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VA appointees brought on board in early 2022

WASHINGTON — More Department of Veterans Affairs key appointments are filled at the start of the new year.

Julia Cardozo - Special Assistant for Policy, Office of the Secretary: Julia Cardozo helps to oversee and coordinate all VA policy efforts with the White House, other federal agencies and on an enterprise level for the department. She previously served as an Assistant State's Attorney in the Special Victims Division of the State's Attorney's Office for Montgomery County, Maryland, where she specialized in prosecuting felony sex crimes, crimes against children and domestic violence cases. Cardozo is the daughter and granddaughter of Veterans and is a dedicated champion of causes impacting children and the environment.

Kurt DelBene - Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology and Chief Information Officer: Kurt DelBene oversees the day-to-day activities of VA's digital transformation, IT infrastructure and other critical assets along with managing a \$4 billion plus budget as VA's Senior Information and Technology Executive. Before joining the department, DelBene served as an executive at Microsoft, fulfilling a range of leadership roles including most recently as executive vice president of Corporate Strategy and Core Services Engineering and Operations. In 2013, he took a leave of absence from Microsoft to assist with the rollout of Healthcare.gov, the primary enrollment website for the Affordable Care Act. He also served as senior advisor to the Secretary of Health and Human Services, helping to assess and implement the first open enrollment period.

Guy Kiyokawa - Assistant Secretary for Enterprise Integration: Guy Kiyokawa advises the VA Secretary and senior leaders on strategic planning, performance and risk management; policy and analysis; data analytics, statistics and governance; and interagency coordination and collaboration. Prior to his nomination, he served as deputy director of the Defense Health Agency, a joint, integrated Combat Support Agency that enables the Army, Navy and Air Force medical services to provide a medically ready force to Combatant Commands in both peacetime and wartime. Before joining the Senior Executive Service, Kiyokawa served in the U.S. Army as a Medical Service Corps Officer. He completed his military service as the Chief of Staff of the DHA, where he played a pivotal role in standing up the Defense Health Agency. With the creation of the DHA, he drew upon his decades of experience leading people and organizations through large-scale change.

Linda Torres - Special Assistant to the Under Secretary for Health, Veterans Health Administration: Linda Torres serves as an advisor to the senior leadership team at VHA. She served in the U.S. Army as a critical care nurse and deployed in 2012 to Bastion Hospital and Bagram Airfield Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. After her time in service, she earned her doctorate in nursing practice, specializing in Nurse Anesthesia. She continues to care for patients as a Certified the service director and then policy director for the all-volunteer Veteran non-profit, Action Tank. Her work in this organization focused on the tree canopy, firearm violence, food insecurity and substance use. Torres continues to volunteer and plant trees.

Maria Carolina González-Prats, Ph.D. - Special Assistant to the Under Secretary for Benefits, Veterans Benefits Administration: Maria Carolina González-Prats serves as an advisor to the senior leadership team at VBA. González-Prats is an Army Veteran with a professional career spanning more than 20 years serving in leadership positions in the public, corporate and non-profit sectors. Since completing her military service in 2004, González-Prats has taken her passion and advocacy skills to support Veterans and their families to identify and access programs and resources in their communities. Additionally, she has experience with Veterans that experience challenges during the transition from military to civilian life and Veterans suffering from invisible injuries such as traumatic brain injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder and military sexual trauma. González-Prats holds a doctorate in social work and social research from Portland State University where she served on the university's board of trustees.

Julia Romero Gusse, Senior Advisor to the Undersecretary of Benefits: Julia Gusse served as a prior-enlisted Air Force intelligence as a cryptologic technician at the National Security Agency, Fort Meade, Maryland. Most recently she served as director of the Veterans Upward Bound program at Arizona State University, Tempe Arizona. Gusse is a founding member of her community American Legion Post along with former past commander. As a former two term elected councilwoman for the city of Maricopa, Arizona, she founded Operation Welcome Home, Veteran Town Halls, free dental clinic for Veterans and a local VetIT non-profit to assist those Veterans in financial need.

As these new leaders join the department, there are two individuals who are leaving.

"We want to thank Jenny Wang who served as director of Mission Operations and Shawn Turner who was the senior advisor for Strategic Engagement," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "Their great work provided valuable service to Veterans. We wish them well in all their future endeavors."

Wang and Turner worked in the Office of the Secretary.

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