

Let's Talk: Cadet to Congressman

A cadet from Escondido Battalion asks U.S. Representative Duncan D. Hunter (R-Calif.) about the way forward for technological development in his home district in Southern California.

Dear Congressman Hunter,

In our modern world, technology has become an increasingly large presence in American life. We use our phones for alarms. We schedule our meetings on tablets and record our lives on social media for all to see.

Going off of this, how is the 50th district integrating itself into a world that is rapidly approaching singularity? As technology becomes more efficient, it can, and has replaced jobs that we as Americans once did on the nine to five. My dream is that San Diego as a whole can develop a hub of technology and creative venturing and entrepreneurship, much like the Bay Area has accomplished in its relationship with Silicon Valley.

I am a member of the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps, a youth organization that is structured along Naval guidelines and strives to instill the core values of Honor, Courage and Commitment. If there was one thing that was constantly emphasized in my tenure as a Sea Cadet, it is the idea that the U.S. military is the greatest fighting force in the world, and I believe that one reason America's military is at the top is due to our focus on developing technology in pursuit of America's interests.

The U.S. military has a history of working with civilians and the private sector in developing revolutionary advancements. The Wright brothers sold their plane designs to the Army in 1909. In the 1960s, the Department of Defense commissioned the creation of ARPANET, the predecessor of the World Wide Web. I believe that if we as San Diegans can transform this city into a Southern Californian version of Silicon Valley, we can create thousands of new jobs and provide a stable source of income for the city. Going on this, can San Diego develop a technological private sector that works hand-in-hand with the U.S. military that can benefit the interests of both San Diego County and the DOD?

Congressman Hunter, it is quite an awesome opportunity to be able to write to you. I hope to hear back from you soon, sir.



Petty Officer 3rd Class
Ryan Pisueña, NSCC

Dear Petty Officer Pisueña,

Thanks for reaching out to me with your questions — it's great to hear from such a dedicated young man. As the co-chair of Military Youth Programs Caucus, I've been able to interact first hand with Young Marines and Sea Cadets like yourself, and I can assure you that what you're learning as a Sea Cadet will stay with you the rest of your life and help prepare you for the challenges ahead.

There are a number of ways — especially in the defense industry. But probably the main one that comes to mind is Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs). This is a technology that's revolutionized the way wars are fought. Twenty to thirty years ago, UAVs were the stuff of science fiction. Fast forward to today and you've got the Secretary of the Navy saying that the Navy's most recent fighter jet, the F-35, should be the last manned fighter that the Navy will ever buy. That's pretty impressive, and keep in mind that this technology is designed and built in San Diego.

I agree with you that San Diego has the potential to become the Southern California version of Silicon Valley, and we're making crucial steps in that direction. San Diego is home to some of the most important private sector companies that provide critical support to our warfighters, and these companies bring thousands of jobs to the San Diego area.

That being said, in order to attract more private sector companies, specifically technology companies, to the Department of Defense (DOD), the government has to first make this appealing to the private sector. As it stands today, the DOD is such an unmanageable bureaucracy with arcane rules and over-burdensome regulations that technology companies regularly shy away from trying to navigate the process to have their product or system purchased by the DOD.

And in my oversight role as a Congressman, I see it as my responsibility to help cut through the red tape so new technologies—which often come from San Diego—can be incorporated into the DOD so our servicemembers have the best technology available in order to protect our country. It's unacceptable that there are technologies that the private sector has at their disposal that the DOD won't have for years—we've got to change that. And I'm glad to be able to say that in this year's National Defense Authorization Act, the House Armed Services Committee, which I'm proud to serve on, made acquisition reform one of its top priorities. We made some critical changes this year, but this is going to be a long fight, and we have to keep pressing the DOD for necessary reforms. 



Rep. Duncan Hunter
(R-Calif.)

