



**THE UNDER SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON**

23 January 2026

Dear Patriots,

Executive Order 14184 acknowledges the prior COVID-19 vaccine mandate of August 24, 2021, as “unfair, overbroad, and completely unnecessary.” The Department of the Navy understands the hardship and injustice you endured as a result. This treatment was a deviation from the warrior ethos that binds us together, and for that, we offer our sincerest apology.

Our focus is on strengthening the Navy and Marine Corps, and we recognize that begins with acknowledging and rectifying past mistakes. We are committed to taking responsibility and making amends, though we understand that no action can fully erase the past.

The Secretary of War has made it clear: we welcome back “people of conscience, warriors of conscience” to our ranks. If you choose to continue your service, we would be honored to serve alongside you. Your experience and leadership are invaluable as we work together to build a stronger future. If, however, you choose not to return, you may still request removal of COVID-related unfavorable service records. Please know that your sacrifice to our Nation is deeply appreciated, and we wish you all the best.

Your proven faithfulness and courage are needed to ensure the enduring strength of our warrior ethos, built not on shifting policies, but on unwavering values.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'H. Cao'.

HUNG CAO