



Martin Matishak | December 1, 2021

Biden expected to nominate first woman as Army Cyber chief

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President Joe Biden is expected to pick Maj. Gen. Maria Barrett to be the first female leader of U.S. Army Cyber Command, according to two people familiar with the decision.

[Barrett](#) is currently head of the Army's Network Enterprise Technology Command (NETCOM), a subordinate unit to Army Cyber Command. The outfit, headquartered at Fort Huachuca in Arizona, operates and defends the service's portion of the massive Defense Department Information Network, or DODIN, which is targeted millions of times daily by foreign adversaries trying to gain unauthorized access to military systems.

Army Cyber Command is looking for a new chief as its existing leader, [Lt. Gen. Stephen Fogarty](#), is slated to retire from active duty — potentially before the end of the month.

Selecting Barrett, [who took the reins](#) of NETCOM in 2018, would place someone who boasts a breadth of cybersecurity experience and deep ties to U.S. Cyber Command atop the Army's digital warfighting arm.

Before taking over NETCOM, Barrett served as deputy of operations at Cyber Command. Prior to that, she was the deputy commanding general at Cyber Command's Joint Force Headquarters-Cyber — an organization that provides intelligence, planning and digital capabilities to DoD combatant commands around the globe — and deputy commander for operations for the command's Cyber National Mission Force, which conducts offensive operations to defend the U.S.

Barrett also served as U.S. Southern Command's chief information officer and the director of operations for the White House Communications Agency, a military support unit that assists the president, vice president and the Secret Service by providing them with secure communications.

Speaking at an event hosted by the Association of the U.S. Army earlier this year, Barrett [stressed the need](#) for the service to recruit top talent in the future, regardless of gender.

“The race for talent is real,” she said.

“As a leader, I think you have to look at the full lifecycle spectrum of your workforce and understand where you might have a gap or a weak area ... and get after it quickly and consistently.”

Barrett, who was commissioned through the Army ROTC program as a second lieutenant in 1988, is a veteran of both Iraq wars. She and [Brig. Gen. Paula Lodi](#) are believed to be the first pair of sisters to become Army generals in the service’s history.

If nominated, and confirmed by the Senate, Barrett would become the fifth chief of Army Cyber Command since it was established in 2010. She would replace Fogarty, who assumed the post in 2018 and has led the digital warfare unit longer than any other commander.

During his tenure, Fogarty saw the organization, which boasts over 16,000 personnel, relocate from Fort Belvoir in Virginia to Fort Gordon in Georgia. The area has become a major hub for the Pentagon’s cyber and signals intelligence work and training in recent years, playing home to NSA Georgia and the Army’s Cyber Center of Excellence, among others.

Fogarty was at the helm in 2018 when the Army handed responsibility for Joint Task Force Ares — a special unit that was created in 2016 to develop digital weapons to fight the Islamic State online — over to Marine Forces Cyberspace Command, where its mission has expanded to focus on nation-state actors, most notably those in the greater Indo-Pacific region.

The three-star, who joined the Army in 1983, also fostered a relationship with the Defense Digital Service, which recruits the nation’s top tech talent for a tour of duty at Pentagon in order to solve the department’s biggest IT headaches.

In 2018, DDS opened its first satellite office — named “Tatooine,” after Luke Skywalker’s home planet in the *Star Wars* series — at the state-owned Georgia Cyber Center. The two organizations have since gone on to work on a variety of projects together.

It’s unclear when the administration might formally announce Barrett’s nomination, but the two people — who requested anonymity to talk about the nomination — believe it could come within the next few weeks.

In a statement, an Army spokesperson said it is the service’s policy not to comment on general officer nominations “until after Senate confirmation.”



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