup>

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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

JUN - 2 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL DOD PERSONNEL

SUBJECT: Message to the Department – Support to Civil Authorities

The United States military has been the greatest force for good in our Nation's history. While we often see the impact of our efforts overseas, every President has at times deployed military forces for domestic missions as well. In the last few months, for example, America's men and women in uniform – Active Duty, Reserve, and National Guard – have worked day and night across our communities to confront the COVID-19 crisis. This historic mission was just the most recent example of our longstanding support to civilian authorities – from pandemics to hurricanes, and from wildfires to providing security after 9/11.

Throughout these response efforts, I have been incredibly proud of our Service members and their hard work to assist our fellow Americans. This past week, our support to civil authority mission – that had been focused on COVID-19 – changed. Our National Guard are now also being called upon across the country to help protect our communities, businesses, monuments, and places of worship.

Department of Defense personnel have taken an oath to defend the Constitution of the United States. I myself have taken it many times in my military and civilian careers, and believe strongly in it. As part of that oath, we commit to protecting the American people's right to freedom of speech and to peaceful assembly. I, like you, am steadfast in my belief that Americans who are frustrated, angry, and seeking to be heard must be ensured that opportunity. And like you, I am committed to upholding the rule of law and protecting life and liberty, so that the violent actions of a few do not undermine the rights and freedoms of law-abiding citizens.

I appreciate your professionalism and dedication to defending the Constitution for all Americans. Moreover, I am amazed by the countless remarkable accomplishments of the Department of Defense in today's trying times – from repatriating and sheltering Americans who were evacuated from a foreign land, to delivering food and medical supplies to communities in need, and to protecting our cities and communities. In every challenge, and across every mission, the U.S. military has remained ready, capable, and willing to serve.

As I reminded you in February, I ask that you remember at all times our commitment as a Department and as public servants to stay apolitical in these turbulent days. For well over two centuries, the U.S. military has earned the respect of the American people by being there to protect and serve all Americans. Through your steadfast dedication to the mission and our core values, and your enduring support to your fellow Americans, we will safeguard the hard-earned trust and confidence of the public, as our Nation's most respected institution.

*Mark T. Esper*

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### JUNE 3, 2020, PRESS CONFERENCE IN THE PENTAGON BRIEFING ROOM

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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE MARK T. ESPER: Well, good morning, everyone.

Over the past couple days there's been a fair share of reporting, some good, some bad, about what is transpiring—transpiring in our great nation and the role of the Department of Defense and its leaders. I want to take a few minutes to address these issues in person to make clear the facts and offer my views.

First, let me say up front, the killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis policeman is a horrible crime. The officers on the scene that day should be held accountable for his murder. It is a tragedy that we have seen repeat itself too many times.

With great sympathy, I want to extend the deepest of condolences to the family and friends of George Floyd from me and the Department.

Racism is real in America, and we must all do our very best to recognize it, to confront it, and to eradicate it. I've always been proud to be a member of an institution—the United States military—that embraces diversity and inclusion and prohibits hate and discrimination in all forms.

More often than not, we have led on these issues. And while we still have much to do on this front, leaders across DoD and the services take this responsibility seriously, and we are determined to make a difference.

Every member of this department has sworn an oath to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America. I've taken this



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oath many times, beginning at the age of eighteen, when I entered West Point. The rights that are embedded in this great document begin with the First Amendment, which guarantees the five freedoms of speech, religion, press, assembly, and the right to petition the government.

The United States military is sworn to defend these and all other rights, and we encourage Americans at all times to exercise them peacefully. It is these rights and freedoms that make our country so special, and it is these rights and freedoms that American service members are willing to fight and die for.

At times, however, the United States military is asked, in support of governors and law enforcement, to help maintain law and order so that other Americans can exercise their rights, free from violence against themselves or their property. That is what thousands of Guardsmen are doing today in cities across America. It is not something we seek to do, but it is our duty and we do it with the utmost skill and professionalism.

I was reminded of that Monday as I visited our National Guardsmen who were on duty, Monday night, protecting our most hallowed grounds and monuments. I am very proud of the men and women of the National Guard who are out on the streets today performing this important task, and, in many ways, at the risk of their own welfare.

I've always believed and continue to believe that the National Guard is best suited for performing domestic support to civil authorities in these situations, in support of local law enforcement. I say this not only as secretary of defense but also as a former soldier and a former member of the National Guard.

The option to use active-duty forces in a law enforcement role should only be used as a matter of last resort, and only in the most urgent and dire of situations. We are not in one of those situations now. I do not support invoking the Insurrection Act.



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Last night, a story came out based on a background interview I did earlier in the day. It focused on the events last Monday evening in Lafayette Park, and I found it to be inaccurate in parts. So I want to state very clearly, for all to hear, my account of what happened that Monday afternoon.

I did know that, following the president's remarks on Monday evening, that many of us were going to join President Trump and review the damage in Lafayette Park, and at St. John's Episcopal Church. What I was not aware of was exactly where we were going, when we arrived at the church, and what the plans were once we got there.

It was also my aim—and General Milley's—to meet with and thank the members of the National Guard who were on duty that evening in the park. It is something the president likes to do as well. The path we took to and from the church didn't afford us that opportunity, but I was able to spend a considerable amount of time with our Guardsmen later that evening, as I moved around the city to many of the locations at which they were posted.

I also want to address a few other matters that have been raised about that evening.

First, National Guard forces did not fire rubber bullets or tear gas into the crowd, as reported.

Second, Guardsmen were instructed to wear helmets and personal protective equipment for their own protection, not to serve as some form of intimidation.

Third, military leaders, including the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, were wearing field uniforms because that is the appropriate uniform when working in a command center and meeting with troops in the streets.

Fourth, it wasn't until yesterday afternoon that we determined it was a National Guard helicopter that hovered low over a city block in

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D.C. Within an hour or so of learning of this, I directed the secretary of the Army to conduct an inquiry to determine what happened and why, and to report back to me.

Now, you all have been very generous with your time, so let me wrap up by stating again how very proud I am of our men and women in uniform. The National Guard, over the short span of several months, has gone from tackling natural disasters such as floods, to combating the coronavirus across the country, to now dealing with civil unrest in support of law enforcement on the streets of America, all while many of their fellow Guardsmen are deployed abroad, defending against America's real adversaries.

Most importantly, I want to assure all of you and all Americans that the Department of Defense, the armed services, our uniformed leaders, our civilian leaders, and I take seriously our oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States and to safeguard those very rights contained in that—that document we cherish so dearly.

This is a tough time for our great country these days, but we will get through it. My hope is that instead of the violence in the streets, we will see peaceful demonstrations that honor George Floyd, that press for accountability for his murder, that move us to reflect about racism in America and that serve as a call to action for us to come together and to address this problem once and for all.

This is the America your military represents. This is the America we aspire to be, and this is the America that we are committed to defending with our lives. Thank you.

STAFF: We'll go to the phones. Bob Burns?

Q: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Secretary. Taking you back to your comments about Monday evening, when you left the White House with the

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president and others, I think if I heard you correctly, you said you did know that you were going to be going to the St. John's Church, but you didn't know what would happen when you got there. And you've since been criticized by many for essentially participating at a presidential photo op. So my question is, do you regret having participated?

SEC. ESPER: Well, I—I did know that we were going to the church. I was not aware a photo op was happening. Of course, the president drags a large press pool along with him. And look, I did everything I can to try to stay apolitical and to try—trying to stay out of situations that may appear political, and sometimes I'm successful with doing that, and—and sometimes I'm not as successful. But my aim is to keep the Department out of politics, to stay apolitical, and that's what I continue to try and do, as well as my leaders here in the Department.

STAFF: All right. We'll go to Phil Stewart.

Q: Yeah, hi. Mr. Secretary, could you address, there's been a lot of criticism of your use of the word "battlespace" when you describe areas inside the United States where people are protesting. Could you—would you like to take that phrase back? And when you talk about keeping the military apolitical, how do you see, you know, the Department navigating this when the response to protests has become a partisan issue? Thanks.

SEC. ESPER: Well, I'll take your second question first, Phil.

That is the challenge, right? It's—it's a—there—there's a political tone to this. We are in a political season. An election approaches, and this is always a challenge for every Department of Defense in every election year. And so this is something we're going to continue to deal with as we creep closer and closer to election season.

I've been speaking about the importance of staying out of politics

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by remaining apolitical to my leadership since—since I took office. I reinforced it when I came in, when we started the—the new year, and I’ve talked about it several times since then. But this will be the ongoing challenge.

With regard to your first question, as—as you rightly said, earlier this week I was quoted as saying the—the best way—way to get street violence under control was by dominating the battlespace, and probably all of you who cover the Pentagon hear us use this phrase often. It’s something we use day in and day out. There are other phrases that we use day in, day out that you’ll understand, that most people don’t understand. It is part of our military lexicon that I grew up with, and it’s what we—we routinely use to describe a bounded area of operations. It’s not a phrase focused on people, and certainly not on our fellow Americans, as some have suggested.

It is a phrase I used over the weekend when speaking with Minnesota Governor Walz. He and I spoke a couple times on Friday and Saturday as I spoke to him about DoD’s support to what was happening there. Keep in mind, it was only a—a—a few short days ago, where Minneapolis was the epicenter and all eyes were focused on—on Minnesota.

But Governor Walz is also a former member of the National Guard, and I was complimenting him on the call with the governors about what he had done. It was his successful use of the Guard in sufficient numbers that really wrested control of the streets from the looters and others breaking the law, and that’s—so I was giving him credit for that. And he was doing so so the peaceful demonstrations could be held, so that peaceful demonstrators could share their frustration and their anger.

That’s what I was encouraging other governors to consider. In retrospect, I would use different wording so as not to distract from the more important matters at hand or allow some to suggest that we are militarizing the issue.

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STAFF: All right, Luis Martinez.

Q: Hi, sir. Thank you much for a very—for doing this briefing. Some of the people that criticized you for the term of “battle space” were some of America’s most respected former generals, and they said that that was just inappropriate language. And if I could move on to what you knew about the situation at Lafayette Square, were you aware that the Park Police were going to use such strong measures in pushing back the—the protesters there? And did you express any concern that that may not be exactly what needed to happen to make that photo op possible?

SEC. ESPER: Thanks for the question, Luis. I—I was not aware of law enforcement’s plans for the park. I was not briefed on them, nor should I expect to be. But they—they had taken what actions I—I assume they felt was necessary, given what they faced. But I was not briefed on the plans and was—was not aware of what they were doing.

STAFF: All right, Dan Lamothe.

Q: Hi, yes, Mr. Secretary, thanks for your time. I realize you’re trying to keep the Department out of politics, but it took you a week to—to say anything along the lines of what you did at the top of this call and—and your strong—strong comments this morning about George Floyd. In—in light of the more than two hundred thousand Black service members in uniform and the pain across the country, why did it take so long? Thanks.

SEC. ESPER: Thanks—thanks, Dan.

It’s a fair question. I think you may have written about this, and as you rightly said, I’ve worked very hard to keep the Department out of

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politics, which is very hard these days as we move closer and closer to an election.

You know, remaining apolitical means that there are times to speak up and times not to. And as I said in my earlier remarks, what happened to George Floyd happens way too often in this country. And most times, we don't speak about these matters as a department.

But as events have unfolded over the past few days, it became very clear that this is becoming a very combustible national issue. And what I wanted to do—I had made the determination, as events escalated in the last seventy-two hours, that the moment had reached a point where it warranted a clear message to the Department about our approach.

And so, given the dynamics, I wanted to lead by crafting my own statement for the Department first—which I did yesterday, and you all should have seen it and got it, it went out, this piece of paper—my message to the force, which set, I thought was the proper tone for service members and DoD civilians and all, and giving my leaders the space to also craft similar messages, expressing our outrage at what happened, expressing our commitment to the Constitution, expressing our commitment as an institution to—to end racism and hatred in all its forms, and just a general expression with regard to what the Department is about.

So that—that's the timeline, Dan, if you will, and that's why it did, and I do that with great counsel from the—my advisers.

STAFF: We'll go—one more from the phones.

Q: The chiefs, several of the chiefs were interested in speaking up sooner. Sometimes when you say nothing, that says something unto itself. In retrospect, would you have done so more quickly?

SEC. ESPER: Well, we did—we—you know, General Milley, we talked to the chiefs. There was—most of the chiefs wanted to take the

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lead from me, and—and so what I told them is I was—through the chairman, I was going to take—I was going to send the initial message out, again to set the tone, to express my views and then I'd give them the space to share their views as well, to do so.

And, again, this is—we are a week into this, or so. And when you look at what's escalated, it's been a matter of seventy-two hours, maybe ninety-six or so. So—and we've been consumed with a lot of things between now and then. But I do think it's important to speak up and to speak out and to share what we view, again, as an institution, the racism that exists in America and how we view it as an institution.

Again, I think we've led on these issues over the history of the United States military, and we'll continue to do so, certainly while I'm at the helm.

STAFF: All right, one more from the phone. Tom Bowman? If not Tom, then Nick Schiffrin?

Q: Mr. Secretary, thanks very much for doing this. If I could take you back to the other night. I know you're saying that you didn't know exactly what the plans were. But with all due respect, those plans were designed by the commander in chief and also by Bill Barr—of course the fellow cabinet secretary, and someone who is in the command center with you. So how could you not know about those plans and what does it say about those plans, to both clear the park and go to the church and do what the president did? And number two, I know you're conducting an inquiry on the use of the helicopter. You may not want to say this, but do you believe it was inappropriate to use a medevac helicopter to intimidate protesters? Thank you.

SEC. ESPER: On the first thing, Nick, again, I think there's some speculation with regard to what you—what you stated. I'd encourage you to



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speak to the Department of Justice as, again, it was a law enforcement action.

I had not yet arrived at the command post, I was en route to the command post when I was asked to return to the White House to update the president. I got back to the White House, and within a short period of time, we were—the president went out to give his remarks.

So there was no space in between there, there was no opportunity to get a briefing and again, nor would I expect to get a briefing on what the law enforcement community was planning to do with regard to the clearing of a park. Again, that was not a military decision, it was not a military action. The National Guard was there in support of the—in support of law enforcement.

With regard to your second question, I would just say this much. I'm not going to comment because I've asked that an inquiry be made. I want to make sure I understand why—what happened, who was involved, what orders were they given or not given, was there a safety issue involved, right? With an aircraft hovering that low. So there's a lot of questions that need to be answered. I spoke to Secretary McCarthy last night about it, he is digging into it and we will get the facts, and we'll go back from there.

STAFF: All right. In the room, Tara?

Q: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. So you served in the D.C. National Guard—

SEC. ESPER: I did, that's right.

Q: —to follow on Nick's question, were you surprised that a medical helicopter from the D.C. National Guard was used to intimidate people who were peacefully assembling? And then secondly, as this

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goes on, you've asked the secretary of the Army to look into this, who tasked the helicopter—

SEC. ESPER: Right.

Q: Was the helicopter under the authority of the Department of Justice? Is that why there's this kind of murkiness about how the helicopter was tasked, how a medical helicopter was used in an aggressive form?

SEC. ESPER: Yeah, so those are some of the details we have to tease out in terms of, you know, who directed it, what was requested, was it at the request of law enforcement. You made a statement that it was to intimidate protesters. I got a report back that they were asked by law enforcement to look at a checkpoint, a National Guard checkpoint to see if there were protesters around.

So there's conflicting reports. I don't want to add to that. I think we need to let the Army conduct its inquiry, and then get back and see what the facts actually are.

Q: But when you looked at the video, if you didn't see it live—

SEC. ESPER: I—look, I think when you're landing that low in a city, it's—it looks unsafe to me, right? But I need to find out—I need to learn more about what's going on. It would not be unsafe if they were a medevac bird picking up somebody who was seriously injured or something like that, right? It would be a different circumstance. So we have to find out all the facts, take it all in, and let the Army do its work and then come back with—with what they discovered.

Let's—

Q: But to your understanding, it was not a medevac mission?

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SEC. ESPER: I—that’s—right, my understanding, it wasn’t. I need to—I’m sorry, but I need to actually head to the White House. So I just want to wrap up by saying something to the—directly to the men and women of the Department of Defense. And let me say this.

As I said in my message to the department yesterday, I appreciate your professionalism and dedication to defending the Constitution for all Americans. Moreover, I am amazed by the countless remarkable accomplishments of the Department of Defense in today’s trying times.

From repatriating and sheltering Americans who were evacuated from a foreign land, to delivering food and medical supplies to communities in need, and to protecting our cities and communities, in every challenge and across every mission, the U.S. military has remained ready, capable, and willing to serve.

As I reminded you in February, I ask that you remember at all times our commitment as a department and as public servants, to stay apolitical in these turbulent days. For well over two centuries, the United States military has earned the respect of the American people by being there to protect and serve all Americans.

Through your steadfast dedication to the mission and our core values, and your enduring support to your fellow Americans, we will safeguard the hard-earned trust and confidence of the public as our nation’s most respected institution.

Thank you.

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### NOVEMBER 9, 2020, FINAL MESSAGE TO THE DEPARTMENT



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

NOV 09 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EMPLOYEES

SUBJECT: Final Message to the Department

It is has been the honor and privilege of a lifetime to serve alongside you as the 27<sup>th</sup> U.S. Secretary of Defense these last eighteen months in defense of our great Nation and adherence to our sworn oath to the Constitution.

Together, we have made solid progress implementing the National Defense Strategy by modernizing the force, improving its readiness, strengthening ties with allies and partners, and reforming the Department to make it more efficient. We have also made major strides in taking care of our military personnel, spouses, and their families, and launched important initiatives to improve diversity, inclusion, and equity in the armed services. At the same time, we stood up the Space Force and Space Command, recapitalized the nuclear triad, expanded the authorities and resources of Cyber Command, and proposed a bold vision for a future Navy. As such, I am confident the Defense Department's progress on all of these initiatives has improved the security of the United States and advanced our interests abroad.

I am particularly proud of these accomplishments in light of the challenges we faced along the way: a global pandemic; confrontations with Iran and its proxies throughout the Middle East; continued deployment of troops into conflict zones; domestic civil unrest; malign behavior globally by Russia and China; and a charged political atmosphere here at home. Through thick and thin, however, we have always put People and Country first.

In my first message to the Department in June 2019, I emphasized the great importance I place on a commitment by all, and especially Leaders, to those values and behaviors that represent the best of the military profession and mark the character and integrity of the Armed Forces the American people respect and admire. I want to thank you all for living up to that standard, for remaining apolitical, and for honoring your oath to the Constitution.

While I step aside knowing that there is much more we could accomplish together to advance America's national security, there is much achieved in the time we had to improve the readiness, capabilities, and professionalism of the joint force, while fundamentally transforming and preparing it for the future.

I will always admire and remain forever proud of the great work our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Space Professionals, and Civilians do each and every day around the world and here at home to keep America safe. Stay focused on your mission, remain steadfast in your pursuit of excellence, and always do the right thing. Following these imperatives will ensure you remain the most ready, respected, and capable military force in the world, which is what our Nation expects and deserves.

*Mark T. Esper*



## APPENDIX F

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### NOVEMBER 9, 2020, LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT

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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

NOV 9 5 2020

Mr. President,

It has been a distinct honor to once again serve our great nation and fellow citizens, this time as the 27<sup>th</sup> Secretary of Defense for the world's premier military force.

I have served these last few years as both Secretary of Defense and Secretary of the Army in full faith to my sworn oath to support and defend the Constitution, and to safeguard the country and its interests, while keeping the Department out of politics and abiding by the values Americans hold dear.

I first took this oath thirty-eight years ago as a Cadet at the United States Military Academy, and many times more since then. I have lived my professional life in accordance with the West Point motto of "Duty, Honor, Country" and have put service to Nation above self as a 21-year Active Duty, Reserve, and National Guard Army officer — in both war and peace, at home and abroad — and as a public servant in the Executive and Legislative branches of government on multiple occasions.

I have been privileged to serve with an outstanding team of military and civilian leaders across the Department of Defense, and alongside the best men and women in uniform the nation has to offer these last few years. Together, we have made solid progress implementing the National Defense Strategy by modernizing the force, improving its readiness and lethality, strengthening ties with allies and partners, and reforming the Department to make it more efficient. We have also made major strides in taking care of our military personnel, spouses, and their families, and launched important initiatives to improve diversity, inclusion, and equity in the Armed Services.

At the same time, we stood up the Space Force and Space Command, recapitalized the nuclear triad, expanded the authorities and resources of Cyber Command, launched a readiness and capabilities renaissance in the Army, and proposed a bold vision for a 500+ ship Navy. As such, I am confident the Defense Department's progress on all of these initiatives has improved the security of the United States and advanced our interests abroad, and that we would prevail in any conflict if called upon to do so.

In addition to these major changes that are underway, I am proud of how the Defense Department handled the following issues in particular:

- Provided full and timely support to the American people in response to COVID-19, while protecting the force and maintaining our military readiness;

## APPENDIX F

- Strengthened allies and partners, defended international rules and norms, and demonstrated U.S. commitment to confront China's bad behavior in the Indo-Pacific;
- Worked closely with NATO to improve allied readiness, deter Russian adventurism, ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS, and chart a new path forward in Afghanistan;
- Acted decisively to restore deterrence with Iran, curtail Tehran's malign behavior, and help defend and reassure regional partners;
- Brought multiple terrorist leaders to justice and focused counter-terrorism operations abroad against threats to the homeland; and,
- Conducted a Defense Wide Review process and Service reforms that freed up time, money, and manpower to put back into the Department's top priorities.

I serve the country in deference to the Constitution, so I accept your decision to replace me. I step aside knowing there is much we achieved at the Defense Department over the last eighteen months to protect the nation and improve the readiness, capabilities, and professionalism of the joint force, while fundamentally transforming and preparing the military for the future.

I have never been prouder to serve my country than as a Soldier or Civilian in the Department of Defense, especially knowing that the military has the faith, confidence, and support of the American people. Moreover, I will always admire and remain forever proud of the great work our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Space Professionals, and Civilians do each and every day around the world and here at home to keep America safe.

They are all great patriots who are committed to those values and behaviors that represent the best of the military profession and mark the character and integrity of the Armed Forces the American people respect and admire. I want to thank them for living up to that standard, for honoring their oath to the Constitution, and for their support to me and my leadership team.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt. Egan". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

## APPENDIX G

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### JANUARY 6, 2021, TWEETS REGARDING THE ASSAULT ON CAPITOL HILL

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This afternoon's assault on the US Capitol was appalling and un-American. This is not how citizens of the world's greatest and oldest democracy behave. The perpetrators who committed this illegal act were inspired by partisan misinformation and patently false claims about the election.

This must end now for the good of the republic. I commend Congressional leaders for meeting tonight to complete their Constitutional task of counting the electoral college votes that will affirm Joe Biden as the next president of the United States.

As this transition plays out over the next two weeks, I am confident the U.S. military will stay out of politics, and remain true to its sworn oath to support and defend the Constitution, and the American people, as the most trusted and respected institution in the country.



## APPENDIX H

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### JANUARY 3, 2021, *WASHINGTON POST* OPINION PIECE AUTHORED BY THE TEN LIVING FORMER SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE

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#### ALL 10 LIVING FORMER DEFENSE SECRETARIES: INVOLVING THE MILITARY IN ELECTION DISPUTES WOULD CROSS INTO DANGEROUS TERRITORY

Ashton Carter, Dick Cheney, William Cohen, Mark Esper, Robert Gates, Chuck Hagel, James Mattis, Leon Panetta, William Perry, and Donald Rumsfeld are the 10 living former U.S. secretaries of defense.

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As former secretaries of defense, we hold a common view of the solemn obligations of the U.S. armed forces and the Defense Department. Each of us swore an oath to support and defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic. We did not swear it to an individual or a party.

American elections and the peaceful transfers of power that result are hallmarks of our democracy. With one singular and tragic exception that cost the lives of more Americans than all of our other wars combined, the United States has had an unbroken record of such transitions since 1789, including in times of partisan strife, war, epidemics, and economic depression. This year should be no exception.

## APPENDIX H

Our elections have occurred. Recounts and audits have been conducted. Appropriate challenges have been addressed by the courts. Governors have certified the results. And the electoral college has voted. The time for questioning the results has passed; the time for the formal counting of the electoral college votes, as prescribed in the Constitution and statute, has arrived.

As senior Defense Department leaders have noted, “there’s no role for the U.S. military in determining the outcome of a U.S. election.” Efforts to involve the U.S. armed forces in resolving election disputes would take us into dangerous, unlawful, and unconstitutional territory. Civilian and military officials who direct or carry out such measures would be accountable, including potentially facing criminal penalties, for the grave consequences of their actions on our republic.

Transitions, which all of us have experienced, are a crucial part of the successful transfer of power. They often occur at times of international uncertainty about U.S. national security policy and posture. They can be a moment when the nation is vulnerable to actions by adversaries seeking to take advantage of the situation.

Given these factors, particularly at a time when U.S. forces are engaged in active operations around the world, it is all the more imperative that the transition at the Defense Department be carried out fully, cooperatively, and transparently. Acting Defense Secretary Christopher C. Miller and his subordinates—political appointees, officers, and civil servants—are each bound by oath, law, and precedent to facilitate the entry into office of the incoming administration, and to do so wholeheartedly. They must also refrain from any political actions that undermine the results of the election or hinder the success of the new team.

## APPENDIX H

We call upon them, in the strongest terms, to do as so many generations of Americans have done before them. This final action is in keeping with the highest traditions and professionalism of the U.S. armed forces, and the history of democratic transition in our great country.

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