



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

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

JUN 14 2023

**MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS**

SUBJECT: 2023 Department of Defense Juneteenth National Independence Day Observance

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation confirming that all enslaved people in the confederate states are to be freed. It took two and a half years before General Gordon Granger presented General Orders No. 3 in Galveston, Texas, stating "The people of Texas are informed that, by a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free." For this reason, Juneteenth is also known as Freedom or Emancipation Day for African Americans. This is why we celebrate June 19, 2023 as Juneteenth National Independence Day to commemorate the notification of emancipation to enslaved African Americans and abolishment of slavery in the United States.

Designated a public holiday in 2021, Juneteenth has long been celebrated as the end of enslavement in the United States. Despite that, African American communities continued to face innumerable hardships due to a history of enslavement, legalized segregation, and inequitable access to opportunities. As we look forward to celebrating, next month, the 75th Anniversary of Executive Orders 9980 and 9981, which desegregated the Federal workforce and the Armed Forces, we reflect on this history and marvel at the resilience and valor of African Americans who have served and continue to serve the Nation, in and out of uniform.

As the Secretary of Defense observed, "Juneteenth holds particular significance for the United States military because it builds upon that legacy of emancipation as we work to defend our freedoms and to make real the full promise of American democracy for all our citizens, on June 19 and every day."

The Department's ability to leverage our Nation's best talent, wherever talent resides, is for the collective benefit of all Americans. By championing diversity and inclusion in our Department, we will ensure each member's contributions are valued and everyone is afforded equal opportunity to reach their full potential. For resources and help with leading and organizing observances, visit: <https://www.defenseculture.mil/Human-Relations-Toolkit/Special-Observances/#juneteenth>.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.", is located below the text.

Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.