

**OPENING STATEMENT OF U.S. SENATOR JIM INHOFE
RANKING MEMBER, SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**ROOM SD-106
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*

(Submitted for the Record)

Thank you, Chairman Reed. I echo your comments and thank our five nominees for being with us and for their willingness to serve the nation.

Our nation's top military and intelligence leaders have told this committee in recent months that the world is more dangerous and complex than at any point in our lifetimes. I agree with them.

I believe the 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) is the right roadmap to deal with these challenges. But we need the right resourcing to make the NDS a reality.

I remain concerned that President Biden's defense budget falls short of the 3-5 percent growth that the bipartisan NDS commission said we need to implement the NDS. Each of the jobs for which you are nominated will be made much harder by these cuts.

Our competitors aren't letting up. Russian and Chinese defense budgets continue to grow, and, combined, they already far exceed our own.

If confirmed, you will be called on to address these and many other challenges.

Mr. Del Toro, last week Chairman Reed and I published an article with the Naval Institute Proceedings that detailed our view that the business of Navy shipbuilding needs to be better understood. I am interested in your thoughts on this topic.

Mr. Cisneros, you will face the daunting task of guiding the personnel and readiness policies of the Department.

You will be challenged to ensure that our troops and their families get the support they need—like high-quality housing, health care, and commissaries—while also working to improve the readiness of the total force under a declining Biden defense budget.

Ensuring readiness will also be an important part of your job as Comptroller, Ms. Miller, and it's made much tougher by the Administration's inadequate budget. I am interested to learn how you will grapple with this dilemma.

Dr. Karlin, the defense budget is not enough to implement the 2018 NDS. The Biden Administration is reviewing the NDS now, and may add even more missions to the next NDS. I am interested to hear what changes you think need to be made.

Mr. Conner, you will establish strategic guidance for the department's Civil Works Program. I am interested to learn which areas you will prioritize and how you will define success.

I look forward to hearing how each of you will address these challenges, if confirmed.

Thanks again for being with us today.