

**Mr. Gilbert Cisneros**  
**Nominee to be Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness**  
**Senate Armed Services Committee**  
**July 13, 2021**

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe and distinguished members of the Committee, I am humbled to be in front of you today. I enjoyed working with many of you while in Congress, meeting others leading up to this hearing, and I appreciate your willingness to consider my nomination for Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

I want to thank my wife Jacki, who is here today, for her continued support, and our twin seven-year-old boys, Alexander and Christopher, for their support and a lack of Dad time. Though they could not join us here today, I am hopeful that they are at least watching part of the hearing, even if personnel and readiness management does not hold their attention.

I am also grateful to President Biden and Secretary Austin for the confidence they have placed in me.

My family has a history of service to our country. My grandfathers both served in WWII, my godfather served in Korea, and my father and uncles served in Vietnam. I followed their example of service and enlisted in the U.S. Navy at 18 years old. Today, I am also reminded of my grandmothers who—despite not having much education—showed me how to care for others and put them first. I come before you seeking to continue their legacy.

Caring for the people who make up the Department of Defense's total force is a sacred responsibility. Service members, civilians, and their families bravely sacrifice in defense of our nation. Regular moves, irregular deployments, and the occasional impromptu all-hands meeting require military families to put country first, making difficult trade-offs regarding where they live, what careers they pursue, and where they educate their kids. Though DOD civilians generally have greater stability than their military counterparts, they also sacrifice pay and flexibility in pursuit of a greater mission.

Having gotten to know many of these folks serving our country, I can tell you nothing inspires me more than hearing why people with vastly different backgrounds choose to serve. For all the things that divide us as a nation, there are still millions of service members and civilians who put the team, the mission, and our country before anything else. They do it because they care; they want to be part of something larger; and they want to be surrounded by the best of our country.

The Undersecretary of Personnel and Readiness is responsible for allowing the service members, civilians, and families who serve to do so to their fullest potential.

If I am lucky enough to be confirmed, I would have three core priorities:

- First, I would ensure we are doing everything we can to recruit and retain the right people with the right skills to deal with emerging challenges. I understand this committee has

been especially focused on the cyber domain. If confirmed, I intend to make sure we are using the new authorities in that area.

- Second, I would want to make sure we are taking advantage of our country's greatest asset—our people—to build the most capable, effective force possible. This means our force should look like the country we serve, with different racial, religious, gender, and sexual identities, as well as diverse political, ideological, and geographic backgrounds. To attract and retain all those who want to serve and can meet high standards, we need to create workplaces free of discrimination, sexual assault, and other mission detractors. This committee has paid particular attention to sexual assault and harassment, a focus I shared as a member of the House Armed Services Committee and an issue I am personally committed to. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with the committee to implement new accountability and prevention measures that make a lasting difference.
- Finally, if confirmed, I would be committed to ensuring our forces are ready to face current threats while preparing for longer-range challenges. I am optimistic that the Department can take advantage of a reduction in operational tempo to continue rebuilding for great power competition. However, our adversaries cannot perceive rebuilding as weakness and I am committed to ensuring the Secretary has the information to make decisions that balance these concerns.

I believe my experience, with assistance from the Department's outstanding civil servants, would allow me to serve well in this role if confirmed. My service in the Navy as both an enlisted Sailor and officer of color gives me a unique perspective into our military. I was an active member on the House Armed Services Committee and the Military Personnel and Seapower subcommittees. There, I worked hard to learn the issues and how they impacted my constituents, developing a record of caring for our service members and their families. I relish the opportunity to again work for them and for our country.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee to achieve our shared goals and ensure the people who make up the total force remain the most ready and capable in the world. Thank you for the chance to appear in front of you today.