

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

**ROOM SD-G50
DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
Tuesday, July 13, 2021**

*To conduct a confirmation hearing on the nominations of
Carlos Del Toro to be Secretary of the Navy,
Gilbert Cisneros, Jr. to be Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness,
Kathleen Miller to be Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller),
Mara Karlin to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities, and
Michael Connor to be Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works*
(As prepared for delivery)

REED: The Committee meets this morning to consider the nominations of Mr. Carlos Del Toro to be Secretary of the Navy, the Honorable Gilbert Cisneros, Jr. to be Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Ms. Kathleen Miller to be Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), Dr. Mara Karlin to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities, and Mr. Michael Connor to be Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. I thank the nominees for their service to the United States and their willingness to assume these important roles.

I would also like to welcome the guests and family members who are with us today. Mr. Del Toro, I welcome your wife, Betty, and son, Chris, and I thank Senator Warner for joining us to introduce you. Mr. Cisneros, I welcome your wife, Jacki, and I thank Senator Kelly for his introduction. Ms. Miller, I welcome your husband, Brian, and thank former Congressman and Secretary of the Army John McHugh for his introduction via WebEx. Dr. Karlin, I welcome your husband, Reuben. And Mr. Connor, I welcome your wife, Shari, and daughter, Gabriela.

Mr. Del Toro, you are well qualified to be the nominee for the Secretary of the Navy, given your distinguished service as a naval officer, years of senior leadership in the Department of Defense, and experience as the CEO of SBG Technology Solutions.

Our naval forces are maintaining an extremely high operations tempo across all areas. The demand for attack submarines, air and missile defense cruisers, destroyers, and strike fighter inventories—and the logistics and maintenance associated with them—is considerable. If confirmed, you will be responsible for recruiting, organizing, training, and equipping the force and guiding policies and programs for the Navy and Marine Corps during this challenging time.

Among the issues you will need to address is the readiness of the Navy and the continuing problems in maintaining its fleet. Deferred ship maintenance, reduced steaming and flying hours, and cancelled training and deployments have created serious readiness problems. Cost overruns and delays in schedules have plagued both public and private shipyards, with impacts felt down to the individual sailor and Marine. We remember too well the collisions of the *McCain* and *Fitzgerald* and the loss of life that resulted. I would like to know what changes you

will make to ensure such incidents do not happen in the future, and your plans for improving the capability and capacity to perform maintenance for Navy ships.

Mr. Cisneros, if confirmed as Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, you will face many challenges in ensuring, first and foremost, that our military has adequate numbers of ready and trained servicemembers—of sufficiently high character and talent—to meet our national defense objectives. You will be responsible for military and civilian personnel policy, military family and child care programs, the DOD-run school system, and working with the military services to ensure the health and welfare of the force. Your experience as a former military officer, Member of Congress, philanthropist, and advocate for veterans should serve you well in this role.

One of the many challenges that will require your immediate attention is the issue of sexual assault and sexual harassment in the military. As we know from the President’s Independent Review Commission that studied sexual assault in the ranks, there has been a dangerous erosion of trust and faith in leaders’ ability to effectively address this issue. I would ask that you share your plans for addressing the problem.

Ms. Miller, you are nominated to be Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller). You are well suited for this position, with decades of civil service and government experience, including a variety of financial and accounting positions within the Army. You have also served as the Associate Chief Financial Officer for Internal Finance at the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

The Office of the Comptroller is instrumental in preparing and executing the Department’s budget and ensuring the resources that Congress provides are allocated to the troops efficiently and effectively. Additionally, the Comptroller is a key player in the Department’s efforts to achieve a clean audit and to modernize its financial management systems. If confirmed, your role will be critical in ensuring the FY22 budget is executed and the Department continues its efforts to achieve a clean audit.

Dr. Karlin, you are nominated to be the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities. You are highly qualified for this role, with decades of leadership in the Department of Defense and where you are currently serves as the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. You also provided valuable leadership in U.S. national security through various roles at the RAND Corporation and Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies.

If confirmed, you will serve as the principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense on issues related to defense strategy. This includes issuing guidance to align resources and capabilities, as well as reviewing contingency plans necessary to implement the strategy. One of your first tasks will be to craft the 2022 National Defense Strategy, or NDS, and assess the current strategic environment, including the most critical and enduring threats to the national security of the United States and its allies. I would like to know how you will approach the NDS and assess the capabilities the Joint Force needed to prevail in long-term strategic competition with China and Russia.

Finally, Mr. Connor, you are nominated to be Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, and, if confirmed, you will be responsible for overseeing the civil functions of the Army to include functions of the Army Corps of Engineers and various U.S. military cemeteries. Your prior service as Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior and as Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation should serve you well in this role.

This Committee has been concerned with the slow rate of Army construction projects, and I would ask that you share how you would improve its processes. Additionally, given the increasing importance of environmental resiliency to our national security, I would like to know your plans for incorporating climate projections in the planning and design of civil works projects.

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