

Mr. Carlos Del Toro
Nominee to be Secretary of the Navy
Senate Armed Services Committee
July 13, 2021

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Inhofe, and Distinguished Members of the Committee.

I am honored to appear before you as President Biden's nominee for Secretary of the Navy. I am grateful for your consideration of my nomination, and I hope this hearing will help earn your trust.

I want to thank Senator Warner for his kind words of introduction.

If I may Mr. Chairman, I would like to quickly recognize and introduce to the Committee my wife of 38 years, Betty, who will undoubtedly serve as a constant reminder to me of the sacrifices of military families. As long as she has my ear – and she always will, I will work tirelessly, if confirmed, to care for our military families. I also want to thank my beloved children, Chris, Marcel, Brice, and John who could not be here today, but who collectively put up with 17 moves over 22 years in the Navy.

Mr. Chairman, I am honored to testify before you and am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Austin for extending me this potential opportunity to again serve our Sailors, Marines, our Navy Civilian Workforce, their families, and our nation. As President Biden said in his Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, “democracy holds the key to freedom, prosperity, peace, and dignity.” I know the value of freedom and democracy because I was born in a country with neither. As a child, my family and I fled an autocratic communist regime and settled in our new home, the United States of America. At age 17, I joined the Navy and served proudly for 26 years. The United States Navy - Marine Corps Team is sacred to our basic freedoms and national security. Should this committee and this Senate vote to confirm me, I will always remember and honor what we are sworn to protect and defend.

As President Biden has previously stated, our nation is at an inflection point and we face challenges as severe as they are unprecedented. China, with its authoritarian system and its determined incursion into the South China Sea and globally, presents a constant naval threat. Russia and other resurgent powers also threaten stability. Our adversaries are even targeting the Arctic theater where we must now also compete despite its harsh operating conditions. We must meet these challenges from a position of demonstrated strength and unity.

China's rising military expenditures fueled by a growing economy coupled with their global adventurism means that we can no longer take U.S. naval superiority for granted. Access to contested waters requires more robust capabilities and capacity. This demands new thinking

about how we invest our defense dollars. I was pleased to see the President's budget request recognize this challenge and invest billions of dollars toward improving readiness and for future capabilities. If confirmed, I look forward to advancing these capabilities to ensure our Navy - Marine Corps team has what it needs to project strength and provide a credible deterrent to China and other adversaries.

The climate crisis also demands U.S. Navy investment precisely *because* it exacerbates every other challenge our Navy faces, including great power competition. Already, installation resilience is an issue, with vital installations facing threats from rising sea levels. Building energy and environmental resilience into our installations will make them more combat effective. If confirmed, I look forward to working with our community partners, at home and abroad to address these complicated issues.

As Secretary Austin has repeatedly stated we must build teamwork and always care for those that defend our nation. We must continue to build a Navy - Marine Corps Team where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. We must recruit from the widest possible talent pool. Diversity of experience, thought, and background makes for a more combat effective team. If confirmed, I look forward to working with our leadership to make sure every Sailor, Marine, and Civilian in the Department feels safe, welcome, and included.

Creating such a force also means we must hold accountable those who do *not* treat others with dignity and respect, regardless of who *they* are.

There is also the inexcusable issue of military sexual harassment and assault. It must end. I appreciate the recommendations of the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military, and if confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Congress to find impactful solutions.

In closing, I again thank our Sailors, Marines, Civilian Personnel, and their families whose professionalism, commitment, and abilities never cease to amaze me.

I also thank my parents in heaven for summoning the courage to leave Cuba and communism with me in tow as an infant and for having both worked two jobs so that my brother, Robert, and I could live and prosper in freedom.

To President Biden and Secretary Austin, thank you for entrusting me with a sacred duty - to support the men and women who defend our nation's interests and our citizens.

I look forward to answering your questions and I hope, earning your trust, as well.

Thank You.