

## *A former Pentagon official is chosen to run the National Counterterrorism Center.*

President Biden's pick, Christine S. Abizaid, would be the first woman to hold the post on a permanent basis if confirmed by the Senate.



By Julian E. Barnes

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President Biden plans to nominate a former Pentagon official as the director of the National Counterterrorism Center, he announced on Monday, giving her the task of adapting the agency to a world in which domestic threats loom as large as foreign ones.

Mr. Biden's selection, Christine S. Abizaid, served as a deputy assistant secretary of defense during the Obama administration, focusing on Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as working on counterterrorism on the National Security Council.

If confirmed by the Senate, Ms. Abizaid would be the first woman to hold the post on a permanent basis. Lora Shiao, a career official, served as an acting director of the center last year.

Avril B. Haines, the director of national intelligence, who oversees the counterterrorism center, praised the choice.

"Christy brings a command of counterterrorism issues, leadership acumen and enterprising approach that will enable her to effectively steer N.C.T.C.," Ms. Haines said in a statement.

Ms. Abizaid, who works for Dell Technologies, is the daughter of the retired Gen. John P. Abizaid, who oversaw the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as the head of the U.S. military's Central Command and also served as ambassador to Saudi Arabia during the Trump administration.

The National Counterterrorism Center was set up after the Sept. 11 attacks to improve how intelligence agencies share information. As the potential threat from China has grown, the national security establishment has begun to shift some resources away from terrorism to other challenges.

Last year, Richard Grenell, the acting director of national intelligence, conducted a review that resulted in the shrinking of the counterterrorism center, though mainly by eliminating unfilled positions.

But officials say the center remains critical in identifying threats, and former officials praised Ms. Abizaid as her name was floated for the position.

Ms. Abizaid has a range of expertise on terrorism issues, said Nicholas J. Rasmussen, a former director of the center. "She's also someone who is instinctively collaborative and collegial, a natural leader, and someone who will think creatively about how to address the constantly evolving set of terrorism challenges we face as a nation," he said.

A key question is whether the center will expand its work beyond foreign threats, to domestic terrorism. The Biden administration has made countering domestic terrorism a priority, and some officials believe the center can do more to help.