

## **Dr. Mark T. Esper**

Dr. Mark T. Esper became the nation's 27<sup>th</sup> Secretary of Defense in July 2019 after being confirmed 90-8 by the U.S. Senate. During his tenure, Dr. Esper led the department through unprecedented times: from conflict with Iran and an ongoing campaign in Afghanistan; to the greatest civil unrest in decades and a once-in-a-century global pandemic. He also implemented a new National Defense Strategy focused on China and Russia; prioritized international alliances and strengthening the military capability of the U.S. and its foreign partners; established the Space Force; took measures to improve the nation's cyber capabilities; proposed a future force structure for the U.S. Navy; and launched novel warfighting and readiness concepts. In response to the coronavirus pandemic, Dr. Esper took steps to protect the health and safety of DoD personnel and co-led Operation Warp Speed, the national effort to accelerate the development and distribution of vaccines, and led important initiatives to improve diversity and inclusion in the Defense Department.

Prior to becoming Defense Secretary, Dr. Esper served as the 23<sup>d</sup> Secretary of the Army from November 2017 until June 2019. In this capacity, he was responsible for over 1.5 million active, Guard, and reserve Soldiers and Army civilians and a \$180 billion annual budget. During his tenure, Esper launched a renaissance in how the Service organized, manned, trained, and equipped the force as it shifted its focus toward large-scale combat operations against China and Russia. He also established a new U.S. Army Futures Command designed to improve the Army's acquisition of innovative technologies to field a modernized force. He also directed an overhaul of Army recruiting standards and processes, and jumpstarted the development of a new Talent Management system for the Service while advancing important initiatives for Army spouses and families.

Dr. Esper earned a BS from West Point, an MPA from Harvard University, and a PhD from George Washington University. He served as an infantry officer with the 101st Airborne Division during the 1990-91 Gulf War, and later commanded an airborne rifle company in Europe. Among his military awards, he earned a Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, and the Combat Infantryman's Badge. Esper retired from the Army in 2007, after 10 years on active duty and 11 years in the National Guard and Army Reserve.

After leaving active duty, Dr. Esper worked in senior national security positions across Capitol Hill, as a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense at the Pentagon, in a presidential campaign, and with prominent think tanks, commissions, and business associations. He later served as a senior executive at Raytheon Company.

Dr. Esper currently works in venture capital and private equity while also serving on the boards of the Atlantic Council and the McCain Institute for International Leadership.

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