

June 23, 2026

Dr. Erich Hernandez-Baquero
Nominee for Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Space Acquisition and Integration
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Dr. Erich Hernandez-Baquero:

Congratulations on your nomination to serve as the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Space Acquisition and Integration. If you are confirmed, the American people will depend on you to be the “senior architect for space systems and programs across the Department of Defense” and the “Service Acquisition Executive (SAE) for space systems and programs.”¹ One of the greatest responsibilities you will have is “guid[ing] efficient Department of Defense investments”² to deliver space-based capabilities. However, given your current position as vice president for space intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance at Raytheon, one of the nation’s largest aerospace contractors, I am concerned that you will enter this role with serious conflicts of interest.

I write to request that you mitigate those conflicts of interest by committing to: (1) recuse yourself from all particular matters involving your former employer for the duration of your service; (2) not seek compensation from a firm that is heavily invested in the defense industry, a defense contractor, or other entity that does business with the Department of Defense (DoD) for a period of at least four years after you leave office, and (3) not lobby DoD – including work as an informal “shadow lobbyist” – for at least four years after leaving office.

Immediately after retiring from military service in 2021,³ you joined Raytheon. The Air Force has awarded Raytheon, and its parent company RTX, over \$26 billion in unclassified contracts since you joined the company through Fiscal Year 2024.⁴ You initially served as the director of advanced ground systems, where you “leverag[ed] advancements in autonomous systems, artificial intelligence, tracking, fusion, modeling and simulation, modern software, and distributed architectures,”⁵ and you currently lead the “development and sustainment of command & control,

¹ Space Acquisition and Integration, “Welcome to SAF/SQ – The Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Space Acquisition and Integration,” <https://www.safsq.hq.af.mil/>.

² *Id.*

³ Air and Space Forces Magazine, “White House Picks Raytheon Exec to Lead Space Force Acquisition,” Courtney Albon, April 22, 2026, <https://www.airandspaceforces.com/white-house-picks-raytheon-exec-to-lead-space-force-acquisition/>.

⁴ U.S. General Services Administration, “Data Bank,” <https://sam.gov/reports/awards/static:Report=>.

⁵ Rochester Institute of Technology, “2024 Distinguished Alumni Award,” <https://www.rit.edu/alumni/distinguished-alumni-award/erich-hernandez-baquero>.

communications, and data processing systems for surveillance & reconnaissance missions from space in support of the Intelligence Community and Department of Defense.”⁶

The revolving door between giant defense contractors and DoD threatens to undermine public trust, distort procurement priorities, and reduce competition by placing non-traditional defense entrants at a disadvantage. If confirmed, you will oversee an expanding portfolio as the President’s Fiscal Year 2027 budget request includes a record \$71.2 billion for Space Force priorities – an increase of over \$20 billion from Fiscal Year 2026.⁷ Raytheon will almost certainly benefit from this budget: already, the U.S. Air Force earlier this year increased the value of a Raytheon satellite communications terminal contract by \$2 billion.⁸

Your relationship with a defense contractor that you served for five years as a senior executive will raise concerns about the appearance of impartiality if you are confirmed in your new role.

The Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch at 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502 addresses impartiality concerns by prohibiting federal employees from participating personally and substantially in any particular matter involving their former employer for a period of one year following the federal employee’s resignation from the company.⁹ Additionally, federal ethics law at 18 U.S.C. § 208 prohibits federal officials from participating personally and substantially in any particular matter that, to their knowledge, would have a direct and predictable effect on their financial interests.¹⁰ To address revolving door concerns, federal ethics law at 18 U.S.C. § 207, imposes post-employment restrictions on former federal officials, including a lifetime ban on representing a private party on the same particular matter the former federal official had worked personally and substantially and a two-year “cooling off” period on programs under their responsibility.¹¹

While these laws create important guardrails, they fall short of fully addressing conflict of interest concerns: they may still allow government officials to work on matters that could affect their previous employers once a one-year period and full divestiture have passed, and they can be undermined by exemptions. And they still allow officials to move through the revolving door by accepting senior advisory roles within the defense industry or lobbying DoD. One watchdog organization found that “[e]xisting restraints regarding conflicts of interest and lobbying after service at the Pentagon are woefully inadequate and undermine the reputation and operational integrity” of DoD.¹²

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Responsible Statecraft, “Raytheon exec blasts through revolving door and into space,” Stavroula Pabst, April 23, 2026, <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/raytheon-air-force/>.

⁸ Space News, “Raytheon contract for protected satellite communications terminals raised by \$2 billion,” Sandra Erwin, March 15, 2026, <https://spacenews.com/raytheon-contract-for-protected-satellite-communications-terminals-raised-by-2-billion/>.

⁹ 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502

¹⁰ 18 U.S.C. § 208

¹¹ 18 U.S.C. § 207

¹² Project on Government Oversight, “Three Steps to Help Stop the Pentagon’s Revolving Door,” November 22, 2021, <https://www.pogo.org/fact-sheets/three-steps-to-help-stop-the-pentagons-revolving-door>.

To mitigate those concerns, prior presidential appointees have made voluntary ethics commitments beyond those required under ethics law, the presidential ethics pledge, and even agreements with the Office of Government Ethics and the Designated Agency Ethics Officials. For example, under the Biden administration, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin¹³ and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General CQ Brown¹⁴ made similar commitments that I ask of you here.

In order to address the concerns about your conflicts, I urge you to voluntarily commit to mitigate your conflicts of interest and assure American's that you will serve in their best interest.

First, I ask that you commit to recuse yourself, for a period of four years, from all particular matters involving your former employer. As the assistant secretary of the Air Force for space acquisition and integration, you will have access to material non-public information and key influence over the DoD's acquisition strategy that could potentially sway procurement decision-making in favor of Raytheon. According to your ethics agreement, you have committed to recusing yourself from Raytheon for a period of one year (or until after payment of deferred compensation, whichever is later).¹⁵ But your conflicts regarding Raytheon do not magically end on day 366. To mitigate the appearance of an ongoing conflict of interest, I urge you to agree to recuse yourself for the duration of your service from particular matters in which Raytheon is involved.

Second, you should commit not to seek compensation from a firm that is heavily invested in the defense industry, a defense contractor, or other entity that does business with DoD for at least four years after leaving office. If you were to rejoin Raytheon or any other big DoD contractor after leaving government service, the public would reasonably question whether the decisions you made in office were influenced by the prospect of future compensation from a company you had favorable ties to. They could also question whether you cashed in on privileged executive-branch connections or influenced procurement strategies to gain favor. We have seen top acquisition officials leave the Pentagon and immediately cash in to become executives, board members, and advisors for prime contractors. For example, Frank Kendall joined Raytheon as vice president of engineering after serving as undersecretary of defense for acquisition, technology, and logistics from 2011-2017 – only to return to DoD as secretary of the Air Force in 2021 – raising concerns about conflicts of interest and abuse of the revolving door.¹⁶ By committing not to work for or

¹³ Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, "In Response to Senator Warren's Questions, Secretary of Defense Nominee General Lloyd Austin Commits to Recusing Himself from Raytheon Decisions for Four Years," press release, January 19, 2021, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/in-response-to-senator-warrens-questions-secretary-of-defense-nominee-general-lloyd-austin-commits-to-recusing-himself-from-raytheon-decisions-for-four-years>.

¹⁴ Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, "At Hearing, Warren Secures Ethics Commitment Joint Chiefs of Staff Nominee General Brown; Reiterates Concern Over Senior Military Holds," press release, July 11, 2023, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/at-hearing-warren-secures-ethics-commitment-joint-chiefs-of-staff-nominee-general-brown-reiterates-concern-over-senior-military-holds>.

¹⁵ U.S. Office of Government Ethics, "Erich Hernandez-Baquero Ethics Agreement," April 22, 2026, [https://extapps2.oge.gov/201/Presiden.nsf/PAS+Index/89FD9D0CF1E60F9885258DEB002DD3BF/\\$FILE/Hernandez-Baquero%2C%20Erich%20%20finalEA.pdf](https://extapps2.oge.gov/201/Presiden.nsf/PAS+Index/89FD9D0CF1E60F9885258DEB002DD3BF/$FILE/Hernandez-Baquero%2C%20Erich%20%20finalEA.pdf).

¹⁶ Journal of International Service, "Slowing the Pentagon's Revolving Door," May 23, 2026, <https://ausisjournal.com/2026/05/23/slowing-the-pentagons-revolving-door/>.

accept compensation for at least four years from any company that you engage with while serving at the Pentagon, you would greatly mitigate concerns about your conflict of interest in this role.

Third, you should commit to not lobby any component of DoD for at least four years after leaving office, either as a formal registered lobbyist or informal “shadow lobbyist.” Influence-peddling by former government officials lobbying the same agencies they once led – and designed procurement strategies for – erodes public trust in our institutions. This commitment is especially critical because your role if confirmed will involve overseeing multi-billion-dollar space and missile defense programs. When former officials weaponize their insider knowledge, personal networks, and programmatic insights to benefit defense contractors that seek to win awards from the DoD, it creates an unlevel playing field. A four-year cooling off period provides a vital firewall that confirms the strategic and budgetary decisions you make during your tenure are focused on warfighting, not future lobbying opportunities.

By making these commitments, you would increase the public’s trust in your ability to serve in their best interest during your time at DoD. I urge you to demonstrate a commitment to integrity and request that you reply to the following questions in writing by June 25, 2026:

1. As noted in your ethics agreement,¹⁷ will you confirm your commitment to divesting your equity in Raytheon, and immediately inform Congress when and how you have done so?
2. Will you commit to recuse yourself from all particular matters involving Raytheon for at least four years?
 - a. Will you commit to recusing yourself from any conversations about equity investments in your former employer and its competitors?
 - b. Will you commit to not seek a waiver from any of the recusal requirements in your ethics agreement?
3. Will you commit to not seek compensation from a firm that is heavily invested in the defense industry, a defense contractor, or any other entity that does business with DoD for at least four years after leaving office?
4. Will you commit to not lobby, including through work as an informal “shadow lobbyist,” any part of DoD for at least four years after leaving office?
5. What ethics guidance did you receive from DoD before your retirement in 2021? Please provide a copy.
 - a. Were you permanently restricted from discussing certain programs with DoD?

¹⁷ U.S. Office of Government Ethics, “Erich Hernandez-Baquero Ethics Agreement,” April 22, 2026, [https://extapps2.oge.gov/201/Presiden.nsf/PAS+Index/89FD9D0CF1E60F9885258DEB002DD3BF/\\$FILE/Hernandez-Baquero%2C%20Erich%20%20finalEA.pdf](https://extapps2.oge.gov/201/Presiden.nsf/PAS+Index/89FD9D0CF1E60F9885258DEB002DD3BF/$FILE/Hernandez-Baquero%2C%20Erich%20%20finalEA.pdf).

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator