THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON DC 20350-1000

AUG 10 2026

The Honorable Vicente Gonzalez
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Gonzalez:

Thank you for your letters of July 10, 2025, and May 13, 2026, concerning the disappearance and death of Culinary Specialist Third Class (CS3) Angelina Resendiz. I am in full agreement that the Navy has a responsibility to protect all Service Members. As the Acting Secretary of the Navy, taking care of our Sailors and Marines will always be my number one priority.

As mentioned in the Navy's letters of September 2, 2025, and May 20, 2026, the Navy initiated a comprehensive review of the response to the facts and circumstances surrounding CS3 Resendiz's disappearance and death. While the review found that proper procedures were followed, several personnel policies and processes were identified as requiring further review and improvement. These policy updates and process improvements are currently being actioned across the Navy.

On June 9, 2026, Seaman Recruit (SR) Jermiah Copeland pled guilty to murdering CS3 Resendiz. He was sentenced to 44 years of confinement and received a Dishonorable Discharge from the Navy. He was initially transferred from USS HARRY S. TRUMAN (CVN 75) to USS JAMES E. WILLIAMS (DDG 95) in December 2024. In accordance with Department of War (DoW) and Department of Navy (DON) policy, this transfer from the HARRY S. TRUMAN was approved at the request of a victim in a separate offense. The Navy is refining the policies applicable to transferring Sailors accused of sexual assault to enhance oversight and notification requirements.

On the morning of May 30, 2025, CS3 Resendiz was not present for the 0730 accountability muster aboard JAMES E. WILLIAMS. In accordance with Navy policy, she was designated as being in an "Unauthorized Absence" (UA) status, as there were no indications at the time that her absence was involuntary. The Navy designates Sailors UA who fail to report to work as a default, absent indications the member's absence is involuntary. CS3 Resendiz's command searched her barracks room approximately two hours after her UA designation.

On May 31, 2025, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) began investigating CS3 Resendiz's absence as involuntary after receiving a tip from the Norfolk Police Department. On June 1, 2025, JAMES E. WILLIAMS' leadership informed their immediate superior in command that CS3 Resendiz's absence may be involuntary, and NCIS issued a "Be On The Lookout" alert for CS3 Resendiz and began daily contact with her mother. On June 3, 2025, NCIS issued a "Critical Missing Adult" Alert for CS3 Resendiz, and on June 5, 2025, JAMES E. WILLIAMS' leadership designated CS3 Resendiz, "Duty Status – Whereabouts Unknown" (DUSTWUN).

Navy policy is currently being revised to establish an "Absent – Unknown" designation, in addition to UA and DUSTWUN, which will allow commanders to place a Sailor in a missing status, and speed notifications and delivery of support services to family members. The Navy is also refining its command leadership training and education materials regarding duty status options and their requirements.

Following the discovery of CS3 Resendiz's remains, and in accordance with DoW and DON policy, Navy Mortuary Affairs arranged for the transportation of CS3 Resendiz's remains from Virginia to Texas. On June 16, 2025, Navy Mortuary Affairs personnel briefed the director of the receiving funeral home that the condition of the remains was "nonviewable." That information was apparently not clearly communicated to CS3 Resendiz's mother, and Navy is revising its policy to require direct communication of the status of remains with both the receiving funeral home and the Person Authorized to Direct Disposition of the Remains.

The Navy continues to mourn the loss of CS3 Resendiz and will ensure to absorb lessons learned from this tragic incident, improve its processes, and continue to prioritize the welfare of our Sailors and Marines.

If you need any further assistance on this matter, please contact my office. Thank you again for your concern in this critical case for our Navy.

Sincerely,

Hung Cao
Acting