

Chairman Peters Opening Statement As Prepared for Delivery
Full Committee Hearing: Nominations of John K. Tien to be Deputy Secretary, DHS; Robert P. Silvers to be Under Secretary for Strategy, Policy, and Plans, DHS; and Jonathan E. Meyer to be General Counsel, DHS
May 27, 2021

The Committee will come to order.

Today, we are considering three nominations for important roles at the Department of Homeland Security, Colonel John Tien to be Deputy Secretary, Robert Silvers to be Under Secretary for Strategy, Policy, and Plans, and Jonathan Meyer to be General Counsel.

Welcome to each of you and to your family members joining us today. Congratulations on your nominations, and thank you for your previous service and for your willingness to take on these critical positions at DHS.

The threats facing our nation today are very different from those we faced when the Department was created in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. However, DHS's mission remains the same, to safeguard the American people.

To successfully carry out this essential mission, DHS needs committed and qualified leaders, leaders who will support and empower the more than 250,000 dedicated employees who serve across the Department.

The lack of consistent leadership at DHS during the last administration exacerbated many of the Department's longstanding challenges.

I am encouraged by the strong leadership Secretary Mayorkas has shown since taking office earlier this year, and I am pleased that we are now considering three highly-accomplished, and truly dedicated public servants for senior roles at the Department.

Mr. Tien is a retired U.S. Army Colonel, whose 24-year career includes three combat tours in Iraq and national security roles in the Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama White Houses. For the past decade, Mr. Tien has been a leader in the private sector, where he has held senior executive roles at Citigroup and managed complex organizations and operations.

Mr. Silvers' public service includes several senior roles at the Department of Homeland Security, including Deputy Chief of Staff and Assistant Secretary for Cyber Policy during the Obama Administration. As a lawyer in the private sector since 2017, Mr. Silvers has been a leader on cybersecurity, data privacy, and artificial intelligence issues.

Mr. Meyer's previous government service spans 17 years and includes senior roles in the Department of Justice, the U.S. Senate, and as the Deputy General Counsel for DHS during the Obama Administration. Since returning to private practice in 2016, Mr. Meyer's legal work has continued to focus on cybersecurity, technology, and homeland security.

We have received bipartisan letters of support for each of these nominees, including from former national security officials who served under both Democratic and Republican presidents. Without objection, these letters will be entered into the record.

All three nominees bring valuable experience from both the public and private sectors, perspective that is especially important as DHS works to build and strengthen critical partnerships.

The recent SolarWinds hack and Colonial Pipeline ransomware attack are only the latest reminders that the federal government, and DHS in particular, has more work to do on this front.

Partnerships, with the private sector, other federal agencies, and state and local entities, are essential to safeguarding the nation from evolving threats. From cyber-attacks, to the rise in domestic violent extremism, to the next pandemic, historic flood, or hurricane, the success of DHS depends on the success of its partnerships.

Congress must also be one of the Department's key partners. I expect that, if confirmed, you will all work closely and transparently with this Committee to tackle the pressing homeland security challenges we face.

I look forward to hearing more from each of you about your qualifications and plans to support the Department of Homeland Security mission to protect Americans from the threats we face today – and those we will face in the months and years ahead.