

Written Statement of Robert Silvers

**Nominee for Under Secretary for Strategy, Policy, and Plans
U.S. Department of Homeland Security**

**Before the
U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs**

May 27, 2021

Chairman Peters, Ranking Member Portman, and distinguished Members of the Committee,

I am honored to appear before you. I thank the President for nominating me, Secretary Mayorkas for his confidence in me, and Senator Carper for his introduction and for his longstanding support for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). It would be a privilege to return to the Department and work once again with the 240,000 brave men and women of DHS.

I want to recognize my family: my wonderful wife, Alison, and our beautiful children, Ricky and Heidi. They have made possible my career in public service. That service to our country is not just my own, but theirs as well. I am also grateful to my parents and brother, who over the decades have offered endless support.

DHS safeguards our nation. Its varied components are the source of the Department's strength, because they allow DHS to harness its many capabilities to tackle challenges. To do this, the Department needs a centralized hub to ensure it has policies and strategies in place to accomplish the mission. The Office of Strategy, Policy, and Plans is that hub – the nerve center for policy development and for advising the Secretary and Deputy Secretary on the best options.

Recent incidents, such as SolarWinds and Colonial Pipeline, have only further highlighted the urgency to secure critical infrastructure and federal networks from cyberattacks. If confirmed, I will focus closely on fortifying DHS's efforts to tackle this critical work. The President's recent cybersecurity executive order and new authorities enacted by Congress in recent years set a powerful foundation on which to build.

DHS also must protect the American people from terrorism. This was one of the Department's founding missions in the aftermath of September 11th. The threats have since evolved. DHS must remain ever vigilant to attacks directed from abroad, but also must address the alarming rise in domestic violent extremism. If confirmed, I will work hard to ensure DHS is doing everything in its means to address the challenge, including by equipping our communities and law enforcement around the country with tools and information to keep our country safe.

The Department must secure our borders. It must be relentless in disrupting the human and drug trafficking organizations that inflict so much devastation. It must administer our immigration system securely and humanely. DHS must continue its support for the COVID-19 pandemic

response. And it must facilitate and secure the lawful flows of trade and travel that power our economy.

DHS also must look forward to emerging threats. This includes threats arising from adoption of advanced technologies, and threats to economic security and our ability to compete with China in the century ahead.

If confirmed, my colleagues and I in the Office of Strategy, Policy, and Plans will be tireless in this vital work, and I will work closely with Congress to achieve success. The Office makes the Department more unified and effective in fulfilling the promise of its mission statement: “With honor and integrity, we will safeguard the American people, our homeland, and our values.”

DHS adopted this mission statement during my last period of service with the Department. Most recently, I served as Assistant Secretary for Cyber Policy, a position that resides within the Office I have now been nominated to lead. I led Department cybersecurity policy for incident response, critical infrastructure protection, attacks from nation-state and criminal actors, Internet of Things security, and cyber diplomatic initiatives to fortify our digital defenses together with allies and partners. In that position, I saw the incredible talent of the men and women of the Office of Strategy, Policy, and Plans, and if confirmed, I will be fortunate to work with them again.

I also previously served as the Department’s Deputy Chief of Staff, where I was privileged to oversee policy and operations across the entire DHS mission set and workforce. That workforce performs essential and heroic work. It succeeds out of the camera’s eye every day – a terrorist plot deterred, a cyberattack repulsed, a relief team dispatched to assist families after a hurricane. I would be privileged to join and support this workforce once again as the Under Secretary for Strategy, Policy, and Plans.

I thank the Committee for considering my nomination and look forward to your questions.