



CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS
117TH CONGRESS

April 12, 2021

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The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin
Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Austin and Members of the Renaming Commission:

As Members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), including several Members of the House Armed Services Committee (HASC), we write to you about the important task of renaming facilities and other DoD property named after the Confederate generals and leaders who rose in rebellion against the United States during the Civil War. Our advocacy now turns to ensuring robust Latino representation in the names of DoD assets, and most importantly to ensure that a mainland American army base is named after a Latino military hero.

Achieving greater diversity and robust Latino representation in new base and property names requires a shift in the existing Army base naming criteria. Army names have historically focused on honoring officers of high rank. Given the continued underrepresentation of Latinos in leadership ranks in the military and the obstacles that Latinos continue to face in reaching these higher echelons of the military, the current base naming convention is unnecessarily exclusive. We therefore ask that as the Commission develop new criteria for naming or renaming current or future military bases that they consider including:

- A greater emphasis on honoring enlisted servicemembers;
- The demographics of the community where the base or property is located, and;
- The diversity of the U.S. military, both historically and today.

Further, we support renaming Fort Hood after Master Sergeant Roy Benavidez. MSG Benavidez was a Texas Native and Mexican-American Vietnam War veteran who grew up experiencing the discrimination of Jim Crow. Despite that discrimination, he enlisted in the Army, eventually becoming a Green Beret. In 1981, MSG Benavidez was awarded the Medal of Honor by President Reagan for heroic actions to save several wounded comrades in Vietnam. At the time, President Reagan stated that “if the story of his

heroism were a movie script, you would not believe it.” MSG Benavidez is an extraordinary example of the determination, skill, and courage that Latino Americans in uniform have exemplified for generations. And, as the base reevaluates and reforms its command climate and culture following the murder of SPC Vanessa Guillén, renaming it after a Latino servicemember would be a symbolic step forward. Fort Benavidez would be a base that all Texans, Latinos, and Americans could be proud of.

The Army, and wider Joint Force, is a diverse institution charged with defending our nation and institutions on behalf of all Americans. The names we choose to honor at military installations are an important symbol for our armed forces and our nation that should reflect the diversity of the armed forces and our nation. In pursuit of this goal, we have collected the names of several additional Latino servicemembers whose service and sacrifice to our country merit the honor DoD base or property names. In addition to MSG Benavidez, these are:

- Macario Garcia, World War II veteran and the first Mexican immigrant to receive the Medal of Honor.
- Marcelino Serna, World War I veteran and the first Latino to receive the Distinguished Service Cross.
- Richard E. Cavazos, Korean War veteran and the first Mexican-American to reach the rank of 4 star General.
- Carmen Contreras-Bozak, World War II veteran and the first Latina to join to U.S. Women’s Army Corps.

Thank you for your commitment to this effort. We hope and expect to work closely with the Department to ensure that the Commission lives up to the highest ideals of our nation in its work.

Sincerely,



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego
Chair, House Armed Services Subcommittee on
Intelligence and Special Operations



Raul Ruiz
Chair, Congressional Hispanic Caucus



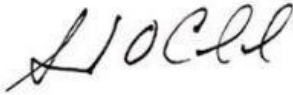
Sylvia Garcia
Member of Congress



Filemon Vela
Member of Congress
House Armed Services Committee



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress
House Armed Services Committee



Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress
House Armed Services Committee



Nanette Diaz Barragán
1st Vice Chair, Congressional Hispanic Caucus



Adriano Espaillat
2nd Vice Chair, Congressional Hispanic Caucus



Darren Soto
Whip, Congressional Hispanic Caucus



J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress



Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress



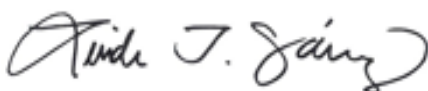
Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress



Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lucille Roybal-Allard". The script is fluid and cursive.

Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pete Aguilar". The script is fluid and cursive.

Pete Aguilar
Member of Congress