



PERSONNEL AND  
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

DEC 17 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP  
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS  
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: *Connect to Protect* During the Upcoming Holiday Season

During this upcoming holiday season, I want to extend my warmest wishes and sincere thanks to our Service members, DoD civilian employees, and their families. As many of you are planning to celebrate with family and friends, I encourage you to take proper safety precautions on the road, at work, and at home, and to continue to follow the most current DoD and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention coronavirus disease 2019 guidance. As always, the health and well-being of each of you is paramount for force readiness.

While the winter holidays can be a festive time of year, ushering in a cherished opportunity to gather and connect with our families, colleagues, and friends, it can also be a time of stress and sadness for others. I want to remind you to continue to *Connect to Protect* and remember that support is always within reach. If you know someone going through a difficult time or who has experienced a loss during the holiday season, reach out and connect with them.

If you are personally going through a challenging time, reach out to Mental Health Counselors, Chaplains/Faith leaders, and other resources like Military OneSource, which provide free, confidential, non-crisis 24/7 support to all Service members and their families at 800-342-9647 or via chat at: [livechat.militaryonesourceconnect.org/chat](https://livechat.militaryonesourceconnect.org/chat). DoD civilian employees have similar support through Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). For your agency's EAP information, please contact your Human Resources team. The DoD EAP provides resources, information, and confidential help 24/7 at 800-222-0364. If you or someone you know is in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, please contact the confidential 24/7 Veterans and Military Crisis Line (VCL/MCL) or confidential National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

**Veterans and Military Crisis Line** (Service members, veterans, and their families)

Call: 800-273-8255 (press 1 for the VCL/MCL) or text: 838255

Chat: [www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat)

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** (all Americans)

Call: 800-273-8255

Chat: [suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat)

I wish you all a joyous holiday season. I encourage you to take time to relax, refresh, and to connect with your family and friends. I look forward to seeing you all return safely in the New Year. Thank you for everything you and your families do to protect and defend our Nation.

Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.