

Prepared Statement of Michael McCord
Senate Armed Services Committee
Nomination hearing to be Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)
May 11, 2021

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this morning in connection with my nomination for the position of Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) and Chief Financial Officer of the Department of Defense (DoD).

I want to express my gratitude to President Biden for nominating me to this important position, and to Secretary Austin and Deputy Secretary of Defense Hicks for their confidence in me. If I am confirmed, it would be an honor to serve as part of their team. I also want to thank former Senator and Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel for introducing me today. His support is especially meaningful as I seek to become the first person to be confirmed for this position for a second time, as he selected and recommended me to President Obama when I was previously nominated and confirmed to hold this position in 2014.

It is an honor and a pleasure to be here in front of this committee where I served on the staff for 21 years and had the opportunity to learn from the examples set by the outstanding senators who have led this committee during my career. As a staff member here, I served under Chairmen Nunn, Thurmond, Warner and Levin. I want take this opportunity to send my best wishes to former Senator and Chairman Carl Levin, my boss for 11 years, in his battle with lung cancer.

In addition, I had the privilege of working with three Senators who went on to chair this committee after I left the staff for DoD: the late Senator John McCain, Senator Inhofe and Chairman Reed. Your leadership follows in the great bipartisan tradition of this Committee, and it is a key reason it continues to be so highly respected.

Finally, and most importantly, I want to thank my family, especially my wife, Donna Miller Rostant. I could not undertake this service without her love and full support. My mother, my daughters, and my brother and sister have been with me throughout my career in public service. Although my family and my wife's family cannot join us here today due to the health restrictions necessitated by the pandemic, they are with Donna and me in spirit and I thank them for supporting me in this journey.

Should I be confirmed, I look forward to returning to the Department of Defense for another opportunity to serve our nation, promote our national security, and support our service members. The sense of mission among the civilian and military workforce in the Department of Defense is remarkable.

My top priority, if confirmed, will be to help the Secretary and other senior leaders build the best defense budget we can to meet our strategic needs; to ensure the Department provides the defense committees the information they need on that budget; and then faithfully steward the resources the Congress sees fit to provide for our common defense.

Second, if confirmed, I will prioritize a strong relationship with the congressional defense committees on all matters under my purview. The stronger the partnership between the Department and the Congress, the stronger our national security will be.

Third, I would, if confirmed, ensure the Department gives full effort and attention to the financial audit so that we can build on and accelerate the progress that has been made toward the goal of a clean opinion.

Fourth, working with other senior leaders, I would work to continue and build upon efforts to improve the Department's performance in light of the dis-establishment of the Chief Management Officer position in the fiscal year 2021 defense authorization bill. I look forward to the opportunity, if confirmed, to focus on making DoD more effective.

After I left DoD four years ago, I served on the Commission on the National Defense Strategy for the United States. I took two strong lessons from my time as a commissioner. First, the United States faces serious national security challenges that in turn require leaders in both the executive and legislative branches to attack those challenges with a seriousness of purpose.

Second, our strategic competitors use all the tools of their national power against us, and we must ensure we are capable of doing likewise. The Department of Defense, no matter how capable or well-funded, cannot by itself ensure we prevail in this competition.

If confirmed, I will be a full partner with you in ensuring we carry out our respective responsibilities for our national security.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.