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Chuck Hagel Secretary of Defense



Chuck Hagel was sworn in as the 24th Secretary of Defense on February 27, 2013 becoming the first enlisted combat veteran to lead the Department of Defense.

Secretary Hagel was born on October 4, 1946 in North Platte, Nebraska, the eldest of four brothers. He joined the United States Army and volunteered to go to Vietnam, rising to the rank of Sergeant and serving as an infantry squad leader alongside his brother, Tom, with the Army's 9th Infantry Division in 1968. He earned numerous military decorations and honors, including two Purple Hearts.

Following his tour in Vietnam, Secretary Hagel graduated from the University of Nebraska at Omaha using the G.I. Bill. Continuing his commitment to public service, Secretary Hagel became Chief of Staff to Nebraska Congressman John Y. McCollister.

In 1981, Secretary Hagel was nominated by President Ronald Reagan to serve as Deputy Administrator of the Veterans Administration. In that post he helped pioneer early electronic health record keeping and pushed for increased benefits for Vietnam veterans suffering from Agent Orange. This fight became one of the causes of his life, later helping federal courts distribute hundreds of millions of dollars for Agent Orange victims through the Court settlement that set up the Agent Orange Payment Program which he chaired.

In the mid-1980's, Secretary Hagel co-founded Vanguard Cellular Systems, Inc., which became one of the largest independent cellular networks in the country. Secretary Hagel also served as President and CEO of the USO; the Chief Operating Officer of the 1990 Economic Summit of Industrialized Nations (G-7 Summit) in Houston, Texas; Deputy Commissioner General of the United States for the 1982 World's Fair, President of the Private Sector Council and President of McCarthy & Company, an Omaha based investment bank.

In 1996, Secretary Hagel was elected to the United States Senate and represented Nebraska until 2009. While in the Senate, he was a senior member of the Foreign Relations; Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs; and Intelligence Committees. He chaired the Foreign Relations International Economic Policy, Export and Trade Promotion Subcommittee; and the Banking Committee's International Trade and Finance, and Securities Subcommittees. Secretary Hagel also served as the Chairman of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China and the Senate Climate Change Observer Group.

Following his Senate career, Secretary Hagel served as Co-Chairman of President Obama's Intelligence Advisory Board and a member of the Secretary of Defense Policy Board. He was a Distinguished Professor in the Practice of National Governance at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service and Chairman of the Atlantic Council, a non-partisan institution devoted to promoting transatlantic cooperation and international security. He also served on the board of PBS and a number of corporations and financial institutions.

Secretary Hagel is author of the 2008 book *America: Our Next Chapter*. He and his wife Lilibet have a daughter, Allyn, and a son, Ziller.

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