

**OPENING STATEMENT OF U.S. SENATOR JACK REED  
CHAIRMAN, SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**ROOM SD-G50  
DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING  
Tuesday, February 15, 2022**

*To conduct a confirmation hearing on the nominations of  
Honorable Robert P. Storch to be Inspector General of the Department of Defense;  
Dr. Lester Martinez-Lopez to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs;  
Mr. Christopher J. Lowman to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Sustainment;  
Mr. Peter J. Beshar to be General Counsel of the Department of the Air Force  
(As prepared for delivery)*

**REED:** The Committee meets this morning to consider the nominations of Mr. Robert Storch to be Inspector General of the Department of Defense, Dr. Lester Martinez-Lopez to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, Mr. Christopher Lowman to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Sustainment, and Mr. Peter Beshar to be General Counsel of the Department of the Air Force. On behalf of the Committee, I want to thank each of you for your willingness to return to public service.

I would also like to welcome the guests and family members who are with us today. Mr. Storch, I welcome your wife, Sara, and daughter, Hannah. Dr. Martinez, I welcome your son, Lucas. Mr. Lowman, I welcome your wife, Tracey, daughter, Shayne, and son, Ian. And, Mr. Beshar, I welcome your wife, Sarah, son, Henry, and daughter, Sophie. I know each of the nominees have family members who are proudly watching from home, and I thank them for their support of your service as well.

Mr. Storch, you are well-qualified to be Inspector General of the Defense Department. In addition to your current role as the IG for the National Security Agency, you served as the Deputy IG for the Department of Justice from 2012 to 2018.

There are a number of important duties that will require your attention within the Department. It will be your responsibility to conduct and supervise audits and investigations relating to the Department, provide efficiency and effectiveness in the administration of the Defense Department, and lead the combatting of fraud, waste, and abuse. You will also assist the Secretary of Defense in addressing

extremism in the military. While we continue to believe that the number of extremists in the ranks remains very small and does not represent a systemic issue, even one is too many. The DOD IG has an important role to play in assessing the extent of this challenge. During your testimony I would ask for your views on the issue and your objectives for this position.

Dr. Martinez, you are nominated to be the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, or ASD(HA). I would note your extensive record of service in military healthcare, both in and out of uniform, as having prepared you well for this position.

The ASD(HA) is the principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness for the all of the Department's force health protection policies, programs, and activities. The ASD(HA) is also responsible for execution of the Department's medical mission, including the readiness of medical services during military operations and for ensuring the health of the members of the military services, their families and other eligible beneficiaries. In addition, you will govern the management of Defense Department health and medical programs, the sponsorship and oversight of medical research and development, and medical education and training. If confirmed, you will need to address a number of pressing challenges for the Department, including implementation of COVID-19 vaccinations across the force, improving the staffing of Walter Reed, and providing medical support to the combatant commanders. I hope you will address these challenges in your testimony.

Mr. Lowman, you are nominated to be the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Sustainment. You bring more than 30 years of service as a Marine and Army Civil Servant to this position—experience that will be invaluable given the complex scope of responsibilities before you.

One of the most pressing issues for the Defense Department is reducing its contested logistics vulnerabilities. The “tyranny of distance” challenge is often referenced in a potential Pacific conflict scenario, and we saw it proven true during our combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Although there have been several studies and table top exercises on this topic, the GAO found the Defense Department has still failed to implement more than 50 recommendations from a recent review. I would like to know your perspective on how the Department can better navigate a contested logistics environment. Additionally, maintaining the operational readiness of the force has always been expensive. Given the rising

costs of new platforms like the F-35, coupled with supply chain impacts from the pandemic, I hope you will share your plans for tackling these challenges.

Finally, Mr. Beshar, you are nominated to be General Counsel of the Department of the Air Force. This position has a broad scope of responsibilities, including serving as legal adviser to the Secretary of the Air Force and other offices within the Department, as well as to the Chiefs of the Air Force and Space Force and their staffs.

If confirmed, you will be tasked with providing legal services throughout the entire Department in a variety of disciplines, including fiscal law, ethics, dispute resolution, environmental law, labor law, and litigation. In addition, the General Counsel exercises oversight of intelligence and other sensitive activities and investigations. These are wide-ranging and complex challenges that will require astute legal guidance. I would ask that you share how you plan to approach these issues and what objectives you have for this important position.

Thank you, again, to our nominees. I look forward to your testimonies.

Let me now recognize Ranking Member Inhofe.