

Prepared Statement of Gina Ortiz Jones
Senate Armed Services Committee
Nomination hearing to be Under Secretary of the Air Force
June 16, 2021

Good morning, Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, and distinguished members of the Committee. I am deeply honored to come before you today as President Biden's nominee for Under Secretary of the Air Force. I am grateful for your consideration of my nomination, and thank you to Sen. Duckworth for the kind introduction.

Today, I am joined by my mother Victorina Medenilla Ortiz. She immigrated to the United States 43 years ago from the Philippines. She raised my sister and me by herself, and she reminded us every day of our responsibility to give back to a country that had given us so much. It is why I served, and why my sister, Christi, proudly serves in the U.S. Navy to this day. I am thankful for my mother and sister's unwavering love and support. I want to thank my partner, Ana, for her unconditional love, endless patience, and constant encouragement.

Perfecto Medenilla Ortiz, my uncle, is not here today, but his example and service also helped me be here today. In 1967, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy from the Philippines and served as a Steward, one of the few ratings open to Filipinos at the time. Undeterred, he signed-up, because he too wanted his shot at the American Dream. Before retiring, he earned the distinction of being the first Filipino to serve as a gas turbine electrician in the fleet.

My own service started with a four-year Air Force ROTC scholarship that took me from San Antonio, Texas to Boston University. I was honored to wear our Nation's cloth. However, similar to my uncle's limited career opportunities because of his ethnicity, my experience in the Air Force was hindered by the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. Yet I, too, remained undeterred because of my desire to serve our country. That experience cemented my resolve to ensure anyone ready and able to serve can do so to their full potential, and accordingly, our country's fullest potential.

If confirmed, that tenet will guide my service. That is what our Airmen and Guardians deserve. That is what the American people entrusting us with their sons and daughters should expect. And that is what the challenges and opportunities we face as a country require.

The Air Force and Space Force are at the forefront of our Nation's ability to meet those challenges and opportunities. If confirmed, I will work with Department of the Air Force leaders to ensure the Total Force is ready to deter, and if needed, win our Nation's wars. Great power competition requires we fully harness the Total Force's talents and courageously invest in modernization efforts that best equip our men and women for the threats they will face.

If confirmed, as the Department of the Air Force's Chief Management Officer, I will lead guided by our need to attain and maintain air and space dominance, and our collective responsibility to

foster an environment where Airmen and Guardians can serve without the fear of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and other behaviors that threaten our readiness.

If confirmed, I will focus on preparing the Total Force for emerging challenges, from the Arctic to cyberspace, while ensuring the Department's unique value proposition to the country—its contributions to the nuclear triad—are ironclad.

Finally, great power competition requires we compete for the Nation's top talent. To that end, if confirmed, I will work across the Department to eradicate extremist behaviors that are antithetical to one's solemn oath to the Constitution and degrade our ability to recruit and retain our Nation's finest talent.

I have been honored to serve our country in a number of ways—as an Air Force Intelligence Officer deployed to Iraq supporting close air support missions, to advising on military operations on three continents, to serving in the Executive Office of the President protecting American intellectual property and guarding against threats posed by foreign investments. I have seen a range of threats to our country's economic and national security. But, as importantly, I have seen the indispensability of American leadership.

That leadership immeasurably rests on the service and sacrifices of those within the Department of the Air Force—from the Airmen and Guardians, to the civilians, to their loved ones who make their service possible. It would be an honor to help lead the Total Force. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to your questions.