

Good morning, Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, and distinguished Committee Members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

I'm humbled and honored to be with you today as President Biden's nominee for Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and appreciate the confidence he, Secretary Austin, and Undersecretary Cisneros have in me.

My father and his family fled Pakistan for India during partition. They knew danger and turmoil; they left their home with nothing but hope seeking opportunity. My father's journey brought him to the United States to complete his post-doctoral studies. It is here, in America, where he met my mother, the daughter of an Indian Foreign Service Officer stationed in Washington. After marrying, my parents returned to India, where they started their family. Having had a taste of the opportunity America offered, in 1967 they moved our young family to the United States, to pursue their American dream. My parents understood achieving that dream would require hard work, service, and sacrifice. After my father passed, my single mother of five children, put herself through law school and eventually married a Marine who lost his sight fighting in Vietnam. My stepdad's blindness didn't stop him and he continued serving as an advocate for veterans, founding the Blind American Veterans Foundation and retired from the Federal workforce after serving at the Corporation for National and Community service, where he helped establish the Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program. Also a patriot and dedicated to service to our country, my mother served as professional staff member in in the Maryland legislature and United States Congress, serving as counsel for several House committees including Government Reform and Civil Service, all while caring for her children and a blinded Marine.

I'm humbled to have grown up in a home where service to Nation, and community, was the family business. Growing up I learned that the American dream is about more than what you achieve and build for yourself, but what you do for others. These are values my wife and I have tried to instill in our two children, one of whom is currently serving as a Marine, stationed in Twentynine Palms. My parents' example of service above self, to improve where needed and innovate when required, inspired my decision to serve in the US Navy and later, a career working with organizations – both public and private - to drive transformative change and care for our military families.

I am honored to have the opportunity to continue that service as Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

I believe the reason our military is the greatest the world has seen is the people – military and civilian – who are our defense community. They dedicate their lives and those of their families to a cause greater than themselves. They serve at the frontlines, the garrisons, and in the Pentagon, making sure that we are ready to deter and, if necessary, fight and win wars. We must provide for the training, education, health, safety, and well-being of those who serve – in or out of uniform –to maintain readiness and because it is the right thing to do. That care extends to military families, transitioning service members, retirees, caregivers, and survivors who have made countless sacrifices for our Nation.

If confirmed, I would strive to sustain a defense community that continues to safeguard the freedom and opportunity that my family has been fortunate to enjoy and privileged to protect. The contemporary challenges to readiness are significant – sexual assault, harassment, suicide, spouse unemployment, COVID, and financial and food insecurity. We face challenges in recruitment and retention – shaping a defense community that reflects America and is comprised of diverse, effective teams, prepared for tomorrow’s fight. I believe America’s people offer us our greatest distinct advantage over our adversaries, and that we must maintain the highest levels of personnel readiness to maintain that edge.

To meet these challenges and support the people who put country first requires innovation: a willingness to ask and answer tough questions, rapidly test and learn, and scale solutions. That’s the role of the Deputy Undersecretary for Personnel and Readiness. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Undersecretary for Personnel & Readiness, Deputy Secretary, Service Secretaries and Secretary to care for the Total Force and our military families, to meet readiness requirements and achieve the nation’s national security objectives.

I commit, if confirmed, that I will bring my best each day to serve those who serve us. I also commit to collaborating with this Committee, in a transparent, agile, and responsive manner, to ensure that the Department is meeting our sacred obligation to support warfighters and their families.

Senators, thank you for the opportunity to be here today, I look forward to your questions.