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GOVERNMENT KEYNOTE



HONORABLE CARLOS DEL TORO
 Secretary of the Navy

THE HONORABLE CARLOS DEL TORO was sworn in as the 78th Secretary of the Navy August 9, 2021. As Secretary, he is responsible for over 1 million Sailors, Marines, reservists, and civilian personnel and an annual budget exceeding \$255 billion. His priorities include securing the training and equipment successful naval operations demand and addressing the most pressing challenges confronting the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps by strengthening maritime dominance, building a culture of warfighting excellence, and enhancing strategic partnerships.

Born in Havana, Cuba, 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 attended public schools and received an appointment to the United States Naval Academy, where he earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Electrical Engineering. Secretary Del Toro was commissioned as a Surface Warfare Officer upon his graduation in 1983.

His 22-year naval career included a series of critical appointments and numerous tours of duty at sea – including First Commanding Officer of the guided missile destroyer USS Bulkeley (DDG 84); Senior Executive Assistant to the Director for Program Analysis and Evaluation in the Office of the Secretary of Defense; and Special Assistant to the Director and Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget – where he helped manage the budgets of DOD, the U.S. Department of State, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Reconnaissance Office, and the Peace Corps.

After retiring at the rank of Commander, Secretary Del Toro founded SBG Technology Solutions, Inc. in 2004. As its CEO and President, he supported defense programs across a host of immediate and long-term Department of Navy issue areas, including shipbuilding, AI, cybersecurity, acquisition programs, space systems, health, and training.

He holds a Masters in National Security Studies from the Naval War College, a Masters in Space Systems Engineering from the Naval Postgraduate School, and a Masters in Legislative Affairs from George Washington University.

Secretary Del Toro and his wife have four children and three granddaughters.



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VICE ADMIRAL SEAN S. BUCK, USN (RET.)

President, National Training and Simulation Association

MODERATOR

VICE ADMIRAL SEAN S. BUCK, USN (RET.) is the President of the National Training and Simulation Association (NTSA). VADM Buck is a seasoned leader with over 40 years of experience in commissioned military service and higher education. He served as the 63rd Superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy, where he led the institution through significant challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring continuous operations in support of its critical mission of developing the leaders of tomorrow for our nation. Throughout his career, he commanded at many levels, including as Commander of U.S. Fourth Fleet & Naval Forces Southern Command, where he was responsible for key security and humanitarian operations across the Americas. In his current role, VADM Buck leads NTSA in advancing the training, modeling, and simulation industry, representing and advocating for its membership that drives innovation in defense and technology sectors. His leadership extends to serving on advisory boards for Academy Securities, Synergist Technology, and First Command Financial Services, and contributing to the development of the U.S. Naval Academy's athletic programs. VADM Buck holds a Master's in Security Policy Studies from The George Washington University and has completed executive education at Harvard and MIT. His commitment to excellence continues to shape the future of training and simulation.



ADMIRAL JAMES W. KILBY, USN

Vice Chief of Naval Operations

UNITED STATES NAVY

ADM. JAMES W. KILBY is a native of Pound Ridge, New York, and a 1986 graduate of the United States Naval Academy. Kilby's sea tours include USS Sampson (DDG 10), USS Philippine Sea (CG 58) and two tours aboard USS San Jacinto (CG 56). He commanded USS Russell (DDG 59) where he received the Vice Adm. James B. Stockdale Award for inspirational leadership. His major command was aboard USS Monterey (CG 61) and included its maiden Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) deployment in 2011. His shore tours include the Naval Postgraduate School; two tours in the Chief of Naval Operations' Surface Warfare Directorate, N96; Navy Personnel Command's Surface Warfare Division, PERS-41; and the Aegis BMD Program Office in the Missile Defense Agency. Kilby's flag assignments include Commander, Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center; Commander, Carrier Strike Group 1; director of Warfare Integration, N9I; Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Warfighting Requirements and Capabilities, N9; Deputy Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command; and Commander, Task Force EIGHT ZERO. Kilby assumed the duties of Vice Chief of Naval Operations, Jan. 5, 2024.



LIEUTENANT GENERAL BENJAMIN T. WATSON, USMC

Commanding General, Training and Education Command

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

LIEUTENANT GENERAL WATSON graduated from Cornell University in 1991 and was commissioned through the NROTC program. After The Basic School and Infantry Officer Course, he reported to 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, in Camp Lejeune, NC, where he served as a Platoon Commander and Executive Officer with Company K. His other operational assignments include: Commanding Officer, Weapons Company, and Operations Officer, 2nd Battalion, 6th Marines, from 1999-2002; G-3 Future Operations Planner, I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), from 2006-; G-3 Plans Officer, 1st Marine Division, from 2007-2008; Commanding Officer, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines, from 2008-2011; Assistant Division Commander, 2nd Marine Division, from 2016-2017; and Commanding General (CG), Task Force Southwest in Helmand and Nimroz Provinces, Afghanistan, from January to November 2018. From 2022-2024, LtGen Watson commanded the 1st Marine Division. His service outside the operating forces includes duty as an instructor at The Basic School from 1995-1997, the Infantry Officer Course from 1997-1998, and the Expeditionary Warfare School from 2002-2005. From 2012-2013, he served in the Office of the Secretary of Defense as Senior Military Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian & Pacific Security Affairs. From 2013-2014, he was assigned to the Office of the Secretary of Defense as Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff. LtGen Watson served as the Commanding Officer of Marine Barracks, Washington D.C. (8th & I), from 2014-16. From 2018-2019, he served as the CG of Marine Corps Installations East / Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, and from 2019-2022 as CG of the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory / Futures Directorate and Vice Chief of the Office of Naval Research. In August of 2024, LtGen Watson assumed duties as Commanding General, Training & Education Command.



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INDUSTRY KEYNOTE



RICK SCHMIDT
 President/Chief
 Executive Officer, Tipping
 Point Solutions, Inc.

RICK SCHMIDT, the 2019 Colorado SBA Small Business “Person of the Year,” has forged a distinguished career as a creative visionary and a highly successful business leader. As the CEO and President of Tipping Point Solutions (TPS), Inc., Rick leads the company’s strategic growth and operations, supporting instructional design, media production, and the development of cutting-edge courseware and technology.

Rick founded TPS, a Native American and Veteran-Owned enterprise, and a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned, SBA-certified 8(a) small business, in 2011 after a distinguished 20-year career as a Naval Information Warfare Officer. Rick culminated his outstanding Navy career serving as Training Director at the Center for Information Dominance in Pensacola, Florida, where he illuminated the need for impactful, high-quality training solutions in the industry.

Over the past thirteen years, Rick has grown TPS into an award-winning, respected business with over one hundred full-time employees across its Colorado headquarters, satellite offices in Arizona and Michigan, and remote locations nationwide. Specializing in immersive, interactive video, TPS stands out in the industry for delivering engaging, results-driven training experiences.

Rick holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science, a Master of Science in Information Systems, and holds certifications in Information Systems Security (CISSP) and Radio Frequency Identification (RFID+). Rick, a proud member of the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians in Sault Saint Marie, Michigan. He is also involved in an SBA-approved Mentor/Protégé relationship with Chippewa Government Solutions (CGS) LLC, where he, and TPS, provides guidance to support CGS’s growth and success.

In recognition of its success, TPS received the prestigious “Gold” Stevie Award as the “Veteran-Owned Business of the Year” in 2020 and was honored by the Denver Business Journal with the 2020 Small Business Award. The company’s steady growth, achieved without external investment or partners, has earned it a place on the Inc. 5000 list for the past five years, with an average growth rate of over 420%, most recently ranking 581st among America’s top 5000 companies. Additionally, TPS has been recognized by the VET100 as one of the top veteran-owned businesses in the country for three consecutive years.