



PERSONNEL AND  
READINESS

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
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SEP 12 2024

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

SUBJECT: 2024 Department of Defense National Hispanic Heritage Month Observance

The Department of Defense observes National Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 to October 15, 2024, by celebrating the histories, cultures, and contributions of Americans who trace their origin or descent to Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central and South America, and other Spanish cultures.

For generations, Hispanic Americans have served on the front lines and supported critical operations at home and abroad, exemplifying their commitment to our Nation's safety and progress. This year's National Hispanic Heritage Month theme, "Pioneers of Change: Shaping the Future Together," highlights how the Latino community drives progress through groundbreaking technologies, social justice reforms, and essential support programs for our families and veterans.

During this month, we proudly recognize the bravery of Hispanic Americans like Marcelino Serna, a Mexican immigrant who served in the U.S. Army in World War I and returned home as the most decorated soldier from Texas; retired Navy Captain Kathlene Contres, the first Latina Commandant of the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute; retired Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Olga Custodio, the first Latina Air Force pilot; and the Honorable Carlos Del Toro, the 78th Secretary of the Navy. Each of these trailblazers paved the way for future generations to serve with honor and distinction while demonstrating resilience in their pursuit of a better future for all.

Let us all celebrate the past and present achievements of our Hispanic American teammates and embrace the rich heritage within this diverse population. As we honor their heritage, we also recognize the vital impact they have made to the safety and security of our nation. For resources and help with leading and organizing observances, visit: <https://www.deomi.mil/Special-Observances/#national-hispanic-heritage-month>.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ashish S. Vazirani".

Ashish S. Vazirani  
Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary of  
Defense for Personnel and Readiness