

Senate Armed Services Committee
Advance Policy Questions for Elbridge Colby
Nominee for Appointment to be Under Secretary of Defense for Policy

Duties and Qualifications

What is your understanding of the duties and functions of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P))?

My understanding of the duties and functions of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)) are based on the U.S. code and custom. Statutorily, the USD(P) is responsible, under the direction of the Secretary of Defense, for directing and supervising:

- The development and promulgation of the National Defense Strategy and any other Departmental strategic documents;
- Representing the Department in the development of the National Security Strategy, and ensuring the integration of the Department's activities and plans with the National Security Strategy;
- The development and promulgation of policy guidance for campaign, contingency, and operational plans, and for their review for alignment with Departmental and national policy objectives and criteria;
- The development and promulgation of policy guidance for global force posture;
- The development and promulgation of the Defense Planning Guidance to guide the formulation of program and budget requests by the Department;
- The Department's activities and policies regarding export controls;
- The Department's policy, program planning, and execution, and allocation and use of resource for the Department's activities for combating terrorism; and
- In coordination with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Director of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation, for developing planning scenarios to assess the Joint Force's capabilities and readiness and to develop and conduct assessments of progress toward meeting specific objectives the Joint Force should be ready to achieve.

In terms of activities, my understanding of the duties and functions of the USD(P) are to serve as the principal advisor to and lieutenant of the Secretary of Defense on matters of strategy, defense and foreign policy, and alignment of the Department's activities with national strategy and other elements of national power. Within the Department, that means representing the strategy and policy perspective throughout the Department's activities. Outside of the Department, it is to serve as the principal representative of the Department below the Secretary himself to the interagency process, the Congress, and foreign governments on matters of strategy and policy.

More broadly, the purpose of the USD(P) and its predecessor roles, in my understanding, is to ensure that the United States has the right defense strategy; that that strategy is reflected in the joint force's plans, posture, structure, and activities; and that that strategy integrates effectively and logically with the Nation's overall strategy, with the activities and strategies of our allies, and with the threats we face. In a nutshell, the role of the USD(P) is to ensure that the United

States follows the tried and true maxim that war and force should be the instrument, and sound policy and strategy the guiding framework. In an era of great power rivalry and the potential for great power war, this function once more takes on profound importance.

If confirmed, what additional duties and responsibilities do you expect that the Secretary of Defense would prescribe for you?

I am not aware of any additional duties and responsibilities that would be prescribed by the Secretary, but I would be prepared to assume additional ones that are compatible with effectively meeting the core responsibilities and duties of the position.

What background and experience do you possess that qualify you for this position?

I believe my background is well-suited for the position of USD(P). I have worked my entire career on national security, defense, and foreign policy issues, and have devoted my career to thinking through what I believe are the most important questions facing our Nation's defense.

In terms of experience, I have spent approximately six years in full-time government employment. Most recently I served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Force Development from 2017-2018, leading the development and rollout of the 2018 National Defense Strategy. I have also served as a staff member on multiple commissions and participated actively in the national and international debates on U.S. and allied security, including testifying before Congress on a number of occasions. I believe I also have the intellectual preparation for the role, having written and spoken extensively at home and abroad on precisely the topics in the purview of the USD(P), including in my book *The Strategy of Denial: American Defense in an Age of Great Power Conflict* (Yale University Press, 2021). I have abundant experience engaging with personnel and constituencies relevant to the role, preparing me for the Departmental, interagency, and Congressional engagement elements of the position. I have traveled and engaged widely, preparing me for the international aspects of the job. Finally, I have also held a security clearance for effectively my entire adult life, testifying to my trustworthiness and commitment.

If confirmed, what duties and responsibilities would you assign to the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy?

I have always worked best with partners and believe in empowering and enabling subordinates to contribute to the shared mission. During the development of the 2018 NDS, for instance, I worked very closely with my deputy, Jim Mitre, who was instrumental in the success of that effort. I would bring that mindset to this position.

The particular duties and responsibilities I would assign to the Deputy USD(P) would, naturally, depend on the individual selected. My understanding is that no nominee has yet been announced, so I cannot say for sure how I would do so. My inclination once a nominee has been identified and confirmed, however, would be to ask that individual to take the lead on a certain set of issues and management responsibilities for which his or her expertise, experiences, and interests are better-suited than my own.

What are the major challenges you would expect to confront if confirmed as the USD(P)?

I believe there is a consensus on the broad outlines of the Nation's defense strategy. My understanding is that the Department has, across both the first Trump and Biden terms, largely settled on a defense strategy prioritizing the challenge posed by China while inducing greater allied participation to help address military shortfalls both vis-à-vis Beijing as well as in other theaters against other potential opponents, particularly Russia, Iran, North Korea, and terrorists. There is also agreement on the broad outlines of the need to restore our defense industrial base and that of our allies. Finally, there is broad agreement that we need to better secure our homeland and our Nation's territorial integrity.

I believe the major challenges I would confront if confirmed as USD(P) would be in attempting to put that strategy into effect, precisely because that strategic consensus has remained largely theoretical rather than a reality. Indeed, the Trump Administration is entering office with the country facing a major "Lippmann Gap": a perilous mismatch between what we have been trying to achieve in the world, on the one hand, and the resources and political will we have to match those aspirations on the other.

Allowing this to go on is a recipe for disaster because, as this Committee has so ably laid out, we and our allies face the potential for multi-front conflict in the coming years, yet we are not as prepared as we should be for such an eventuality. Admiral Paparo recently emphasized that China's preparations for war are becoming disturbingly realistic, and that is only a piece of China's broader preparations for conflict. War with Beijing is certainly not inevitable, but it is very possible, and it would be disastrous for U.S. interests – with the only thing worse than it happening being our losing such a war. At the same time, Russia's military is, as General Cavoli and others have indicated, battle-hardened and larger than where it stood in 2022. Iran poses a grave threat to our key ally Israel and our interests in the Middle East. North Korea is advancing on its nuclear and missile programs. And we must not neglect the ever-present threat of terrorism. Even worse, these potential opponents are increasingly collaborating.

Yet this takes place in a situation in which the previous administration has made clear that the United States does not have the ability to fight multiple major wars at the same time. This is a simple fact and one with which we are now forced to reckon.

To be clear, the answer to this quandary in my view is not withdrawal or isolationism. To the contrary. Rather, the answer is the realistic, peace through strength, America First agenda that President Trump and his team, including Secretary Hegseth, have laid out. To my understanding, this involves:

- Rebuilding our military's readiness and capabilities;
- Restoring our defense industrial base;
- Encouraging and where necessary pressing our allies to step up to take more responsibility for their own defense; and
- Engaging with our potential adversaries to avoid unnecessary conflict, exploit wedges where possible, and enable a *peace through strength* outcome.

The problem is that some of these measures will take – at best – many years to pan out, while the threat we face is here and now. As a result, scarcity will persist in key regards with respect to U.S. forces and supporting industry. For this reason, it is a strategic deduction that the United States must prioritize, based on the urgency of the threats we face and the importance of the interests at stake. It is widely agreed that China is the most formidable challenger to the United States. At the same time, the previous Secretary of the Air Force said last fall not only that China was preparing for war, but that he judged the People’s Liberation Army would say it is ready by 2027. As Secretary Rubio clearly and rightly stated in his confirmation hearing, there is a real chance of a Chinese attack on Taiwan in the coming years. This is the glaring reality we must face—even as we must also urgently strengthen our Nation’s homeland defenses, not just against China and other state threats, but against illegal migration, narcotics flows, and other persistent threats to the very heart of our Nation.

To return to the question, then, the major strategic challenges I would face, if confirmed, would be:

- How to address and prioritize the China threat in the near term given that the joint force and the defense industrial base are not as ready as we would like, nor are our allies’ forces or industries;
- How to do this while robustly strengthening U.S. homeland defenses and dealing effectively with persistent threats in other important theaters like the Middle East and Europe, including by working with our allies there to take a more leading role in their own security; and
- How to revamp the defense industrial base to attain much better results for our and our allies’ forces.

I believe the organizational challenges I would face would be downstream of these strategic challenges. Based on my own experience and observation, I know that not all organizations within the Department or in the U.S. Government, let alone among our allies, have internalized the need to take the steps to make this strategic shift a reality. I therefore believe a major part of the role, if confirmed, would be helping to implement the strategic shift it is widely agreed that the Department needs to make, both within the Department itself and in dealings with the interagency and allies.

If confirmed, what would your policy priorities be, and what areas of policy do you think have not been adequately emphasized or addressed by the Department of Defense (DOD)?

I am committed to the President’s America First and peace through strength agenda. I believe Secretary Hegseth’s focus on the challenge posed by China and securing our territorial integrity are rightly the priorities for the Department. At the same time, the United States should deny Iran gaining a nuclear weapon and be prepared to support our NATO allies and South Korea.

My primary concern with the Department in recent years has not been the formal strategy, which I view as rightly focused on China, but rather the *implementation* of that strategy. I believe the main problem the Department has faced is not the strategy, but the ability and resolve to follow that strategy through. Making that strategic shift a reality would, if confirmed, be my main focus.

How would you characterize your views regarding the appropriate posture of stationing of U.S. armed forces overseas and their use in overseas operations?

I believe U.S. forces should be postured, stationed, and employed abroad in furtherance of our national strategy designed to benefit Americans' security, freedoms, and prosperity. Given the importance of preventing a hostile or potentially hostile state from gaining hegemony over a key area of the world and undermining those American interests, as well as threats such as terrorism, overseas basing and presence are critical. They should, however, be continually reevaluated to ensure the United States is optimally posturing U.S. forces in the event of conflict, ensuring allies adequately invest in their own security, and do not create costs beyond their benefits.

I regard such evaluation as a critical part of the role of the USD(P).

Conflicts of Interest

Federal ethics laws, to include 10 U.S.C. §208, prohibit government employees from participating in matters where they, or certain family members or organizations with which they have certain relationships, have a financial interest.

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to disclose any potential conflicts of interest, including investments, business ties, family relationships, or other connections that could be perceived as influencing your decision making?

I do.

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, that if a conflict of interest arises, you will recuse yourself from participating in any relevant decisions regarding that specific matter?

I do.

Do you commit, without qualification, if confirmed, to decision-making on the merits and exclusively in the public interest, without regard to private gain or personal benefit?

I do.

Civilian Control of the Military

What are your personal views on the principle of civilian control of the military?

I believe civilian control of the military is absolutely critical. The United States is a constitutional republic, and civilian control of the military is rightly an essential part of our

republican system. I believe one of the core functions of the USD(P) is to make that civilian control and oversight a reality.

To be clear, it is not the place of civilians to dictate to the military. Rather, the right model, especially in a world of great power rivalry, is a respectful, engaged, and expert discussion and debate. The purpose is to ensure that the conduct of defense and war is an instrument of national policy, and thus democratically accountable, while ensuring our military is the very best it can be by respecting its proper sphere and professional ethos.

If confirmed as the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, what specific actions would you take in preparing guidance for and reviewing contingency plans?

If confirmed, I would actively focus on deep and thoroughgoing reviews of operational and contingency plans. As I stated above, plans for war are not merely a military matter. Of course, they must be that at their core – our forces must be prepared to win. But those plans must be consistent with our national interests and strategy, and that is the role of civilian officials to ensure. I would see my role as USD(P), if confirmed, as ensuring that linkage is tight, consistent with President Trump and the Secretary's agenda.

If confirmed, specifically what would you do to ensure that your tenure as the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy epitomizes the fundamental requirement for civilian control of the Armed Forces embedded in the U.S. Constitution and other laws?

I believe I have the right experience, attitude, and commitment to do precisely this. I have profound respect for the military, I know my own limits, and I am open to debate and learning. At the same time, though, I have deep background and thinking on defense strategy and policy and our foreign policy, more broadly, and understand the military and its role. I would bring this active, open, and focused perspective to ensure proper civilian control and the alignment of our defense policy, strategy, posture, plans, and the like with our national interests and strategy.

Aside from civilian control of the military via the Executive Branch, please describe the extent to which you believe Congress plays a role in furthering civilian control of our military?

Congress plays an essential role in civilian control of the military. Congress is a source of legitimacy for all confirmed officials, who have been confirmed by democratically elected representatives. More specifically, Congress has made clear its emphasis on the importance of civilian control of the military and is a vital partner in ensuring that remains the case.

Section 901 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 authorized an increase in the number of personnel in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and "sunsetting" the reduction of funding mandated in section 346 of the FY 2016 NDAA. What has the Department done to use these additional flexibilities to increase the number of civilian billets in OSD? In your view, would an increase in the number of personnel assigned to the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSD(P)) enhance civilian control of the military? Please explain your answer.

I have not had the opportunity to review the staffing situation in OSD(P). If confirmed, I would carefully review the staffing situation in OSD(P) and make recommendations to ensure it is able to conduct its role effectively, including supporting civilian control of the military.

Strategy and Force Design

The 2022 National Defense Strategy outlines that the United States faces a rising China, an aggressive Russia, and the continued threat from rogue regimes and global terrorism. The Congressional NDS Commission recently testified that China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea have formed malign partnerships, supporting each other's military aggression and illegal wars.

What is your assessment of the military threat posed by the People's Republic of China?

The military threat posed by China is the most serious and pressing for the United States. Indeed, both the 2018 and 2022 National Defense Strategies stated that the People's Republic of China poses the most significant challenge for the U.S. Department of Defense. As discussed previously, this is a matter of bipartisan agreement.

Nor is China solely a long-term threat, even though it is surely that too. Rather, the Chinese military threat has arrived. The most pressing scenario for the Department would be a rapid attempt by China to seize Taiwan by force. While war is not inevitable and it would be my goal, if confirmed, to prevent it while protecting American and allied interests, there is strong reason to think it is very possible, including President Xi Jinping's stated goal of annexing Taiwan, his directive to the People's Liberation Army to be ready for such an operation by 2027, and China's broadscale modernization and buildup of capabilities tailor-made to hold the Joint Force at risk, among many other factors.

What is your assessment of the military threat posed by the Russian Federation?

The Russian military poses a serious threat to Eastern Europe, including NATO members. Its nuclear, missile, and other asymmetric capabilities also pose a direct military threat to the United States and the rest of NATO, among other allies.

Despite the war in Ukraine and sanctions, the Russian military remains a serious threat and in some respects that threat is increasing vis-a-vis Europe.

What is your assessment of the military threat posed by collusion among Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea?

A "counter coalition" of China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea has formed and become more cohesive in recent years. These states are supporting and enabling each other in ways that are mutually advantageous. Even worse, this growing collaboration presents a much more serious threat of multi-front war. This is especially problematic because the

United States does not have a military sized to fight multiple major wars, and too many of our allies are inadequately prepared. This is a key challenge I would focus on addressing if confirmed as USD(P).

Are there significant opportunities that, in your view, DOD has been unable to leverage, or has leveraged only in part, since the NDS was published in 2022? If so, how would correct this situation, if confirmed?

While I understand that the 2022 NDS was largely consistent with the 2018 version from President Trump's first term, my assessment is that the strategy's emphasis on prioritization was not implemented. I think a key challenge I would face, if confirmed, is turning prioritization from an aspiration into a reality consistent with President Trump's peace through strength and America First agenda and the priorities Secretary Hegseth has already rightly laid out.

The 2022 NDS identified defending the homeland as the top defense priority.

In your view, is the Department making investments in homeland defense that are consistent with this being a top priority? What additional investments do you believe are necessary to protect the homeland?

Defense of the U.S. homeland is critical and a core mission of the armed forces. Any defense strategy putting the American people first must include defense of the homeland.

This includes threats from nuclear and conventionally armed missiles, drones, aircraft, and other vectors. The President's Golden Dome initiative is an essential, flagship way to ensure our homeland is well-defended. This combines both ongoing and legacy capabilities as well as disruptive new capabilities and technologies. We should aggressively pursue them with the vision of ensuring an effective defense of the American homeland.

At the same time, we must secure our border and halt the unchecked flow of deadly drugs like fentanyl. The Armed Forces can and should play an important role in ensuring our borders are secure and we can effectively combat the scourge of drugs that kill more than 100,000 Americans every year.

In your view, to what extent should the Department anticipate being called on to support civil authorities in the event of a war with a strategic competitor? What investments and planning do you believe the Department should be undertaking to prepare for such a scenario?

Defense support to civil authorities is a vital part of such preparations, and if deterrence fails, defending against and recovering from attacks on the U.S. homeland. DoD's mission is to defend the homeland and to project power to fight and win the Nation's wars. War with a peer or near-peer competitor would have serious and direct impact on the homeland, including kinetic and non-kinetic attacks on military bases, dual-use infrastructure, and civilian targets in the U.S. homeland. Building resilience at all

levels—Federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial—is a vital whole-of-government approach to strengthen domestic entities, which will enable the defense of the homeland and the effective prosecution of the war.

For these reasons, the Department should be actively preparing for such contingencies and working to prepare for such engagement with and support to civil authorities.

Looking forward, what types of resource shortfalls, if any, are likely to hamper the Department’s execution of the 2022 NDS and other national defense priorities, in your view? How would you address or mitigate these shortfalls, if confirmed?

If confirmed, I would regard the development and promulgation of a new NDS as a cardinal responsibility. With the blessing of the President and the Secretary, this would guide our national defense priorities.

While I cannot say what such an NDS would say, Secretary Hegseth’s stated priorities already give us clear and sound vectors, including China, the homeland, and a refocus on lethality. If confirmed, I would see my role as ensuring the Department has the robust funding needed to resource such a strategy, while at the same time ensuring the strategy is not one characterized by “pie in the sky” aspirations.

The 2023 Strategic Posture Commission (SPC) reached similar conclusions to the NDS Commission regarding the threats facing the United States, now and in the coming decades. To address these threats, the SPC recommended that U.S. defense strategy should prepare to effectively deter, and if necessary, defeat, simultaneous Russian and Chinese conventional aggression in two geographically separate theaters. Do you agree with the conclusions and recommendations of the SPC regarding overall force sizing?

It is clear that the United States faces the very real potential of multi-front aggression. The central focus of U.S. defense strategy and planning must be to prepare for such conflicts, *precisely* to deter them.

Such preparations must be clear-eyed and realistic, however, taking stock of the existing size and structure of our armed forces, the limitations of our existing defense industrial base, the capabilities of our allies and adversaries, and the likely timelines for addressing our shortfalls. A realistic strategy of prioritization focused on China while working closely with allies in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, such as Secretary Hegseth has laid out, would allow us to meet this exceptionally dangerous moment.

The 2023 SPC concluded that the U.S. should expedite its ongoing nuclear force modernization activities, modify its strategic nuclear force structure to account for the rapid growth of China’s nuclear forces and the unprecedented need to deter two nuclear-armed peer adversaries, and urgently develop additional theater range nuclear options. Do you agree with the recommendations of the SPC regarding U.S. nuclear forces?

It is crucial for the United States never to be subject to nuclear blackmail or coercion, let alone attack. We therefore absolutely need a nuclear force able to deter more than one nuclear power.

What precisely that entails in light of the state of our industrial base, the needs of our conventional forces, allied capabilities, and other salient factors, would be a primary focus for me, if confirmed as USD(P).

In mandating changes to the process and form of the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, and the National Military Strategy, Congress intended that these documents, through the Defense Planning Guidance, would more rigorously drive program planning of the Military Departments, Defense Agencies, and Combatant Commands. If confirmed, how would you ensure consistency between the guiding strategies of the Department and its allocation of resources?

If confirmed, I would see it as a central focus of my tenure to ensure that our strategic documents are keyed to the national interest in service of our broader international strategy, realistic, and rigorous, and that they are thoroughly, logically, and practically carried through in subordinate documents and – critically – actually implemented.

Use of Military Force

If confirmed, how would you define your role in making recommendations to the President on the use of military force?

My understanding is that the USD(P) plays a crucial role in recommendations to the President on the use of military force, through the Secretary of Defense. The USD(P) is the official principally tasked with guiding and overseeing development of military options that the President can use to defend the Nation's interests, in line with our overall foreign policy strategy, including by ensuring any proposed use of military force is clearly and rationally tied to feasible and reasonable political objectives. If confirmed, I would see my role as providing that crucial perspective in this process.

What factors would you consider, if confirmed, in determining which forces of other nations are eligible for collective self-defense by U.S. forces, and under what conditions?

I would need to study this question more carefully to provide a more definitive answer.

That said, factors I would regard as material for such a determination would include: the geopolitical, military, and other interests of the United States as affected both by the attacked and attacking parties; U.S. treaty and other commitments; and international reactions to both the attack itself and U.S. reactions; among other factors.

What limitations, if any, would you seek to impose on the provision of collective self-defense by U.S. forces?

I would need to study this question more carefully to provide a more definitive answer.

That said, I believe in the importance of collective defense as part of overall U.S. strategy, rigorously weighed, applied, and apportioned according to the national interests, our interests in upholding our differentiated credibility, and other factors. That said, U.S. forces should only be

committed to conflict for compelling purposes and with clear objectives along the lines laid out in the Weinberger/Powell Doctrine. This would apply to collective defense operations as to any others.

Civilian Harm Mitigation

In August 2022 the Secretary of Defense issued the Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan (CHMR-AP), which included a detailed set of objectives and initiatives to “improve its approach to mitigating and responding to civilian harm, protecting U.S. national security, and confronting the complex challenges of the modern security environment.”

What is your view on the importance of civilian harm mitigation and response efforts?

I believe it is in the U.S. national interest, as well as morally right, to seek to reduce civilian harm to the degree possible. While I am not deeply familiar with the CHMR-AP, I value efforts to apply this perspective in ways consistent with military effectiveness and deterrence. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about this effort.

How, in your view, do such efforts relate to operational effectiveness and strategic success?

I believe it is in the U.S. national interest, as well as morally right, to seek to reduce civilian harm to the degree possible. Organizations that help the Department do this in ways consistent with military effectiveness and deterrence are therefore helpful and to be welcomed. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about this program and seeing how it can be leveraged.

What is your assessment of the progress made by the Department to implement the CHMR-AP to date? What areas do you believe require greater attention or resources to achieve the desired outcomes?

I have not had the opportunity to be briefed on this but, if confirmed, look forward to learning more about and providing an assessment of its effectiveness and areas for potential improvement.

What role do you believe public transparency plays with respect to accounting for and responding to allegations of civilian casualties resulting from U.S. military operations?

Public transparency plays an important role in the Department’s response to civilian harm. I have been advised that the Department maintains a public-facing webpage where unclassified and releasable DoD policies, reports, and other information related to civilian harm can be readily accessed. Maintaining public transparency through accurate reports and assessments is both valuable in and of itself but also bolsters trust in the U.S. military and provides a mechanism for accountability, which is to be welcomed.

Do you believe the Department of Defense has achieved a sufficient level of transparency on such matters? If not, what additional steps do you believe are necessary?

I have no reason for concern at this stage, but I have not been briefed on this matter. If confirmed, I would look forward to assessing the matter to ensure there is sufficient transparency properly balanced with military necessity.

Readiness

In your view, how do the readiness challenges facing the DOD today and over the next 10 years impact the Department's requirements for force structure investments?

The problem of balancing the demands of the near term and the medium to longer-term is one of the toughest challenges the Department faces. Due to the possibility of major war, and even simultaneous major conflicts, we are simply not in a position to "take a knee" to invest only for the longer term. We need our forces to be ready now, next year, and over the longer term.

If confirmed as USD(P), I would see my role as ensuring that the Department's readiness and force development efforts are designed to achieve both near and longer-term warfighting readiness goals. This is an area where the USD(P) must take an active role – both to ensure that the demands of the near-term do not consume the long-term, but also vice versa.

If confirmed, how would you balance force structure and readiness demands, particularly with respect to rotational forces in the U.S. Indo-Pacific, European, and Central Command areas of responsibility (AOR), against the imperative to modernize or restructure current forces to meet NDS requirements?

I would approach these questions with the above perspective. I would also look to scrutinize operations to ensure the Department is focused on maximizing warfighting readiness against key priorities like deterring China and defending the homeland.

How would you assess the current readiness of the DOD components across the domains of materiel and equipment, personnel, and training to execute operational plans?

I have not had the access to provide an informed answer to this question. But coming to an assessment would be an early priority for me, if confirmed.

Global Force Posture

What is your assessment of the adequacy of the current U.S. global defense posture, particularly as it relates to stationing U.S. military forces overseas, and where would you look to increase or decrease U.S. force posture overseas given current international security dynamics?

I believe the current U.S. global defense posture is inadequate to the legacy foreign policy we

have been pursuing – hence my “Lippmann Gap” reference above. I believe President Trump’s America First agenda sets a far more rational and realistic policy while remaining resolutely engaged in the international sphere in a way that puts Americans interests first but also dovetails with the interests of our allies. I believe we can adjust our defense posture to back up the President’s agenda, thus closing the perilous “Lippman Gap.” I would see it as a primary responsibility of mine, if confirmed, to help do just that.

In your view, in the event of a major conflict with a strategic competitor such as China or Russia, what component of DOD would be responsible for real time management of the resulting impacts and necessary adjustments to global force posture?

I am not currently in a position to provide a clear answer to that question, but I believe Policy would play a very important role in such a context.

In your view, are DOD Components adequately resourced and structured to react at the speed of relevance?

If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the resourcing of the Department, including the Military Departments, to ensure they are appropriately resourced and structured. If confirmed, I will support the Department receiving the resources necessary to secure the President’s vision of peace through strength and the strategy needed to attain it.

The United States has traditionally been a maritime power, and its large Navy has helped ensure open and free navigation of the world’s oceans by all nations. This freedom of navigation has protected trade and greatly contributed to the stability of the world economy and the prosperity of the American people. However, the Navy is currently nearly 100 hulls short of its current 381 ship requirement, with no plan to meet even the current need before the 2040s.

What is your perspective on the credibility of U.S. power projection capabilities and our ability to promote stability in critical regions, particularly in comparison to China’s rapidly growing fleet?

I believe the rapid growth of the Chinese Navy in comparison to the challenges facing our own is a source of deep concern. I also believe the growth of China’s Navy portends not only a direct challenge in the Western Pacific but, if China is successful in dominating in that region, a global power projection to impose Beijing’s will well beyond its own shores. It is critical that the United States reverse this exceptionally dangerous decline in the maritime and overall military balance vis-a-vis China, especially with respect to the Western Pacific.

If the United States is unable to field a Navy capable of countering the likes of China or Russia, or even consistently counter piracy along the major energy trade routes in the Red Sea and off the Horn of Africa, how do you see this affecting American influence globally? Do you think this could drive countries to look to our adversaries as security guarantors and partners of choice in the future?

I believe if China is able to secure military dominance first in the Pacific and then beyond, that key countries and regions of the world would turn to Beijing and our interests would be severely undermined.

If confirmed, how would you mitigate the impacts of this reduced capacity, or how will you work with the Secretary of the Navy and other DOD officials to expand Navy fleet size?

If confirmed, I would work avidly with the Secretary of the Navy and other DoD officials to help reverse this problem, including by providing more focus for demands on the naval operations and revamping the defense industrial base.

In your view, what role do forward-stationed forces play in implementing the NDS and what is the proper balance between forward-stationed, rotationally deployed, and surge forces in executing our defense strategy?

I believe this is a matter of degree, but I believe forward deployed and stationed forces play a critical role, especially in a denial defense along the first island chain. Such forces are present in operationally relevant timelines, provide a strong local defense that is difficult and painful to dislodge, and bolster allied confidence in our resolve.

As the world's preeminent Air Force for much of the past century, the U.S. has long depended on the ability to reliably project combat power and support rapid logistics across the globe. The previous Secretary of the Air Force stated that the U.S. Air Force is too small and too old to perform the missions it has been assigned. Do you agree with this assessment? If so, what are the implications for U.S. national security if the Air Force is unable to perform such missions effectively in the future?

The Air Force plays an essential role in American national and defense strategy. It seems beyond dispute that the Air Force is, as former Secretary Kendall put it, too small and old. I believe it is imperative for the Nation to have an Air Force able to play its essential role in key missions such as nuclear deterrence, China, and defending the homeland.

If confirmed, I would work avidly with the Secretary of the Air Force and other DoD officials to revivify and modernize the Air Force, including by revamping the defense industrial base.

Alliances and Partnerships

The 2022 NDS stressed that mutually beneficial alliances and partnerships are crucial to U.S. success in competition with, deterrence of, and potential conflict against long term strategic competitors.

What is your view of the continuing strength of our current alliances, relationships, and partnerships, and the trust our partners have in the willingness of the U.S. to meet its obligations? If confirmed, how would you enhance that trust?

I believe alliances are key. But, as President Trump rightly emphasizes, we must put our alliances on a more realistic and businesslike foundation. For too long there has been profound imbalances between what America does and what too many of our allies do (with noble exceptions like Israel, Poland, and South Korea). This cannot go on, both because of the growth of our potential opponents' military power and because of the valid perceptions of unfairness by Americans.

I believe the best way to sustain our alliances for the near term and in the long haul is to re-baseline them, putting them on a much more equitable footing. In this model, our allies do more, and we look more to their perspectives as well. I believe this is a return to our successful alliance policy in the Cold War, when we made a huge focus of ensuring allies did their part.

If confirmed, I would regard promoting this approach and helping our allies adapt to it as central to my responsibilities. My experience dealing with allies in and out of government I believe prepares me well for this role.

If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to strengthen existing U.S. alliances and partnerships in each combatant commander's geographic AOR for long-term strategic competition?

I am not in a position at this stage to give specific recommendations. If confirmed, I would make this a priority as part of the various key reviews I would lead in the first year or so of my tenure.

Industrial and technological integration between alliance members and international partners are critical to ensuring interoperability and economies of scale when modernizing and maintaining combat forces.

Based on your experience, do you have any recommendations for how DOD can leverage foreign military sales and industrial base integration as a tool to improve our own military systems, as well as improve our ability to fight by, with, and through our allies and partners?

I believe this is a very important issue. Developing our own defense industrial base and that of our allies is a win-win. Our alliance system is much stronger than the counter-coalition we face. But our industrial base is not in good enough shape on its own to provide the military resources for it. If confirmed, I would make it a priority to figure out how we can better leverage FMS and industrial base integration for this purpose.

Authorities to conduct research and cooperative development are vested in the offices of the Under Secretaries for Acquisition & Sustainment, as well as Research & Engineering. How would you propose improving coordination and synchronization to better leverage their authorities and technical expertise to support Policy's role in negotiating and executing agreements?

Policy coordination with A&S and R&E is essential for the success of the Department as a whole. While I do not have specific recommendations at this stage, I would strive, if confirmed, to ensure such cooperation.

What are your views of the reforms underway within the security cooperation workforce and the Defense Security Cooperation University?

I do not presently have a view on this topic, given that I have not been briefed on it, but would be happy to provide one if confirmed and once I am able to take such briefings.

National Security Investment & Defense Industry

Investment

Multiple independent commissions, including congressional commissions on the National Defense Strategy, Reforms to the Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE), and the Strategic Posture of the United States have highlighted that U.S. defense investments are inadequate for addressing the international security threats facing the United States. These conclusions have been echoed by many members of Congress. In its July 2024 report, the Commission on the National Defense Strategy recommended that Congress provide real growth for defense spending, at an annual average rate of three to five percent above inflation.

Do you agree that sustained real growth in the defense budget of at least 3 to 5 percent is necessary to meet global security challenges without incurring significant additional risk?

I have supported and do support robust defense spending that allows us to meet our national defense strategy. If confirmed, I will advocate for the robust defense spending needed to implement the NDS that President Trump and Secretary Hegseth promulgate.

If confirmed, by what standards would you measure the adequacy of the defense budget?

If confirmed, I would prioritize the development of a new National Defense Strategy and assess required resources against our ability to meet the President's strategic goals, especially first and foremost defending the homeland and deterring China.

Many observers assert that the only way to force DOD leaders to make the "hard choices" to divest of lower priority or underperforming programs, is to constrain the Department fiscally. Do you believe that this approach leads to more effective and efficient decision-making by DOD leaders?

I do not. I believe we have run this experiment, and it did not lead to such results. A more efficient DoD is very much to be welcomed, but I do not think a "starvation diet" is the most effective or prudent way to pursue it.

The PPBE process has remained fundamentally unchanged since its inception more than half a century ago. The congressionally-appointed Commission on PPBE Reform released its final report in March 2024, and Congress has directed DOD to establish a cross-functional team to oversee the implementation of the Commission’s recommendations.

What changes would you make, if any, to the PPBE process to improve both resourcing decisions within DOD and information flow about those decisions to the Congress?

I believe this is a very important commission whose work should be closely studied and considered for implementation. Before providing any recommendations, I would need to investigate the matter more carefully, if confirmed, once I am able to be briefed and better understand the “lay of the land” within the Department.

If confirmed, what would you do to implement the recommendations of the Commission, and how would you work with Congress to ensure success?

If confirmed, I would work to implement the recommendations of the Commission that are consistent with the President and Secretary’s priorities and the improved functioning of the Department.

How would you propose the Department expedite the identification, integration and day-to-day use of modern data analysis tools and techniques to help the Department make more timely and adaptive data-informed decision making that are aligned to the various planning and risk management processes in the Department?

Such tools are highly useful in the contemporary context. If confirmed, I would seek to adapt them to the Department’s processes wherever advisable.

Former Secretary of Defense Mattis stated, “If you don’t fund the State Department fully, then I need to buy more ammunition.”

What are your views on the role of the State Department and other non-DOD departments and agencies in achieving U.S. national security objectives?

The State Department and other non-DoD departments and agencies play crucial roles in U.S. national security policy. If confirmed, I would work closely with my colleagues across the government to implement the President’s America First and peace through strength agenda.

Do you believe non-DOD departments and agencies have been sufficiently resourced to appropriately contribute to U.S. national security objectives?

I am not able to provide an informed opinion regarding the resourcing of non-DoD organizations.

Defense Innovation

U.S. superiority in key areas of innovation is decreasing or has disappeared. Our competitors are engaging in aggressive military modernization and advanced weaponry development. DOD has identified 14 key areas in which investment to develop next generation operational capabilities is imperative: hypersonics; integrated network system of systems; directed energy; advanced computing and software; human-machine interfaces; integrated sensing and cyber; space; quantum science; microelectronics; trusted AI and autonomy; renewable energy generation and storage; future generation wireless technology; advanced materials; and biotechnology. Much of the innovation in critical technologies suitable for national defense purposes is occurring outside of the traditional defense industry.

How should Policy be working with others in DOD, like the USD(R&E) and USD(A&S), to understand and coordinate the technical direction for those critical technology areas with the overarching policy goals and strategies being developed and executed by the USD(Policy)?

It is my understanding that the DoD has not leveraged the full potential of our industrial and innovation bases to deliver military capabilities at the pace and scale necessary to meet Secretary Hegseth's defense priorities. If confirmed, I would work with stakeholders from across the Department to advocate for the rapid development and fielding of defense capabilities in alignment with the Secretary's strategic guidance and policy priorities.

In your view, what technologies do you see as having the greatest military impact in the future? Do you believe the Department of Defense is effectively developing this technology in comparison to our adversaries?

Exploiting technology is crucial for our military's success and thus for peace through strength. While I am not in a position to provide a definitive assessment on these questions at this stage, if confirmed I would regard promoting this line of effort as a critical part of my role and would be happy to engage further on the topic.

Nuclear

Nuclear Policy and Force Modernization

United States nuclear forces are the bedrock of our nation's defense, underpin our most critical alliances, and have deterred nuclear aggression and great power conflict for more than 70 years. Unfortunately, long deferred investments have left us with systems nearing the end of their useful lives. These capabilities must be updated to maintain a viable nuclear deterrent.

Do you agree with the assessment of past Secretaries of Defense that nuclear deterrence is DOD's highest priority mission and that modernizing our nation's nuclear forces is a critical national security priority?

I do. U.S. nuclear forces underpin our entire deterrence and defense posture. I agree that nuclear deterrence should remain DoD's top priority mission and that ensuring we retain a modern, capable, and effective nuclear deterrent should be our top priority.

What is your understanding of how Russia, China, and North Korea have expanded and/or modernized their nuclear force capabilities? In your view, do these capabilities pose an increasing threat to the United States and its allies?

I agree with Secretary Hegseth's assessment that China, Russia, and North Korea have significantly expanded and modernized their nuclear force capabilities. These improvements, which include advances in warheads, delivery systems, and command and control systems, pose an increasingly severe threat to the United States and its allies and partners.

Do you believe our current deterrence policy and force structure effectively accounts for two near peer nuclear competitors? If not, do you believe the U.S. will require additional capabilities, a numerically larger force than exists today, or a combination of both?

I am not currently in a position to assess the adequacy of our current nuclear deterrent. I do, however, believe that our strategic forces must be able to deter multiple nuclear-armed powers, especially the most capable ones. Determining what that requires and what changes that entails in our strategy, modernization plans, and posture would be top priorities for me, if confirmed.

What is your assessment of our regional and extended deterrent capabilities in Europe and Asia and our allies views on them?

I believe it is very important that the United States have nuclear options below the strategic level. My understanding is that our forces in this area have shrunk and atrophied considerably since the end of the Cold War. If confirmed, I would seek to understand what gaps we might have in this area and determine how best to remedy them.

Do you agree that a triad of land, air, and sea based nuclear delivery platforms is consistent with an effective deterrent posture in an era of great power competition with Russia and China?

I do.

If confirmed, do you commit to support full funding for efforts to comprehensively modernize the nation's nuclear deterrent forces, including supplemental capabilities like the sea-launched cruise missile, and accelerate such programs wherever possible?

I do commit to advocating, if confirmed, for fully funding efforts to modernize our nuclear forces, while also meeting the other top priorities for the Department, especially a conventional denial defense force vid-a-vis China and defending the homeland.

Successive Nuclear Posture Reviews have concluded that the adoption of a nuclear “No First Use” (NFU) policy by the United States is not advisable. Do you believe a NFU policy would be appropriate for the United States, and what do you believe would be the implications of such a policy on the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence commitments to our allies?

I do not believe an NFU policy would be advisable, and would advocate against one, if confirmed.

A core tenet of U.S. nuclear strategy since the Cold War has been that only the President of the United States can authorize or terminate the use of U.S. nuclear weapons. This principle is based on preserving civilian control of military forces and ensuring that the United States maintains the ability to respond in a timely manner to strategic attacks. However, there have been periodic calls to revise this policy in order to constrain presidential authority to direct the employment of nuclear weapons. Do you believe the president should be the sole authority for authorizing and terminating the use of U.S. nuclear weapons?

Yes.

The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and the Nuclear Weapons Council (NWC)

By statute, the USD(P) is a member of the Nuclear Weapons Council. In your view, what are the most significant issues the Council should take up in the coming years?

While I do not have access to this information, my impression is that the principal challenges are simultaneously fielding a modern nuclear triad and sustaining legacy nuclear forces while also rebuilding the Cold War-era nuclear weapons infrastructure into a responsive and resilient enterprise. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with the other members of the NWC to address these challenges.

If confirmed, will you commit to fully participating in NWC matters and personally attending meetings?

If confirmed, I look forward to Policy’s ongoing active involvement in the NWC and ensuring it has top level attention.

The NNSA is responsible for maintaining the nation’s nuclear weapons stockpile and meeting military requirements for nuclear weapons, which are established through the interagency NWC. NNSA’s principal challenge over the next 20 years is to rebuild the

Cold War-era U.S. nuclear weapons infrastructure into a responsive and resilient enterprise.

Do you support the recapitalization of the NNSA's capabilities to design, manufacture, and sustain an effective nuclear weapons stockpile?

Yes, I support the recapitalization and revitalization of NNSA infrastructure for improved and accelerated design, manufacture, and sustainment of the nuclear weapons stockpile.

Do you support continued collaboration with the United Kingdom in the maintenance of its independent nuclear deterrent?

Yes.

If confirmed, will you commit to working with the other members of the NWC and the interagency to ensure that annual budgets adequately support the modernization and sustainment of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile?

I do.

The Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act restructured the existing Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Defense Programs into the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear Deterrence, Chemical, and Biological Defense Policy and Programs. Congress took this action to cut through bureaucratic stovepipes in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and designate a single official as the principal civilian staff assistant responsible for nuclear policies, programs, and operations.

If confirmed, will you commit to expeditiously implementing this reform and working with the Secretary of Defense, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, and the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition & Sustainment to ensure resources, personnel, and policies are reallocated and revised to support the standup of the Assistant Secretary?

I am committed to working with stakeholders in the Department to establish the new structure consistent with statutory authority. If confirmed, I would work with OSD colleagues to keep Congress informed on the status of DoD's efforts and would welcome insights and inputs from Members.

Arms Control

Arms control, when effective and verifiable, has been a valuable tool for managing competition and international security concerns. In contrast, unverifiable arms control regimes observed by only one party can generate instability.

Do you believe that further reductions should be taken only within the context of a formal, verifiable arms control agreement with Russia, China and other nuclear-armed powers?

The United States should pursue arms control when it is in U.S. interests to do so. Specifically, DoD should seek arms control agreements that enhance U.S. security, are stabilizing, and are verifiable.

What are your views on the military significance of Russian tactical nuclear forces not covered by the New START Treaty and whether arms control measures can adequately address them?

Russian tactical nuclear weapons pose a serious challenge to NATO security and potentially give Moscow significant advantages in a limited war. Future arms control engagements with Moscow, if they are initiated, should take these forces into careful and serious account.

The first Trump administration considered an overall cap on the number of nuclear warheads between the U.S. and Russia rather than platform specific limitations.

What are your views on this approach? How does China's nuclear expansion affect this approach?

The United States should pursue arms control when it is in U.S. interests to do so. I believe any future nuclear arms control effort must fully account for China's dramatic nuclear expansion.

What is your current assessment of the New START Treaty and the likelihood of any follow-on nuclear arms control treaties with either Russia or China?

My understanding is that both sides have ceased implementation of the New START Treaty's verification mechanisms, and the United States is unable to confirm that Russia is abiding by all of the Treaty's limits. I believe the United States should be open to arms control with Russia and China *if* such measures genuinely promote U.S. interests and security and those of our allies. I am not in a position at this stage to assess the likelihood of such measures with Moscow and/or Beijing.

Do you believe that the United States should consider accepting limitations on its missile defense, cyber, space, or conventional power projection capabilities in order to obtain an agreement with Russia or China on nuclear weapons reductions?

While I believe it is imprudent to rule anything out in considering negotiations, I am highly skeptical about such potential constraints on U.S. forces. My sense is that arms control has been most successful from the U.S. point of view when focused on nuclear forces.

Space

China and Russia are training and equipping their military space forces and fielding new

anti-satellite weapons to hold U.S. and allied space operations and activities at risk, even as they push for international agreements on the non-weaponization of space.

In your view, how would you characterize the strategic environment as it pertains to the space domain?

Space is vital for U.S. military operations. China, in particular, as well as Russia have become far more active and capable in space. Enabling U.S. military operations in, from, and through space in the face of these challenges thus must be a top priority for the Department.

How would you assess current DOD readiness to counter adversary activities in space?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue, and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

What do you perceive as the most significant threats to U.S. national security space satellites? To commercial space systems owned by U.S. companies?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question, but I believe Chinese and Russian and counterspace capabilities are the most formidable dangers.

The DOD is increasingly reliant on commercial space systems which can become enemy combatants in a time of conflict.

Do you have concerns about over-reliance on commercial systems supporting DOD operations, especially in a time of conflict who may find it in the companies best commercial interest to cease support to the Department?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question, I see it as an important issue, and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

What are the Department's responsibilities in defense of U.S commercial assets in space, especially those the DOD is employing in a time of conflict?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue, and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

Do you believe the Department should offer indemnity to commercial companies supporting DOD operations?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I

see it as an important issue, and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

If confirmed, would you support the development of offensive and defensive space control capabilities to counter threats against such assets?

Yes, and I would advocate for such capabilities.

Space systems, like other military systems, rely on the availability of sufficient frequency spectrum that is becoming increasingly scarce. If confirmed, how would you work with the Military Departments and Services, the Joint Staff, and other DOD Components to ensure that the Department's frequency spectrum requirements are accounted for and protected in interagency discussions about potential spectrum auctions?

Access to spectrum is essential to mission effectiveness and vital to our national security. Spectrum is the cornerstone of success in all warfighting domains and, if confirmed, I would always advocate for the requirements of the Joint Force. If confirmed, I would collaborate with Department senior leadership and interagency stakeholders to ensure DoD's continued ability to carry out its critical national security missions.

Electronic Warfare

Advances by Russia and China in electronic warfare, particularly in tactical warfighting scenarios, have highlighted Recent attention has been given Department-wide to the importance of electronic warfare, given its use in Ukraine and the importance which China and Russia has placed on it as a tactical warfighting element. What are your views on this matter?

Electronic warfare is a critical part of modern warfare. Although I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question, I see it as an important issue, and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer once I have been briefed on the matter.

Cyber Policy and Authorities

What do you see as the primary cyber policy challenges for the Department and what suggestions do you have for addressing them?

My understanding is that China poses the most significant cyber threat to the Department and to the Nation in cyberspace. Other nation-states, including Russia, Iran, and North Korea, also present cyber threats.

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question of how to meet these cyber challenges, but I see it as an important issue, and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

As pertaining to cyber policies and governance, what is your understanding of the USD(P)'s relationship with:

- **The Commander of U.S. Cyber Command**

My understanding is that the Commander of U.S. Cyber Command is responsible for the planning and execution of military cyberspace missions, serving as the cyberspace operations joint force provider and joint force trainer. If confirmed, I would look forward to working closely with the Commander of U.S. Cyber Command on all policy issues affecting the Command's ability to achieve national security objectives.

- **The DOD Chief Information Officer**

My understanding is that the DoD Chief Information Officer (DoD CIO) is the principal staff assistant and senior advisor to the Secretary of Defense and Deputy Secretary of Defense for information technology (IT) and spectrum. If confirmed, I would intend to foster a close relationship with the DoD CIO to strengthen governance of information systems, information technology, spectrum matters, networking, information assurance, cybersecurity, communicates, and cyber capability architectures of the Department.

- **The Military Service Principal Cyber Advisors**

My understanding of the role of the Military Service Principal Cyber Advisors (PCA) is to address cyber readiness, capabilities, budget, and strategy for their respective services. If confirmed, I would plan to work closely with the Service PCAs, through the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Cyber Policy (ASD(CP)) in his or her role as the Principal Cyber Advisor to the Secretary of Defense, on developing and implementing policies and strategies to synchronize these efforts across the Department of Defense.

- **The Director for the Defense Cyber Crime Center (DC3)**

My understanding is that the Defense Cyber Crime Center (DC3) is a Federal Cyber Center, and the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy oversees the Department of Defense's role as the Sector Risk Management Agency for the Defense Industrial Base (DIB). Both roles share responsibility for defense critical infrastructure protection matters. If confirmed, I would ensure that we are fully aligned in efforts to protect the DIB from malicious cyber activity.

- **The Director of Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) at DHS**

My understanding is that the DoD's relationship with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is essential to ensuring the cybersecurity of U.S. critical infrastructure systems. If confirmed, I would ensure a constructive relationship with DHS that encourages expanded coordination and communication between the Departments. I would also ensure DoD is postured to address requests for assistance from DHS and other Federal civilian agencies.

- **The National Cyber Director**

My understanding is that the National Cyber Director is the principal advisor to the President on cybersecurity policy and strategy and leads whole-of-government coordination of programs and policies to improve the cybersecurity posture of the United States, increase information and communications technology security, understand and deter malicious cyber activity, and advance diplomatic and other efforts to develop norms and international consensus around responsible state behavior in cyberspace, among other matters. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with the Office of the National Cyber Director to achieve the President's cybersecurity objectives and build an enduring advantage for the Nation in cyberspace.

The FY23 NDAA created the position of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Cyber Policy to elevate the visibility and advocacy of cyber issues, including within the Policy bureaucracy.

What are your views on the position and what role will it have in the policy priorities within your office?

My understanding is that the ASD(CP) is the senior official responsible for overall supervision of DoD policy for cyber issues as specified in 10 U.S.C. §138 and serves concurrently as the Principal Cyber Advisor to the Secretary of Defense as described in 10 U.S.C. §392a. The ASD(CP) oversees two subordinate offices: the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Cyber Policy (DASD Cyber Policy) and the Office of the Principal Cyber Advisor (OPCA).

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question as to this office's role in the policy priorities in OSD(P), but I see it as an important issue, and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

Do you believe that position is adequately resourced and staffed to meet its responsibilities, especially in comparison to the resources and staffing of other assistant secretary positions within your purview?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue, and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

What is your understanding of how the authorities for the ASD for Cyber Policy are deconflicted with the information assurance responsibilities in the DOD CIO office?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue, and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

Do you have any specific priorities that you intend to have them take the lead on?

At this stage, I do not. If confirmed, I would work closely with the DoD CIO, through the ASD(CP), to ensure the Department is postured to implement the President's priorities in cyberspace.

Given the difficulty in anticipating and defending against cyber attacks, many suggest that the Department of Defense should rely more on a policy of deterrence to protect its and the Nation's critical systems.

Do you believe that deterrence is possible in cyberspace?

I do. As in other domains, deterrence can be made more effective through a combination of denial, resilience, credible threats of retaliation, third party pressure, and other measures. Although not foolproof, I believe this is a fruitful area for policy development and implementation.

Do you believe that the escalation dynamics in cyber differs significantly from our nuclear or other conventional conflict escalation dynamics?

I believe that the fundamentals of escalation and deterrence are, broadly speaking, similar across domains, but naturally the practical nature of escalation and deterrence in a domain like cyber is quite distinct from the nuclear and conventional military domains.

What do you see as the policy, authority or technical limitations potentially impeding our cyberspace deterrence policy?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I believe the Department needs to have the authorities to ensure it can defend the Nation and the joint force. If confirmed, I would look to enable and promote our ability to deter and, as necessary, act effectively and resolutely in cyberspace.

Do you believe that the Department's current capabilities, policies, doctrine, and authorities allow for effective cyber deterrence? If not, what steps should DOD take to address any shortfalls?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

What are your views on deterrence relationships across domains, and do you believe state actors perceive cross domain threats as credible?

I believe deterrence across domains is certainly possible, though often more difficult. The most effective deterrent threats tend to be closely linked to the form and location of the provocation, although in the past we have effectively employed cross-domain deterrence. It is important that we ensure our threats are credible but also that we not unduly limit our

ability to deter.

In your view, is the current scale and frequency of cyber attacks on the Department and on the Nation tolerable?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question, but I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer. That said, I believe cyber-attacks against the United States are of grave concern, and I would regard it as a critical part of my role, if confirmed, to improve our Nation's defenses and deterrent against them.

In September 2023, DOD released its 2023 Cyber Strategy. The strategy charges DOD to persistently engage malicious cyber actors and other malign threats to U.S. interests in cyberspace.

What role do you envision for DOD and the Cyber Mission Force in defending the nation from an attack in cyberspace? In what ways is this role distinct from those of the homeland security and law enforcement communities?

Although I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question, I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

That said, I understand that DoD partners with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies to protect against and respond to cyberattacks against the Nation. The Cyber Mission Force (CMF) is primarily charged with defending forward while DHS and law enforcement are lead for homeland security with DoD support.

If confirmed, I would review the status of the Cyber Mission Force and ensure that DoD is appropriately postured and resourced to support DHS and law enforcement when requested to protect the Nation from cyberattacks.

I understand DoD and the CMF's priorities are defending against cyber threats with strategic or military implications. This includes threats to the defense industrial base, nuclear command and control, and the ability to project U.S. power globally. Effective national cybersecurity clearly demands close partnership between DoD and other entities, and I would be committed to fostering this collaboration if I am confirmed.

Based on your experience, what do you see as areas where the structure and training of the Cyber Mission Force should evolve to meet emerging cyber threats?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

Are there elements missing from our current approach for offensive and defensive cyber operations that you would recommend we pursue?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question, but I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer. That said, I believe it is critical for the United States to have robust, effective, and second-to-none offensive and defense cyber capabilities and, if confirmed, would focus on ensuring this is the case.

If confirmed, what role should DOD and the Cyber Mission Force have in combating foreign influence operations, especially those conducted via social media?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

That said, I believe it is vital for DoD to focus on its core missions of defending the Nation and the joint force.

I also believe the experience of recent years should make us very skeptical of governmental efforts to engage on social media with the purpose of foreign influence. This has disturbing implications in recent years, and I believe it is important for DoD to zealously guard against any activities that would undermine or infringe on Americans' rights, liberties, or free expression.

What role should DOD and the Cyber Mission Force have in anticipating, preventing, or responding to attacks on U.S. commercial entities?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

Do you consider the recent breaches in telecommunications infrastructure involving Salt Typhoon to be an “act of war” or an espionage operation that falls within *de facto* norms? In your view, does the nature and scope of this intrusion operation merit a stronger or more visible response?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer. If confirmed, I would support the Department's efforts to work with federal law enforcement agencies to review the extent and ramifications of the Salt Typhoon compromise and generate effective and robust response options and to prevent future such intrusions.

What do you conclude from cyber-attacks carried out by Volt Typhoon and Salt Typhoon about the state of our cyber defenses?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

That said, I am greatly concerned about the public reporting on Volt Typhoon and Salt Typhoon. If confirmed, I would work with other elements of DoD and other agencies to ensure we are better defended against such disturbing intrusions.

Do you believe that the National Security Agency and U.S. Cyber Command should be dual-hatted? What are the benefits or disadvantages of this arrangement, in your view? Please explain your answer.

I understand that the dual-hat relationship places the same individual in charge of the National Security Agency (NSA) and CYBERCOM. If confirmed, I would support continued consultations with Congress and DoD leadership on this important issue and work to ensure DoD is appropriately structured to meet the Nation's requirements.

If confirmed, what specific measures would you take to improve cybersecurity culture across the DOD workforce? How would you empower and hold key leaders accountable for improvements in DOD cybersecurity?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question, but I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

If confirmed, what how do you plan to work with the Military Service Principal Cyber Advisors and CIOs in the coordination of cyber policy and the many cyber initiatives across the DOD?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

The NDAA for FY 2021 established the position of National Cyber Director (NCD) to improve coordination and integration across the government in developing cyberspace strategy, policy, plans, and resource allocation.

What is your understanding of how DOD has been supporting the National Cyber Director?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

Do you have suggestions for how you might improve the relationship with the NCD if confirmed?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

Cyber notifications from the Department for sensitive cyber military operations, as required by law, have become increasingly vague and do not provide enough information for the committee to perform adequate oversight of these operations.

If confirmed, what would you do to improve these cyber operations notifications?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer. That said, I am committed to ensuring Congress has the information it needs to conduct adequate oversight.

Are there steps other than improving the written notifications that you would take, if confirmed, to help Congress perform oversight of these critical operations?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

What is your understanding of the process for how the Department might respond to a request for Defense Support to Civilian Authorities (DSCA) when it comes to cyber incident?

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

Integrated Air & Missile Defense

Rapidly growing Russian, Chinese, North Korean, and Iranian missile arsenals are outpacing United States' capabilities for defeating these threats to the homeland, allies, and U.S. forces abroad.

If confirmed as USD(P), what would be your priorities for U.S. missile defense capabilities for the homeland?

If confirmed, my priority would be to deliver on the President's Executive Order issued on January 27, 2025, calling for the development and fielding of a next generation missile defense shield for America. My objective would be to ensure that homeland missile defenses place the burden of escalation upon the adversary, thereby strengthening deterrence and providing greater security for the American people.

In your view, are the roles and responsibilities for Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) appropriately assigned across the Military Services and Defense Agencies?

This is an important issue, and I would, if confirmed, work with all stakeholders to ensure that the roles, responsibilities, and authorities for IAMD are assigned to the right Services and agencies. I support the President's initiative, as outlined in the Executive Order issued on January 27, to review the relevant authorities and organization of the Department to develop and deploy capabilities with necessary speed to develop and deploy a next-generation missile defense shield.

Current U.S. missile defense policy is focused on deterring North Korea and Iran while reserving our nuclear deterrent against missile threats from Russia and China. However, there are growing calls to reevaluate this policy given the changes in the global threat environment, including the 2023 Strategic Posture Commission, which recommended construction of a homeland integrated air and missile defense architecture.

What are your views on this policy, especially in light of Russia's recent statements and actions in Ukraine, as well as China's and North Korea's ongoing expansion of their respective nuclear and missile forces?

Improving U.S. homeland missile defense systems is vital to countering growing rogue state threats from countries like North Korea. The United States must also, however, account for the growth of advanced Chinese and Russian nuclear and missile arsenals. The President's Executive Order 14186 establishes clear policy for the United States to defend the U.S. homeland, its citizens, and its critical infrastructure, against foreign aerial attack from any source. I fully support this policy shift.

If confirmed, how would you ensure the Military Services make the investments required to fulfill their IAMD responsibilities, including for base defense? How would you ensure effective integration of the Services' current capabilities, as well as of the capabilities each is separately developing?

If confirmed, I would work with stakeholders throughout the Department to ensure that the roles and responsibilities for IAMD and base defense are assigned to the right Services and agencies in accordance with the Administration's Executive Order issued on January 27, 2025.

Over the past several years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of unmanned aerial systems operating, both lawfully and unlawfully, in U.S. airspace domestically and over American military installations overseas.

If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure the Department appropriately prioritizes and resources detection and defeat capabilities for UAS that pose a threat to U.S. military assets?

I am aware that the Department recently published a Counter Unmanned Autonomous Systems (UXS) strategy. If confirmed, I would work to ensure policy guidance prioritizes giving commanders the critical information, resourcing, and capabilities they need to defend critical military assets against evolving UAS threats.

If confirmed, will you commit to working with Congress and the interagency to better clarify U.S. government roles and responsibilities for detecting, tracking, and if necessary, defeating, UAS within U.S. airspace?

Yes.

China & the Indo-Pacific

China

The 2022 NDS describes the People’s Republic of China (PRC) as “the most comprehensive and serious challenge to U.S. national security” and states “The PRC seeks to undermine U.S. alliances and security partnership in the Indo-Pacific region, and leverage its growing capabilities, including its economic influence and the People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA) growing strength and military footprint, to coerce its neighbors and threaten their interest.”

How would you characterize the current overall U.S. relationship with China?

I agree that China is “the most comprehensive and serious challenge to U.S. national security.” Conflict with China is not inevitable, but it is very possible. It must be the top priority of the Department to address this challenge, with the goal of achieving and sustaining peace through strength.

China has embarked on an historic military buildup based on its enormous economy, which includes the world’s largest industrial base. It is preparing for confrontation with the United States. The locus of such a war, should it happen, would be the Western Pacific. China is attempting to build an economy that minimizes its exposure to and maximizes its leverage over the outside world. Beijing’s goals appear to be regional hegemony in Asia first, and then global preeminence, supplanting the United States, with devastating ramifications for Americans. This is the nature of the profound challenge.

At the same time, China has deep interests in avoiding war with the United States. Such a war would be extraordinarily risky and costly for China and could be catastrophic. President Trump is pursuing the right approach to Beijing, which is a combination of peace – an openness to dialogue and negotiations, cabining the rivalry rather than unnecessarily intensifying it, and the like – and strength – restoring and focusing our military on deterring China and strengthening our economy, including by diminishing China’s leverage over it.

What do you believe are the objectives of China’s rapid increase in defense spending and its overall military modernization program?

I believe China is preparing for war with the United States in order to have the option to forcibly eject the United States first from the Western Pacific/East Asia region and, from that position of strength, to establish China’s global preeminence. This is not a dead-set

objective, in my view, but one that Beijing would pursue if it could attain it at a reasonable cost.

It is the job of DoD to persuade China that such an effort would fail, making war much less likely because Beijing would see it is futile.

What are the strategic implications of the rapid modernization of Chinese nuclear weapons that are set to potentially triple by 2030, and what approach should the United States take to address those implications, in your view?

China's nuclear breakout, coupled with its massive conventional military buildup and its efforts to make itself economically self-reliant, are profoundly worrying. If China could establish strategic deterrence vis-a-vis the United States while establishing conventional dominance in the Western Pacific, it could attain hegemony over Asia. From there, it could effectively challenge America to establish its global dominance. China's nuclear forces are a crucial part of that strategy.

The United States must respond by modernizing its own nuclear forces, focusing and advancing its conventional forces for a first island chain denial defense, and strongly press its allies – especially Japan and Taiwan – to dramatically increase their defenses.

Is the current posture of U.S. forces in the Indo-Pacific region sufficient to effectively deter aggression by the PRC? Please explain your answer.

I am not currently in a position to give a definitive answer to this important question. I am very concerned, however, that there are solid reasons to worry that the answer is no.

In your assessment, what are the priority investments DOD could make that would implement the NDS and improve the military balance in the Indo-Pacific?

Restoring our military edge for a denial defense along the first island chain must be the top priority for U.S. and Asian allied conventional forces. I am not in a position to say what particular investments are needed for this. But I would stress that we cannot have a single-threaded solution to the problem of China's military challenge. It will take a variety of types of forces, concepts, locations, posture, etc. to effectively deter and, if necessary, give the President credible options to defeat a Chinese assault in the first island chain.

In your view, what are the key areas in which each Military Service must improve in order to provide the necessary capabilities and capacity to the Joint Force to prevail in a potential conflict with China?

I am not in a position to say what particular investments are needed for this. But I would stress that we cannot have a single-threaded solution to the problem of China's military challenge. It will take a variety of types of forces, concepts, locations, posture, etc. to effectively deter and, if necessary, give the President credible options to defeat a Chinese assault in the first island chain.

What is your assessment of the current state of U.S.-China military-to-military relations?

I am not in a position to answer this question. I can, however, express my skepticism as to the materiality of such relations, given that Sino-U.S. rivalry is rooted in geopolitical factors and, in both China and the United States, the top authorities are civilians.

What do you believe should be the objectives of U.S.-China military-to-military dialogue? What are the limitations on this kind of dialogue?

Please see the response to the previous question.

In what technology areas are you most concerned about the erosion of U.S. advantages?

Based on public sources, I am concerned about the erosion of U.S. technology advantages more or less across the board. I am of the view that we should not underestimate China's abilities in the technology area or otherwise.

Should the United States revisit or change its "one China" policy, in your view?

The President has made clear his agenda of America First and peace through strength. The "one China" policy, in my view, is perfectly satisfactory for those purposes. Changing that policy risks dramatically intensifying the already very dangerous rivalry with China for negligible benefits to Americans.

What should the United States do, both unilaterally, and in coordination with allies and partners, to counter the increasing challenge posed by China in the South China and East China Seas?

The most important thing the United States and its allies can do is ensure they have sufficient military forces to conduct a denial defense against a Chinese assault against one of our allies. If we do this, then Beijing's attempts to expand its influence and dominate its neighbors will be resistible. If we do not, they will not. Other elements of national power will be important, but this – military power – is the crucial foundation.

What is your current assessment of the risk of a critical logistics failure in any conflict with China?

I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question but believe it is a very concerning possibility.

What is your assessment of China's increasing military presence overseas, including its base in Djibouti and other infrastructure projects across the Indian Ocean?

I believe China is very likely to seek to expand its military presence overseas in pursuit of

an ability to secure its international trade and ultimately establish hegemony over Asia and pursue preeminence globally. Beijing has sought basing locations not only in its region, but increasingly around the world. China poses ultimately a global challenge, but the nub of the military problem is in the Western Pacific. If the United States and its allies can check Beijing's military power projection there, then China's broader presence can be advantageously managed. If the Western Pacific and Asia fall under China's control, however, then China is likely to be in a very strong position to expand its dominating influence much farther.

What non-military activities and resources do you believe are necessary to effectively address the challenge posed by China? Do you believe these current activities are sufficient?

Non-military efforts are critical to meeting the China challenge. Diplomacy, economics, trade, and many other tools of statecraft all play crucial roles. Our military response is foundational and central, it is not exclusive. Ideally, if we get the military balance right in the Western Pacific, it will recede in importance.

The ability of U.S. ground forces to hold at risk adversary ships and aircraft; intercept missiles aimed at our ships, airfields, ports and other fixed facilities; and provide electronic warfare and communications support for our air and naval forces could enable the United States to present adversaries with our own "anti-access/area denial" (A2/AD) challenge.

What should be the role of ground forces in creating an A2/AD challenge for adversaries within the First Island Chain in the Indo-Pacific?

I believe ground forces play a very important role in a denial defense in the Asia-Pacific. Ground forces are difficult to dislodge, can present effective and different military capabilities, interact closely with local allies and partners, and present other advantages. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with the Secretaries of the Army and Navy and other DoD officials to encourage and enable the Army and Marine Corps to move in this direction.

Do you believe the current ground force posture in INDOPACOM is adequate? If not, what would you recommend to bolster it?

I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question but, if confirmed, would make a point of assessing and engaging on it.

Do you support the Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI), including the realignment of some U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam and the build-up of facilities at other locations?

I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question but, if confirmed, would make a point of assessing and engaging on it.

As Chinese aggression and nuclear capabilities both increase, do you assess that we

have adequate military and national security crisis communication channels with senior Chinese leadership to avoid or at least mitigate the threat of rapid strategic escalation?

My understanding is that the United States and China have functional crisis communications channels, including the Department of Defense's Defense Telephone Link for communications with the PLA. Whether and when senior leaders in China would use these channels during a crisis is not, however, clear. It is important that China joins the United States in initiating and responding to requests for calls in a timely manner to mitigate and avoid the threat of rapid escalation.

Guam & Oceania

What is your understanding of the importance of Guam in a U.S. response to contingencies in the Western Pacific and to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command operations generally?

I am not in a position to provide a detailed answer, but my understanding is that Guam's role in U.S. military operations in the Western Pacific is crucial for these purposes on multiple levels.

What is your understanding of the state of U.S. military infrastructure, facilities, and defensive capabilities on Guam?

I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question but, if confirmed, would make it a priority to assess and engage on this issue.

Do you agree that it is critical for infrastructure on Guam to be constructed in a resilient manner so that the U.S. military can utilize Guam as a power projection platform in the Indo-Pacific?

Yes.

What is your understanding of U.S. cooperative efforts across Oceania, and do you believe such efforts are important to long term competition with China in the region?

I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question, but I do believe engaging with Oceania is critical for U.S. military operations in the Pacific as well as the broader strategic competition with China.

Taiwan

How do you assess the current cross-strait relationship between China and Taiwan, and how can the U.S. help prevent miscalculation on either side?

I believe there is an increasing threat of a Chinese assault on Taiwan. Beijing is committed to unification with Taiwan for multiple reasons and appears to be resolutely pursuing the ability to forcibly seize the island.

If confirmed, I would see it as a cardinal responsibility to ensure the success of President Trump's policy that China will not attack Taiwan during his tenure. To do this, America must prioritize a denial defense of Taiwan and focus its military assets and resources on that objective. Meantime, Taiwan and Japan in particular must dramatically upgrade their defenses for such a scenario. At the same time, the United States should stick to its "one China" policy while seeking to engage Beijing from a position of strength, as President Trump has already done by reaching out to President Xi Jinping.

How do you assess the current military balance across the Taiwan Strait? What do you believe should be the priorities for U.S. military assistance to Taiwan? Do you think Taiwan is making appropriate investments in its defensive capabilities and if not, what changes would you recommend?

The military balance has deteriorated dramatically from Taiwan's perspective. Accordingly, Taiwan should be dramatically increasing its defense capabilities focused on denying an invasion and riding out a blockade. Taiwan, however, is not doing nearly enough of this. As President Trump has made clear, Taiwan must do much more for its own defense, and focus its efforts on capabilities laser-focused on a denial defense. This is essential for enabling a potential American intervention on Taiwan's behalf.

Some have argued that the United States should explicitly state that we would respond militarily to any Chinese use of force against Taiwan as a means to deter such actions. In your view, what would be the benefits and risks of such a policy change?

I believe the costs of explicitly committing to Taiwan's defense outweigh its benefits. Current U.S. policy, including the Taiwan Relations Act, the Six Assurances, and decades of statements and activities, makes clear the deep interests the United States has in Taiwan's security. The Department has already rightly specified Taiwan as the "pacing scenario" for the joint force. Together, this indicates a very strong interest in Taiwan's autonomy. Taiwan falling to aggressive Chinese action would constitute a severe blow to American interests.

At the same time, going further than the current declaratory policy poses serious risks on a number of fronts, with limited benefits. Such a move could inflame relations with Beijing, and even offer a pretext for military action. It also risks sending a signal of approval for Taiwan's laggardly efforts on its defense, with dire implications for our collective efforts to rapidly strengthen deterrence and reduce operational risk to U.S. forces.

Ultimately, I would see my role, if confirmed, as providing the President and the Secretary with the best military options to back up the policy of deterring and, if necessary, denying an attack on Taiwan at a reasonable level of cost and risk for the American people. Ultimately this would be a Presidential decision.

Japan

What is your assessment of our military-to-military relationship with Japan?

Japan is a vital ally for the United States. It is the largest economy in our alliance network and critically positioned along the first island chain.

Military-to-military relations appear solid, but I believe need to be much further deepened, moving toward a model of integration along the lines of what exists with the South Korean military. Fortunately, there is momentum to build on from the efforts of the last few years under the previous Administration and Japan's own worsening threat perception.

In late 2022, Japan signaled a significant change in its defense posture with the release of a new National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, and the Defense Buildup Program.

In your view, how can the United States best support Japan's defense transformation in line with its strategic documents?

Japan's strategic shift is critical and most welcome, but it is inadequate. Japan is moving toward spending approximately 2% of GDP on defense by 2027. This is manifestly inadequate. As the President has rightly said, allies need to spend far more on their own defense, especially those that are most acutely threatened. The President has suggested that Taiwan spend 10% and that European NATO spend 5%. In that context, it makes little sense for Japan, which is directly threatened by China and North Korea, to spend only 2%.

Japan should be spending at least 3% of GDP on defense as soon as possible and accelerating the revamp of its military to focus on a denial defense of its own archipelago and collective defense in its region.

The best way for the United States to support this shift is to make these priorities and urgency clear to Tokyo in a constructive but pressing fashion.

Do you support the efforts by the United States and Japan to establish a modernized command-and-control structure, to include an improved U.S. Forces Japan?

I do, and I believe it should be accelerated and deepened. Japan must take a much more active and expanded role in its own defense and collective defense in the Western Pacific.

Do you agree that the Department of Defense should move as fast as possible to establish a new command-and-control structure with Japan, considering its strategic importance as a capable ally in the Indo-Pacific?

Yes.

The Korean Peninsula

How would you describe the value to U.S. national security interests of the U.S. Republic of Korea alliance?

The U.S.-ROK alliance is critical for U.S. interests, and a foundation stone of the U.S. geopolitical position in Asia.

It is important that this critical alliance continue to be updated to reflect the broader geopolitical and military circumstances the United States and the ROK face.

What is your assessment of the threat posed by North Korea to regional and global stability?

North Korea poses a severe direct military threat to South Korea on multiple levels. It also poses a direct nuclear, missile, and unconventional threat to the United States, Japan, and other allies.

Do you believe the transfer of wartime operational control from the U.S. to the Republic of Korea should be conditions-based? If so, and if confirmed, what conditions would you recommend that the Secretary of Defense delineate as the threshold for transfer of control?

If confirmed, I would need to review this delicate issue carefully. On the whole, however, I believe that President Trump's vision of foreign policy involves empowering capable and willing allies like South Korea, and thus I support efforts to bolster South Korea's role in the alliance.

In your view, are there additional steps that DOD could take to improve U.S. and allied defenses against North Korea's missile capabilities, including through trilateral cooperation between the United States, the Republic of Korea, and Japan?

If confirmed, I would review this important issue and make recommendations based on that, particularly building on the President's missile defense initiative.

What are your views on the value of U.S. extended deterrence assurances to the Republic of Korea in deterring Chinese and North Korean aggression, and in helping prevent further proliferation?

I believe the U.S.-ROK alliance is critical and that together we face a severe threat from North Korea. We must ensure the strategic posture deterring and defending on our behalf and South Korea's is credible and stout. Consistent with the President and Secretary's approach around the world, I believe we need to be clear-eyed, frank, and realistic with our allies about the nature of the threats we face and the allocation of responsibilities among ourselves, in the service of ensuring our alliances are best defended and strategically sustainable. If confirmed, I would review this matter carefully and approach this question in that spirit.

If the Chinese and North Korean nuclear arsenals continue to expand in quantity and capability, do you believe the U.S. should explore additional options for expanding strategic cooperation with the Republic of Korea.

Yes, I believe we should do so presently, given that both China and North Korea are dramatically increasing their nuclear arsenals.

Australia

What is your assessment of our military-to-military relationship with Australia?

My understanding is that it is excellent.

Australia is a core U.S. ally. It has the right strategic approach as reflected in its strategic documents. The main concern the United States should press with Australia, consistent with the President's approach, is higher defense spending. Australia is currently well below the 3% level advocated for NATO by NATO Secretary General Rutte, and Canberra faces a far more powerful challenge in China.

In 2021, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States announced the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) partnership with the objective of helping Australia to acquire a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines and increasing collaboration on a range of advanced technology initiatives.

What are your views of the AUKUS partnership?

As Secretary Hegseth has said, maintaining deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region is not a mission the United States can achieve on our own. Interoperable allies and partners are critical to our forward posture, military capabilities, and combined efforts. AUKUS is a model of the type of cooperation we need to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

I have expressed concerns, as I understand, shared by many on this Committee, regarding U.S. attack submarine force structure and production rates. I believe we must increase U.S. attack submarine production to meet U.S. military requirements in the Indo-Pacific region – to ensure our servicemen and women are as well-armed as possible in the event of war – as well as to meet our obligations under AUKUS Pillar I. If confirmed, I would look forward to learning in more detail about the efforts the Navy is leading to improve submarine construction and sustainment rates and the steps all three involved countries are taking to meet important milestones in the coming years.

I also agree with Secretary Hegseth that AUKUS is a model for how we should engage with our closest allies and partners when it comes to technology cooperation, scaling production, and integrating our industrial bases.

In your view, are there improvements, clarifications, or enhancements that need to be made to effectively implement the AUKUS partnership as intended?

If confirmed, I would look forward to learning in greater detail the progress that has been made under AUKUS and commit that I would work avidly to remove red tape and knock down barriers so that our cooperation and integration can move forward expeditiously. I commit to working closely with Congress to ensure we have the authorities and resources required.

The Philippines

What is your assessment of our military-to-military relationship with the Philippines?

The U.S. alliance with the Philippines is critical. My understanding is that the military-to-military relationship with Manila is strong and continuing to improve.

In your view, are there opportunities to improve our military-to-military cooperation with the Armed Forces of the Philippines, particularly as it relates to issues in the South China Sea?

I understand that our military-to-military cooperation with the Armed Forces of the Philippines continues to deepen, especially as the Philippines undertakes an ambitious 15-year military modernization program. If confirmed, I would work to identify new avenues of cooperation with Manila.

India

What is your assessment of our military-to-military relationship with India?

The U.S. deepening partnership with India is of profound importance. If confirmed, I would strive to accelerate and expand this critical partnership. As part of this, I would seek to deepen military-to-military ties.

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or “Quad” between the United States, Japan, India, and Australia is designed to uphold the international rules-based order, ensure freedom of navigation, promote democratic values, improve information sharing, and enhance technological collaboration. What are your views on the Quad and, in your view, how can it be more effectively utilized as a multilateral platform for addressing challenges in the Indo-Pacific region?

I think the Quad is very useful and important, and would, if confirmed, seek to expand and elevate its efforts.

Russia, NATO, & Europe

European Deterrence Initiative (EDI)

Since 2014 the NDAA has authorized billions of dollars each year under the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI).

In your view, how have EDI investments improved U.S. and allied capability and capacity to deter Russian aggression in the European theater?

If confirmed, I would review the allocation of resources across the different theaters and recommend investments that best protect U.S. interests, deter conflict, and leverage the investments of our allies to provide for their own defense.

Do you believe continued, robust funding for programs under each of EDI's five lines of effort is required to achieve U.S. national security objectives, including implementation of the NDS, in Europe?

It is my understanding that the EDI's lines of effort – increased presence, exercises and training, enhanced prepositioning, improved infrastructure, and building partner capacity – have contributed to the capabilities and readiness of U.S. forces in EUCOM, of NATO allies, and of regional partners. If confirmed, I would review the resource requirements necessary to achieve our national security objectives in Europe in light of our global strategic and defense priorities as indicated by President Trump and Secretary Hegseth.

What is your understanding of the mechanisms by which the Department measures progress and evaluates the return on the investments under EDI and its five lines of effort?

I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question but, if confirmed, would investigate and engage on this issue.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

In your view, how important to U.S. strategic interests is the U.S. commitment to its obligations under the North Atlantic Treaty, especially Article 5?

I believe NATO is of profound importance to the United States. America's Article 5 commitment is of special importance in this context, and I believe the United States should take that commitment with grave seriousness.

At the same time, it is absolutely essential that the European allies and Canada actually step up and live up to their own Article 3 and other commitments. NATO at its inception was never meant to be such a lopsided arrangement, with the United States doing most of the spending and providing even more of the high-end combat power. Nor was this the case during the Cold War when the Western European allies fielded very impressive and large militaries. This is neither fair to Americans, nor sustainable, given the threats America faces in other theaters, the force construct of the U.S. armed forces, and the bipartisan consensus here that China must be the priority. Moreover, Europe with its very large economies can do much more and is already, in large part thanks to President Trump's leadership, moving to do so.

In my view, this is precisely the way to sustain NATO for the long-haul: Much greater responsibility by Europe for its own self-defense, with America continuing to play a very important role in the Alliance. If confirmed, I would advocate for this approach, seeking to work closely with European and Canadian allies to manage this transition to a more balanced Alliance while ensuring deterrence and defense capabilities across time.

What do you view as the essential strategic objectives of the NATO Alliance and what do you perceive to be the greatest challenges in meeting those objectives?

NATO is and should refocus on being a military alliance to defend the member states in the Euro-Atlantic area. The greatest challenge to meeting those objectives is the combination of the recovery of the now battle-hardened Russian military while too much of Europe (with noble exceptions like Poland and Finland) have not used the time to rearm to levels close to what they fielded in the Cold War, even as China poses a grave and near-term threat to U.S. and allied interests in the Pacific.

What are your views on the importance of Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty which states any “European state in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area”?

Article 10 outlines the conditions European States must meet to be considered for NATO membership, which requires unanimous consent of all 32 Allies. In my view, any consideration of expanded membership must be evaluated through the lens of the strategic interests of the United States, measuring the benefits of any such admission against the costs and risks of doing so.

In December 2020, NATO reaffirmed the Allies’ longstanding position that, “as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance.” Do you believe this principle requires the United States to continue to deploy nuclear weapons in NATO countries?

I support the principle and believe U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe play a key role in extended deterrence.

Do you believe the existing NATO nuclear force posture should be reexamined given Russia's reported deployment of tactical weapons into Belarus?

These reports are concerning and should be carefully considered in light of what I believe should be continual reevaluations of NATO’s force posture, including its nuclear force posture.

If confirmed, how will you encourage NATO Allies to continue to maintain the positive trajectory on defense spending?

In line with the President’s approach, through clarity of message backed by actions consistent with that message. I have spent countless hours in recent years communicating to Europeans in writing, in person, and online the reality of our strategic and defense situation and what it means for them. In a word, the reality of our situation and the recovery of Russian military power means that European Allies must take primary responsibility for defense of the continent. That begins with increasing defense spending. 2% is only a modest start. As President Trump has said and European leaders now readily admit, it is not enough. Increasing European and Canadian defense spending to 5% is urgently needed. Also critical is expanding our defense industrial base capacity on both sides of the Atlantic. Moreover, we must look not only at spending inputs, as important as those are, but real military capability outputs. Europe must field real and large-scale combat capabilities as quickly as possible. They can do this – the West German military of 1988

is one clear example. Now rhetoric must become reality. I believe this is the way to sustain NATO over the long haul and ensure European security.

In your view, how important is it to align the defense efforts of the European Union (EU) and NATO?

I believe the United States should be open to a greater EU role in European defense. First, the EU will have to be involved in any increased spending on defense as well as efforts to revamp Europe's defense industrial base. Second, if America is rightly insisting on higher defense spending by Europe, it is only fair for us to be more flexible about the modalities by which Europe does so. Although I do not have specific recommendations on this front, this would be the spirit in which I would approach the matter, if confirmed.

What is your assessment of the adequacy of integrated air and missile defense capabilities and the capacity to defend critical assets in the EUCOM theater? If not, what are the areas of highest risk?

I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question but, if confirmed, would make it a priority to assess and engage on this issue in light of our global defense requirements in this critical area.

Russia

In your view, which EUCOM and NATO activities most deter Russia and mitigate the Russian threat to NATO Allies and partners?

I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. I understand the Department of Defense has begun conducting a global force posture review to assess the effectiveness of existing missions and forces assigned to EUCOM. If confirmed, I would actively lead this effort, including addressing this question.

In your assessment, are there capability and/or capacity shortfalls in current U.S. posture which affect the U.S. ability to achieve U.S. national security objectives in Europe?

I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. I understand the Department of Defense has begun conducting a global force posture review to assess the effectiveness of existing missions and forces assigned to EUCOM. If confirmed, I would actively lead this effort, including addressing this question.

What aspects of U.S. and NATO force posture do you assess as having the most significant deterrent effect on Russia?

I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. I understand the Department of Defense has begun conducting a global force posture review to assess the effectiveness of existing missions and forces assigned to EUCOM. If confirmed, I would actively lead this effort, including addressing this question.

What more should DOD do to counter Russian malign influence in Europe?

I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. I understand the Department of Defense has begun conducting a global force posture review to assess the effectiveness of existing missions and forces assigned to EUCOM. If confirmed, I would actively lead this effort, including addressing this question.

In your assessment, does the United States have sufficient air and missile defense capability and capacity to defend critical infrastructure in EUCOM? What are the areas of highest risk?

I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. I understand the Department of Defense has begun conducting a global force posture review to assess the effectiveness of existing missions and forces assigned to EUCOM. If confirmed, I would actively lead this effort, including addressing this question.

At the 2024 NATO Summit in Washington, DC, the NATO Heads of State and Government issued a declaration identifying China as a “decisive enabler of Russia’s war against Ukraine” and calling out China’s malicious hybrid, cyber, and space activities and nuclear advancements.

What is your view of the current state of Russia-China relations, particularly the “no limits partnership” on political, economic, and military cooperation?

I believe the Sino-Russian partnership is now deep and has many features of an alliance.

How in your view, does this relationship impact U.S. national security interests in Europe and around the globe?

The effect of this partnership, especially in concert with their joint deepened relations with Tehran and Pyongyang, is very dangerous.

In particular, this heightens the risk of simultaneous aggression against the United States and its allies. Military conflict spurred by one of these actors could be used deliberately or as an opportunity for another to attack a U.S. ally or allies if they believe U.S. and allied forces are tied down and resources significantly depleted. Prioritization of deterring China, as enshrined in both the 2018 and 2022 NDS, must go from a statement to a reality as the top strategic objective for the United States, making European leadership in deterring Russia in Europe more vital than ever. This is how we can not only strengthen the NATO alliance but ensure that the United States and our allies are collectively postured to deter effectively or, if necessary, prevail in conflict in multiple theaters simultaneously.

Ukraine

In February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale, unprovoked, and illegal invasion of Ukraine.

How do you assess the trajectory of the conflict in Ukraine and in your opinion what role should the Department of Defense play going forward?

The war in Ukraine appears, from public reports including reports on U.S. Government assessments, to have been trending in Russia's favor for some time.

President Trump has made it a priority to end the war in Ukraine as quickly as possible, and I support that effort. If confirmed, I would help ensure that the Department of Defense supports the President and his team in pursuing that goal.

In your view, what would be the implications for European security and for U.S. national security interests if Russia were to prevail in Ukraine?

Russia remains a serious military threat to U.S. and European security, and thus credible deterrence remains a strategic imperative. As President Trump has repeatedly emphasized, it is vitally important that our European Allies take the lead in providing security assistance to Ukraine and deterring further Russian aggression, including by rapidly increasing their own defense spending and production.

Do you believe it is important for the United States to continue providing security assistance to Ukraine, including potentially after the conclusion of the war, as a means to help Ukraine defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity and deter future Russian aggression?

If confirmed, I would support the President, the Secretary, and the Administration team in seeking to forge a sustainable end to the war in Ukraine.

I believe it is important for Ukraine to be well-armed to support its self-defense, even after the war is concluded. As the President and Secretary have made clear, the United States has already contributed a very great deal to Ukraine's defense, and the United States has urgent and major priorities elsewhere, especially the threat from China and securing our own territorial integrity. In light of this, the solution, as the President has rightly emphasized, is for Europe to lead on these efforts. If confirmed, I would make it a priority to advance this overall approach.

Transnational Criminal Organizations

Transnational criminal organizations are engaged in a wide variety of illicit activities, including money laundering, human trafficking, illicit financial flows, illegal trade in natural resources and wildlife, and trade in illegal drugs, precursors and weapons. These activities reach not only the entirety of the Western Hemisphere, but increasingly throughout the world. In your assessment, how has the threat to the United States from transnational criminal organizations evolved?

I believe transnational criminal organizations, including those transporting fentanyl, pose a direct

threat to Americans. I believe this is a very important matter for the U.S. Government to address. The United States should do so in ways that are practical, results-oriented, and sustainable. In light of this, the lead organizations are likely normally to be non-DoD. That said, DoD can and should play an important role. If confirmed, I would actively support efforts to reduce the threat posed by such groups, including fentanyl traffickers and the cartels.

Arctic

What, in your view, are U.S. defense interests in the Arctic region?

Our primary defense interest in the Arctic is to secure the U.S. homeland. The Arctic region encompasses the northern approaches to North America, and our footprint in Alaska enables vital early warning and missile defense infrastructure. The Arctic is an important region for U.S. power projection to the Indo-Pacific region and to Europe as well, and the region includes significant maritime chokepoints, such as the Bering Strait, which is becoming more economically and militarily relevant.

What threat, if any, do Russian and Chinese activities in the Arctic pose to U.S. security interests?

The Arctic region has transformed into a venue for strategic competition, with adversaries showing increasing appetite to challenge the United States in ways that could place the U.S. homeland at risk. The CCP is attempting to strengthen its access and influence in the Arctic through a range of diplomatic, economic, and military activities, including a robust scientific research program with likely civil-military applications. In addition to China, Russia continues to focus on the Arctic region, including basing some of its strategic nuclear forces there. Russia is modernizing its Arctic military infrastructure, investing in weapons systems and new sensor capabilities, and increasing its exercises in the region. Of particular concern is the growing operational cooperation between China and Russia in the vicinity of Alaska, as illustrated by the joint People's Liberation Army Air Force and Russian Air Force bomber patrol operating in the Alaska Air Defense Identification Zone in July 2024.

How can the U.S. best leverage and enable our partners in the Arctic to counter Russian and Chinese malign activities in the region?

I believe we should focus our allies' efforts on areas where their interests and capabilities are naturally strong, rather than try to induce everyone to act everywhere as if their interests are all the same. The Arctic includes the territory of six NATO Allies: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. These allies, as well as others like the United Kingdom, have the interests and will to act in the Arctic. Thus, I would urge these allies to bolster their capacities to act in the region, alongside our own efforts.

Does the Department of Defense have the appropriate capabilities, relationships, and assets to meet its goals in the Arctic? If not, what changes would you propose to better position DOD to support the achievement of U.S. national security objectives in the Arctic?

I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. I understand the Department

of Defense has begun conducting a global force posture review. If confirmed, I would actively lead this effort, including addressing this important question.

Defense Support to Civilian Authorities

Civil authorities may request DOD support for domestic disasters and certain counter-drug operations as well as in managing the consequences of a terrorist event employing a weapon of mass destruction.

In your view, are the procedures by which other Federal, State, and Local agencies request DOD support efficient and effective?

I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. I understand that the procedures by which DoD receives requests from civil authorities, or qualifying entities, allows for appropriate coordination of the request across DoD. DoD should encourage its partners to, where possible, work with DoD in advance of a formal request to ensure clarity of requirements and use of appropriate legal authorities.

In your view, are DOD procedures for evaluating and approving the provision of support requested by a civil authority efficient, effective, and timely?

I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. I understand that the procedures by which DoD receives and reviews requests from civil authorities, or qualifying entities, allows for efficient, effective, and timely review of the request to ensure that such support is in the national interest, the use of appropriate legal authorities, that support can be adequately resourced, and assess impacts to military readiness. DoD should encourage its partners to, where possible, work with DoD in advance of a formal request to define requirements and ensure that DoD efforts are complementary to civil authorities.

What is your understanding of the factors that are considered in determining whether DOD will provide support to a civil authority?

My understanding is that requests for Defense Support of Civil Authorities are evaluated based on: legality (compliance with the law); lethality (potential use of lethal force by or against DoD forces); risk (safety of DoD forces); cost (including the source of funding and the effect on the DoD budget); appropriateness (whether providing the requested support is in the interest of the Department); and readiness (the impact on DoD's ability to perform other primary missions).

What types of assistance in this context are inappropriate, in your view?

In my view an inappropriate request would be one that would violate the Constitution, U.S. law, or be likely to result in such a situation.

What role do you believe that DOD should play in addressing security at the southwest border? What aspects of the current DOD role at the southwest border

could be improved?

Border security is national security. In general, DoD's role in the execution of this mission is to provide support to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as the lead Federal agency for immigration enforcement. DoD can provide support to DHS when requested, appropriate, lawful, and approved by the Secretary of Defense. DoD has unique military capabilities that can enhance overall situational awareness and contribute to full operational control of the southern border. Additionally, in Executive Order 14167, the President established that it is the "policy of the United States to ensure that the Armed Forces of the United States prioritize the protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the United States along our national borders." I support this policy.

In your view, to what extent should the Department anticipate being called on to support civil authorities in the event of a war with a peer competitor? What investments and planning do you believe the Department should be undertaking to prepare for such a scenario?

Defense support to civil authorities is a vital part of such preparations, and if deterrence fails, defending against and recovering from attacks on the U.S. homeland. DoD's mission is to defend the homeland and to project power to fight and win the Nation's wars. War with a peer or near-peer competitor would have serious and direct impact on the homeland, including kinetic and non-kinetic attacks on military bases, dual-use infrastructure, and civilian targets in the U.S. homeland. Building resilience at all levels—Federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial—is a vital whole-of-government approach to strengthen domestic entities, which will enable the defense of the homeland and the effective prosecution of the war.

For these reasons, the Department should be actively preparing for such contingencies and working to prepare for such engagement with and support to civil authorities.

If confirmed, what recommendations would you make to the President to deter Russian and Chinese influence in the SOUTHCOM AOR?

I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would ensure the Department is actively working to address this issue, consistent with national policy and other requirements on the Joint Force.

Do you believe these influences threaten hemispheric security and prosperity?

Yes, I do believe that the influences of China, Russia, and Cuba threaten security and prosperity in this hemisphere.

Detainee Treatment and Guantanamo Bay Naval Station

Do you support the standards for detainee treatment specified in Army Field Manual 2-22.3, *Human Intelligence Collector Operations*, issued in September 2006 and DOD

Directive 2310.01E, *Department of Defense Detainee Program*, dated August 19, 2014, and required by Section 1045 of the NDAA for FY 2016?

Yes, I support the standards for detainee treatment in the Army Field Manual on Interrogations, FM 2-22.3, issued in September 2006, and in DoD Directive 2310.01E, DoD Detainee Program, dated August 19, 2014 (Incorporating Change 2, Effective September 18, 2020). Individuals in the custody or control of the U.S. Government may not be subjected to any interrogation technique or approach, or any treatment related to interrogation, that is not authorized by and listed in the Army Field Manual.

If confirmed, how would you ensure that DOD detainee operations and interrogations comply strictly with these standards?

Individuals in the custody or control of the U.S. Government may not be subjected to any interrogation technique or approach, or any treatment related to interrogation, that is not authorized by and listed in the Army Field Manual. If confirmed, I would be fully engaged in addressing all matters regarding DoD policy and guidance on DoD detention operations, as outlined for the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy in DoD Directive 2310.1E. I would also support the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security in addressing interrogation matters, including interrogation matters that relate to detainee treatment.

What are your views on the continued use of the detention facility at Guantanamo?

If confirmed, I would support the continued operations of the detention facility at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. As the Department's only long-term detention facility for law of war detainees, I would also ensure the continued safe, humane, and legal care and treatment of detainees through Joint Task Force – Guantanamo (JTF-GTMO).

Executive Order 13567 established the Periodic Review Board (PRB) *Periodic Review of Individuals Detained at Guantánamo Bay Naval Station Pursuant to the Authorization for Use of Military Force* process.

If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to address the cases of detainees already recommended by a PRB for transfer from Guantanamo to another nation?

As I understand it, there are three detainees remaining at Guantanamo who have been designated as transfer eligible through the PRB process. The authority to transfer a detainee from Guantanamo to his home country or a third country rests with the Secretary of Defense, but also depends on the State Department working through diplomatic efforts to obtain the appropriate security and humane treatment assurances before the transfer can occur. If confirmed, I would follow this Administration's policy guidance on transferring eligible detainees out of Guantanamo.

Will you commit to notifying Congress if a decision is made to transfer a detainee to Guantanamo *before* any such transfer occurs?

If confirmed, the Department would continue to notify Congress as required.

In your view, what standard of care should govern the physical and mental health services provided to detainees at Guantanamo, particularly as the detainee population ages?

Law and Department policy (e.g., DoD Instruction 2310.08, Medical Program Support for Detainee Operations) require the provision of physical and mental health care of individuals detained at Guantanamo that meets applicable standards of care. If confirmed, I would work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to ensure that the Department provides such care as the detainee population ages, consistent with applicable law.

If confirmed, would you ever advise the President to transfer new detainees to Guantanamo, and if so, under what criteria?

The decision to transfer a detainee to the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, is first initiated by the Combatant Commander to the Secretary of Defense using the Global Screening Criteria approved by the Secretary of Defense in May 2018. Should a Combatant Commander request to send someone to Guantanamo, I would consult with other administration officials to determine policy regarding the transfer of a detainee to Guantanamo.

What are your views on the objectives and outcomes of the Department's Military Commission process?

The Military Commissions process provides standards and processes for trials of alien unprivileged enemy belligerents for violations of the law of war and other offenses triable by military commission.

If confirmed, to the extent possible, I would work with the Office of Military Commissions to ensure that policy is not an impediment to thorough and speedy justice for those responsible for the 9/11 attacks and other terrorist attacks.

Counternarcotics Activities

DOD serves as lead agency for the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime foreign shipments of drugs flowing toward the United States. On an annual basis, DOD expends nearly \$1 billion to build the counternarcotics capacity of U.S. Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies and certain foreign governments. What changes, if any, should be made to DOD's counternarcotics strategy and supporting activities?

I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. That said, the flow of drugs, including fentanyl, poses a concrete and dire threat to Americans. If confirmed, I would look forward to assessing DoD's counternarcotics activities and determining where we can improve on and adapt these efforts.

Corruption and the absence of the rule of law enable the transnational criminal organizations' narcotics trade that contributes to the flow of illegal drugs into the United States.

In your view, what should be DOD's role in countering the flow of narcotics to nations other than the United States?

DoD's primary focus should be on the flow of drugs headed to the United States. Some drug-trafficking organizations, however, have an increasingly global reach. Working with partners to combat drug trafficking can help degrade those drug-trafficking organizations responsible for illicit drug flow into the United States.

To what extent do you view our allies and partners in the region as partners in countering counternarcotics and other illicit activities?

The United States shares a common interest in reducing the threat to security and stability posed by illicit trafficking and has a long history of working with partners in the region. I view this continued cooperation as essential to countering drug trafficking and other illicit activities. If confirmed, I would work with other departments and agencies to ensure that DoD efforts are well-integrated as part of a broader, rational, practical, and sustainable strategy for reducing the threat drug flows pose to Americans.

How, if at all, should U.S. security assistance be scoped to address factors at the root of counternarcotics trafficking, in your opinion?

I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question but, if confirmed, would assess and engage on it.

Venezuela

What is your assessment of the current situation in Venezuela and to what degree is the illegitimate Maduro regime dependent on support from external actors like Russia, Cuba, and China?

The current situation in Venezuela is very concerning, with the potential to cause further direct challenges to American interests, including through large-scale, unchecked migration. I support the Administration's outreach and policies to address this challenge.

How would you assess Venezuelan relations with China, Cuba, Iran, and Russia vis-à-vis the national interests of the United States?

I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. But Venezuelan and other regional actors link with China, Cuba, Iran, and Russia are very concerning. I believe President Trump and his team have moved quickly to counter this through a whole-of-government refocus on our Hemisphere and, if confirmed, would work actively to support this.

Colombia

***Plan Colombia* has enabled the Colombian government to make significant gains against paramilitary forces in Colombia. Additionally, Colombia has become a security exporter in the region due to its advances in capabilities and professionalism.**

What are your views regarding: (1) the current military and political situation in Colombia; and (2) the effectiveness and sustainability of ongoing DOD programs in Colombia?

I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. My understanding is that the U.S.-Colombia bilateral defense relationship is strong, and that DoD has a strong presence in Colombia.

Does the Department require any additional capabilities or legal authorities in Colombia, given developments in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration?

I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question but, if confirmed, would assess and engage on this important issue.

Are there lessons to be learned from *Plan Colombia* that may be useful in addressing security and governance challenges elsewhere in the region and beyond?

If confirmed, I would work to identify such lessons and apply them elsewhere.

Cuba

What is your assessment of Cuba's activities and objectives in the Western Hemisphere?

I am concerned about Cuba's role and influence in the Western Hemisphere, especially as it faces a dire socioeconomic situation created by the Cuban regime. Cuba has longstanding partnerships with China and Russia that threaten U.S. national security. Cuba has also facilitated and supported Nicolas Maduro's regime in Venezuela. Cuba's close proximity to the United States makes these relationships especially concerning.

Under what circumstances, if any, would you recommend modifications to the security relationship between the United States and Cuba?

I would not advocate for such modifications absent fundamental change in Havana's orientation to a posture far more aligned with American interests.

Middle East & Southwest Asia

To what extent does achieving U.S. national security interests in the Middle East require a continuous U.S. military presence there, in your view? In your opinion, is the current U.S. force presence in the Middle East appropriately sized? Please explain your answer.

It is my understanding that the Department maintains the capability to surge forces anywhere in the world if needed during a crisis. As a result, the Department is able to execute multiple missions in the Middle East—to include deterring Iran and its proxies.

I understand that the Department is in the process of reviewing global U.S. force posture to reassess the optimal level of forces assigned to CENTCOM in order to achieve regional and national defense strategy goals given the evolving geostrategic environment. If confirmed, I would support this reassessment and advise the Secretary on the force posture necessary to achieve the President's national security objectives.

What opportunities exist for increasing burden-sharing with U.S. regional and European partners to counter threats emanating from and affecting the CENTCOM AOR?

The United States collaborates effectively with multiple allies and partners in the region as well as European allies to counter threats emanating from within the CENTCOM AOR. If confirmed, I would seek increased opportunities to enable regional partners to counter terrorist groups and defend their sovereign territories. Our partners can, and must, do their part. If confirmed, I would also look to increase cooperation with regional and European partners in countering the Iranian Threat Network and the Iranian missile and UAV threat. Joint missions, security cooperation, missile defense integration, and capacity building are effective mechanisms for strengthening the ability of our allies and partners to counter threats within the AOR.

To what extent is the Middle East relevant to great power competition? How should DOD consider countering Russia and China in the Middle East, in your view? Do you believe there are other elements of national power and policy tools that might be useful?

Given its size, economic resources, centrality in Eurasia, and other factors, the Middle East is relevant to great power competition.

The United States can counter Chinese and Russian involvement in the region through strong partnerships with our allies and partners across a full spectrum of activities, to include security assistance, regional integration efforts, and military cooperation through training, exercises, and other activities.

Israel

In your opinion, what are U.S. national security objectives in Israel?

Israel is a key U.S. ally, and the U.S.-Israel alliance is of great importance to the United States. Indeed, Israel is a model ally for the United States in its self-reliance, independence, and fortitude. Enabling Israel's security and ability to defend itself is thus a key U.S. national security objective.

My understanding is that the Department of Defense supports Israel's security by helping facilitate security assistance to Israel, extensive military cooperation through CENTCOM channels, and through coordination with the Israelis to help secure the release of hostages held by Hamas, including American citizens.

In your opinion, what should DOD's role be in supporting Israeli efforts to degrade and defeat Hamas?

Hamas's horrific and unprovoked attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, killed more than 1,200 innocent people, including 46 Americans. The United States should support Israel by providing the security assistance that Israel needs to defeat Hamas and never again allow a Hamas-style attack on Israel. I support measures by the Trump Administration to bolster support to Israel, including through the release of the shipment of 2,000 lb. bombs previously paused. If confirmed, I would build on these efforts to help bolster U.S. support for Israel and its ability to defend itself and ensure its security.

In your opinion, should U.S. activities in Israel be in support of the pursuit of a two-state solution?

U.S. activities in Israel should be in support of U.S. interests: namely, the defense and security of our model ally Israel and the re-establishment of deterrence in the region. President Trump is a master dealmaker, and I believe his vision presents the best opportunity for a lasting peace in this context. If confirmed, I would support such efforts.

Syria and Iraq

What is your understanding of current U.S. strategy and objectives in Syria? How have those objectives changed, if at all, in light of the recent fall of the Assad regime?

I understand the Department's primary objective in Syria is to prevent credible external terrorist plots against the homeland by supporting the enduring defeat of ISIS. If confirmed, I would work to review our objectives in light of the fall of the Assad regime.

What role, if any, should DOD play in supporting a peaceful democratic transition in Syria? Please explain your answer.

The President has stated his position that the United States should not get involved in the political affairs of Syria. If confirmed, I would support this policy. The U.S. military rightly remains focused on the defeat of ISIS and other threats to the homeland.

From a DOD perspective, what must be done to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS? What non-military efforts are needed for the enduring defeat of ISIS?

I understand that the U.S. military supports the enduring defeat of ISIS through counterterrorism operations and by enabling key ally and partner militaries to assume the burden for addressing terrorist threats within their own countries. More broadly, the enduring defeat of ISIS also

requires efforts across whole of government channels, to include intelligence and law enforcement.

What do you perceive to be the role of the Syrian Democratic Forces and Iraqi Security Forces in countering ISIS and al Qaeda?

These partners have historically played a critical role in our efforts to counter ISIS and al Qaeda. If confirmed, I would seek the appropriate briefings on the current role of these forces to ensure a full-picture assessment and determination on the future of U.S. counterterrorism policy.

In your view, should U.S. troop levels in Syria be tied to the achievement of certain conditions on the ground? If so, what conditions would you factor into your recommendation to the President on future troop levels in Syria?

The deployment of U.S. troops in any foreign country should always be tied to specific objectives and conditions, and, if confirmed, I would guide any potential recommendations to the Secretary of Defense about force deployments by this principle.

In September, the U.S.-Iraq Higher Military Commission announced the transition of the global coalition to defeat ISIS to a bilateral security relationship with the Government of Iraq. However, many of the details of such a transition are still being negotiated with the Iraqi Government.

In your view, what should the guiding principles for DOD's presence in Iraq moving forward?

The deployment of U.S. troops in any foreign country should be continually assessed based on changing objectives and conditions on the ground. If confirmed, I would support a thorough analysis along these lines prior to making a recommendation to the Secretary.

Do you assess that U.S. forces should remain in Iraq beyond next September? Why or why not?

The Coalition operations to defeat ISIS have succeeded in the mission to reduce the threat of ISIS in Iraq. As the United States and Iraq agreed in September 2024, Operation INHERENT RESOLVE is scheduled to wind down operations inside Iraq by September 2025. If confirmed, I would ensure that the implications of the agreement between the U.S. and Iraq are considered in the global force posture review.

Iran

What is your understanding of the objectives of the U.S. national security interests with respect to Iran? What is the role of the U.S. military in this strategy?

I fully support the President's National Security Presidential Memorandum on Iran, which establishes that: 1) Iran should be denied a nuclear weapon and intercontinental ballistic missiles;

2) Iran's terrorist network should be neutralized; and 3) Iran's aggressive development of missiles, as well as other asymmetric and conventional weapons capabilities, should be countered. The U.S. military, alongside other elements of national power such as sanctions and the capabilities of allies such as Israel, play a critical role in this strategy.

What is your assessment of the current military threat posed by Iran and its proxy groups?

Iran poses a significant threat to the security of the United States and its allies and partners. Last year, Iran launched two unprecedented major missile and drone barrages against Israel from Iranian territory. In addition to Iran's conventional military, Tehran also leverages proxy forces to launch kinetic attacks and advance their interests across the Middle East. These forces threaten both U.S. forces and those of our partners. Iran also continues to inch closer to gaining a nuclear weapons capability, which the President has rightly insisted must not happen.

Do you believe it remains in the national security interest of the United States to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon?

I do believe it is in the U.S. interest to deny Iran a nuclear weapon. Iran with a nuclear weapon would be far more dangerous, and it is clearly in our interests and those of our allies to prevent that from happening. The President has rightly been clear the United States will not allow Iran to obtain a nuclear weapon. As part of this, the President has expressed his readiness to negotiate an agreement with Iran that prevents Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. I support the President's policy approach and believe he has the negotiating prowess to achieve this goal, producing a much better agreement than the flawed JCPOA. As part of this, the Department's role is to ensure that the President is armed with the best possible military options to deny Iran a nuclear weapon. If confirmed, I would regard it as my responsibility to ensure that the Secretary and the President have the best possible military options for this purpose.

Are U.S. military forces and capabilities currently deployed to the CENTCOM AOR adequate to deter and, if necessary, respond to threats posed by Iran?

I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question.

That said, my understanding is that the Department maintains the capability to surge forces anywhere in the world if needed during a crisis. As a result, DoD is able to execute multiple missions in the Middle East—to include deterring Iran and its proxies. The Department is in the process of reviewing the global U.S. force posture to reassess the optimal force posture for CENTCOM to achieve our national defense strategy goals given the evolving geostrategic environment.

In your opinion, can Iran be sufficiently deterred through military force alone?

I believe non-military efforts play a crucial role in addressing the threat posed by Iran. I support the President's stated intent to address Iran's malign activity through non-military tools, including economic pressure and diplomacy. At the same time, it is the Department of Defense's role to ensure the President is armed with the best possible military options. If confirmed, I

would work to ensure the President has the best military options to consider in order to counter Iran's attempt to acquire nuclear weapons and/or conduct other aggressive actions.

How do you view military cooperation between Iran and Russia? In your opinion, has this partnership affected Middle Eastern regional security?

My understanding is that there is growing military cooperation between Iran and Russia. Iran continues to provide Russia with uncrewed aerial vehicles and ballistic missiles in exchange for a range of Russian support. Russia's support to Iran's space program is particularly concerning, because it could enable Iran to improve its long-range ballistic missile capabilities and eventually threaten the U.S. homeland. There is also potential Russian provision of advanced weapons to Iran, such as fighter aircraft and air defenses systems. Should this Russian support continue, it will substantially improve Iran's capabilities to attack U.S. personnel and U.S. partners across the region, consequently driving U.S. partners to pursue acquisition of advanced capabilities to ensure their own defense.

Yemen

What are the U.S. national security interests in Yemen?

The primary national security interest in Yemen is ensuring that terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and ISIS cannot conduct attacks against the U.S. homeland. Additionally, Houthi maritime and aerial attacks enabled by Iran's support continue to threaten the territorial defense of Israel and our Gulf partners and freedom of navigation through a critical waterway. If confirmed, I would work to advance the President's policy to cooperate with our regional partners to degrade the Houthi's capabilities and operations, deprive it of resources, and end its attacks on U.S. personnel and civilians, U.S. partners, and maritime shipping in the Red Sea.

If confirmed, how would you adjust or augment the current strategy to be more effective to deter and counter Houthi attacks in the Red Sea?

If confirmed, I would ensure that the Department supports the President's policy, as outlined in his executive order on the Houthis, to "cooperate with regional partners to eliminate the Houthis' military capabilities and operations, deprive it of resources, and thereby end its attack on U.S. personnel and civilians, U.S. partners, and maritime shipping in the Red Sea." This will require a whole-of-government effort involving multiple departments and agencies to place additional pressure on the Houthis.

If confirmed, I would support the Department in reviewing U.S. military options to ensure they are resource-informed and meet the President's intent, should the direct military action. It is the Department's job to ensure the President is armed with the best possible military options.

Lebanon

What is your understanding of current U.S national security objectives in Lebanon?

My understanding is that the Department's current objectives are to strengthen Lebanon's sovereignty by building its capabilities to counter internal and terrorist threats and combat corruption. Through these capacity building efforts, the United States can reduce regional tensions, improve Israel's security along its northern border, and further degrade Iran's influence in Lebanon.

With the election of President Aoun, Lebanon has formed its most pro-Western, anti-Lebanese Hizballah government in recent memory. There appears to be an historic opportunity to ensure that Lebanon is no longer a home to terrorists who seek to threaten U.S. and partner forces in the region.

While there has been a ceasefire established between Israel and Hezbollah, Lebanon continues to be at risk of becoming a failed state. What role, if any, should the Department play in increasing stability in Lebanon?

Building the capability and credibility of Lebanese institutions to be the sole guarantor of Lebanese sovereignty is one pathway to prevent Lebanon from becoming a failed state. If confirmed, I would seek appropriate briefings to further assess and evaluate the role the Department can play to ensure U.S. interests are fulfilled with regards to Lebanon.

If confirmed, would you support providing additional equipment and training to the Lebanese Armed Forces to help improve stability and security in Lebanon?

If confirmed, I would be open to such support if and as in line with security assistance priorities in the Middle East and beyond.

Egypt

What is your assessment of the security situation in Egypt and the U.S.-Egypt security relationship?

My understanding is that Egypt faces several security challenges. Despite the challenges, the United States should expect a better return on its significant investment from our security relationship and encourage Egypt to be more active in addressing instability in its near abroad, particularly Gaza. It is critical that U.S.-Egypt security cooperation advances U.S. interests in the region.

What role does the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) play in the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty? Should the U.S. maintain its military deployment to the MFO? What would be the risks of reducing this commitment?

I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter carefully.

In your view, should the United States continue to provide defense articles and services purchased by the Egyptian military using U.S. Foreign Military Financing funds?

Egypt is an important U.S. ally, due to its strategic geography astride the Suez Canal, its role as a leading Arab nation, and the historic ties of our longstanding relationship. U.S. Foreign Military Financing (FMF) plays an important role in strengthening the strategic partnership with Egypt and supporting Egypt's legitimate defense needs. That said, U.S. support to Egypt should be evaluated in the context of our overall defense priorities, especially the pressing threat posed by China and the need to secure our interests in our own hemisphere.

What is your assessment of Egypt's deepening ties with Russia? Where do U.S. and Russian interests converge in Egypt? Where do they diverge?

I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter carefully.

South Asia

In your opinion, what are U.S. national security objectives in Afghanistan, and what is your understanding of the current strategy to achieve them?

Ensuring terrorism that threatens the U.S. homeland does not emanate from Afghanistan is an essential national interest. I understand that ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K) maintains the intent and capability to strike outside of its traditional area of operations in Afghanistan and is committed to enabling attacks within the United States. I further understand that DoD conducts Operation ENDURING SENTINEL to identify potential attack plotting by terrorist groups in Afghanistan that wish to do the United States harm and to prevent them.

If confirmed, I would work with the Secretary of Defense to assess whether this strategy is effective and how it might be adapted.

In your view, is the United States properly postured to counter ISIS-Khorasan and al Qaeda and related groups in Afghanistan? Please explain your answer.

I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would investigate and engage on this important matter.

If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you recommend to U.S. relations with Pakistan?

Pakistan remains an important relationship for the United States. I am not aware of any significant changes that are needed at this stage but would be prepared to learn more and engage on this important matter.

In your view, what tools and options are available to the United States to ensure that Pakistan is not used as a sanctuary for militants and violent extremist organizations (VEOs)?

The President has made it clear that his highest priority is to ensure the safety and security of the United States and the American people. If confirmed, I would prioritize ensuring that the United States is able to protect Americans against threats emanating from Pakistan or elsewhere.

Africa

AFRICOM has minimal assigned forces and, as a result, is required to compete for the vast majority of its U.S. forces in the global force management process.

What should be the primary objectives of the DOD specifically, and the United States more broadly, in the AFRICOM AOR?

My understanding is that the Department has two primary objectives in the AFRICOM AOR. The first is to degrade terrorist groups' ability to strike the U.S. homeland and U.S. facilities and persons abroad. The February 1 and February 15, 2025, strikes against ISIS in Somalia are key examples of DoD pursuing this objective under this Administration. The second objective is to counter China's attempts to co-opt African governments in ways that undermine U.S. strategic interests. These seem to be reasonable objectives to me at this stage.

What is your assessment of U.S. counterterrorism strategies in the AFRICOM AOR, particularly those in East Africa, North Africa, and the Sahel? If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you propose to these strategies?

My understanding is that the current U.S. counterterrorism strategy in the AFRICOM AOR is to disrupt violent extremist organizations and other emerging threats, with continued focus on ISIS and al-Qaeda, especially those groups with the intent and capability of posing a direct threat to the U.S. homeland or U.S. personnel.

The Department rightly prioritizes working by, with, and through allies and regional partners to disrupt and degrade terrorist threats. If confirmed, I would seek to build on this approach.

What is your assessment of the strategic objectives of Russia and China in Africa? In what areas, if any, are these objectives in conflict with U.S. and partner objectives?

China and Russia have both deepened engagement in Africa. China has sought to bolster relationships with African countries and their militaries and where possible, create dependencies through increased investment in Africa. China has looked to gain African countries' support for its global policy objectives. Russia uses irregular means to assert influence in Africa, including through paramilitary deployments, seeking to create dependencies on Russian military assets.

Many of these activities are not in line with U.S. and partners' objectives in Africa.

What should be DOD's role and objectives in countering Russian and Chinese activities and objectives in Africa?

I agree with the broad U.S. objectives specified above and believe DoD's role is largely a supporting one in Africa, with the main line of effort being other departments and agencies as well as activities by allies and partners.

Special Operations, Counter-terrorism, & Trans-National Threats

Beginning in Fiscal Year 2017, successive NDAAs have empowered the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (ASD(SOLIC)) to serve as a “service secretary-like” civilian official for special operations forces. Among other reforms, the law defines the administrative chain of command for USSOCOM as running through the ASD(SOLIC) to the Secretary of Defense for issues impacting the readiness and organization of special operations forces.

What is your understanding of the Department's progress in implementing the “service secretary-like” responsibilities of the ASD(SOLIC)?

I am aware of the efforts to institutionalize the service secretary-like responsibilities of the ASD(SO/LIC) and the Secretariat for Special Operations. I understand the criticality of the civilian role in cultivating partnerships and shaping strategic initiatives and policies in alignment with the national defense objectives to ensure SOF are most effectively and efficiently organized, trained, equipped, and resourced. I look forward to conducting a thorough assessment of the progress in implementing this civilian-military partnership for the SOF enterprise.

If confirmed, would you commit to fully implementing these reforms?

Yes. If confirmed, I would fully implement these reforms. I would also ensure these reforms translate into tangible improvements in how the Department oversees and supports special operations forces.

Irregular Warfare

Nation states are becoming more aggressive in challenging U.S. interests through the use of asymmetric means that often do not rise to the threshold of traditional armed conflict, commonly referred to as irregular warfare or “gray zone operations.”

What is your understanding of the role and relative importance of irregular warfare in supporting DOD's strategic, operational, and tactical objectives?

My understanding is that irregular warfare (IW) is critical for the Department's mission to deter adversaries and ensure our Nation's security. IW provides valuable flexible options for countering adversaries, combating terrorism, and stabilizing volatile regions.

If confirmed, what would be your priorities to ensure that DOD is appropriately organized, trained, resourced, and has sufficient authorities to effectively conduct irregular warfare?

I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

What is your assessment of the use of irregular warfare by China, Russia, Iran, and other adversarial states to undermine the national security interests of the United States and those of our allies and partners?

I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

What more do you think DOD should be doing to integrate irregular warfare concepts and forces into our operational planning for major regional contingencies? How can irregular warfare contribute to traditional approaches for great power competition?

I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

Special Operations Authorities

Section 127e of title 10, U.S. Code, authorizes U.S. special operations forces to provide support (including training, funding, and equipment) to regular forces, irregular forces, and individuals supporting or facilitating military operations for the purpose of combatting terrorism. Section 127d of title 10, U.S. Code, similarly authorizes U.S. special operations forces to provide support to forces or individuals supporting or facilitating irregular warfare operations.

What is your assessment of the national security utility of each of these authorities in the current strategic environment?

I believe these authorities are very helpful for the United States in bolstering ally and partner capacity and delivering higher “bang for the buck” for Americans.

If confirmed, what criteria would you apply to the evaluation of proposals for the use of each of these authorities, with a view to mitigating the risks associated with the conduct of counterterrorism and irregular warfare activities below the level of traditional armed conflict?

I would first note that these authorities do not provide DoD with any operational authority, and therefore it is my understanding that DoD does not use these authorities to support partner force operations against a group that DoD has not been granted the authority to conduct operations against itself.

It is my understanding that there is a very deliberate process that the Department uses for approval of any 127d and 127e program that includes collaboration by experts across the department and substantial civilian oversight, and that these processes are carefully

defined within policy and U.S. Special Operations Command doctrine to ensure risks are managed and activities do not lead to unmanageable escalation dynamics. If confirmed, I would maintain these rigorous standards for 127d and 127e programs.

If confirmed, how would you seek to ensure that recipients of support under these authorities are appropriately vetted to protect against potential human rights and counterintelligence concerns?

It is my understanding that all prospective recipients of support under these authorities must be screened prior to receiving any material or financial support, and that recipients undergo a continuous vetting process after their initial screening as well. Screening and vetting are intended to identify and mitigate force protection threats, affiliation to foreign intelligence services or other groups that pose a risk to force or mission and identify individuals whose past and present relationships or conduct are unsuitable for supporting U.S. operations, such as past participation in gross violations of human rights or violations of the law of war. I would continue these measures, if confirmed.

Violent Extremist Organizations

What is your assessment of the threat to U.S. interests posed by Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, and their affiliates and adherents? Which group, in your view, presents the greatest threat to the United States?

Despite significant and continuous U.S. efforts to degrade Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, both continue to pose a threat to U.S. interests around the globe. My understanding is that the U.S. intelligence community assesses that ISIS poses the greater near-term threat to the United States.

If confirmed, I would ensure that the Department retains an abiding focus on the threats posed by either group or their affiliates and adherents, especially their ability to threaten the U.S. homeland.

If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you recommend to the U.S. counterterrorism strategy and DOD's role in supporting it? What metrics would you apply to measure the effectiveness of the strategy?

I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review this very important matter and focus on ensuring U.S. counterterrorism strategy and DoD's role in it are effective and sustainable.

Should the Department focus principally on terrorist organizations that pose a direct threat to the U.S. homeland? If so, how would you mitigate risk posed by other terrorist groups that have such intent but currently lack the capability to do so?

I believe that focusing on countering direct threats to the United States makes sense. Through cooperation with our partners and allies we will ensure emerging terrorist threats are tracked and

countered. At the same, it also makes sense to maintain a set of indications and warning to understand how terrorist threats are evolving so that we are not caught off guard in the future.

Military Operations in the Information Environment

What is your assessment of DOD's ability to conduct effective military operations in the information environment to defend U.S. interests against malign influence activities carried out by state and non-state actors?

Information is a critical part of the "battlespace." The United States must be appropriately and effectively postured to act there for clear military advantage purposes.

If confirmed, I would review the matter further and be prepared to engage on it.

In your view, does DOD have sufficient authorities and resources to conduct these operations effectively? If not, what additional authorities and resources would you request, if confirmed?

I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

The DOD's organizational structure and approach to Operations in the Information Environment (OIE) has not changed significantly in nearly 25 years and was largely based on legacy psychological warfare approaches that go back to the Cold War. Do you foresee any need to revisit the organization, doctrine, training and tools for OIE to integrate the lessons we are seeing from our adversaries?

I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

In your view, are DOD approaches for tools and training in OIE keeping pace with what we are seeing from our adversaries, in particular with regards to new tools like generative artificial intelligence, use of publicly available or commercially available data, and sentiment analysis tools?

I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

In your view, are DOD's OIE appropriately integrated with other similar U.S. Government organizations and activities?

I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

Do you have suggestions for how to strengthen those relationships and capabilities across the interagency?

I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

Department of Defense Role in Election Security

In September 2019, at the annual National Cybersecurity Summit, then Secretary of Defense Esper noted that “our adversaries will continue to target our democratic processes”, the Pentagon had “developed our capabilities and increased our capacity to allow us to detect, locate, and exploit threats in the cyber domain”, and that “influence operations are at a scope and scale never before imagined.” In that same speech, Secretary Esper declared election security “an enduring mission for the Department of Defense.”

What do you see as the Department’s continued role in election security?

I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review this important matter and be prepared to engage on it.

Do you agree that there is a continuing threat to our democratic processes from foreign malign influence operations?

I believe there are clearly foreign actors and adversaries that seek to target the United States and its democratic processes.

Do you envision election security as an enduring mission for the Department? If so, how would OUSD(P) best support the mission of defending our democratic processes from interference by Russia and other foreign adversaries?

I believe DoD can play an important role in deterring and, as necessary, responding to attempts to subvert our democratic processes. That said, I believe we should be very deliberate on this front, zealously preventing national security resources and capabilities from being used in ways that affect our own domestic processes. The point is to have robust and free speech, and free and fair elections.

Do you assess that DOD actions to date are supporting a whole of government approach to foreign adversaries that seek to interfere in our elections? If not, are there additional policy steps that you believe the Department of Defense should take to enhance deterrence of foreign election interference? How would the actions you list, if any, support whole of government efforts?

I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

Counter Threat Finance

What should be the Department’s role in counter-threat finance activities?

I believe the Department can play an important, albeit supporting, role in counter-threat finance activities.

In your view, should the Department expand its support to other U.S. Government departments and agencies conducting counter threat finance activities? If so, how?

I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

Defense Security Cooperation

In your view, what should be the role of the Department of Defense within the interagency on efforts to build the capabilities of foreign security forces?

My understanding is that the Department approaches national security problem sets with a focus on U.S. military forces. As such, DoD approaches efforts to build the capabilities of foreign security forces in the context of enabling those partners to take on roles and operations that also support U.S. national security objectives. DoD's building partner capacity efforts include significant interagency coordination, but it ultimately rightly focuses on the benefit to U.S. national security interests.

What is your assessment of the current level of coordination between the Department of Defense and Department of State on security cooperation?

I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

In your view, what should be the primary objectives of Department of Defense security sector assistance activities? What changes, if any, would you recommend to the Department's current approach to building the capabilities of foreign security forces?

The Department should ensure that its security cooperation and assistance activities further national security objectives, either by enabling foreign security forces to work with the United States on operations or by allowing those forces to take on operations while U.S. forces focus on other priorities.

Is the Department of Defense appropriately organized and resourced to execute security sector assistance effectively, and do you believe the OUSD(P) is organized and empowered to fulfill its oversight and resource allocation responsibilities under 10 U.S.C. 382? If not, what changes would you make or direct, if confirmed?

I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

If confirmed, what would be your relationship with the Director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA)? On what issues would you expect to consult with the

Director?

My understanding is that the DSCA is a field activity under the authority, direction, and control of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)). As such, a close relationship between the USD(P) and the Director of DSCA is important to ensure alignment between policy direction and execution, and if confirmed I would anticipate working closely with the DSCA Director to ensure that coherence continues.

Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)

It has been noted repeatedly that the 2005 BRAC round resulted in major and unanticipated implementation costs and saved far less money than originally estimated.

Do you believe that another BRAC round is needed? If so, what changes to law and implementation policy would you recommend to improve on the outcomes of the 2005 BRAC process?

If confirmed, I would explore all options to enhance the Department's ability to restore lethality. I would commit to working with Congress, who would ultimately need to authorize another BRAC, on this issue.

If you are confirmed, and were Congress to authorize another BRAC round, how would you set priorities for infrastructure reduction and consolidation across DOD?

I believe that the Department needs to ensure that its infrastructure portfolio is appropriately sized and utilized. If confirmed, I would commit to reducing the amount of excess infrastructure and ensure the Department's infrastructure aligns with mission requirements. If Congress were to authorize a future BRAC, I would ensure the priorities for infrastructure reduction and consolidation would align with Secretary of Defense's priorities of rebuilding the military by matching threats to capabilities and reestablishing deterrence by defending our homeland.

Military & Civilian Personnel

Active and Reserve Component End Strength

The active military is smaller today than at any other point since the start of World War II. Since 2020, the active force has shrunk by over 60,000 personnel.

Do you believe military end strength should increase? If yes, where do you believe that growth should occur?

My view is that military end strength should be based on what is necessary to support the Nation's defense strategy as laid out in the National Defense Strategy. If confirmed, I

would look forward to developing that Strategy with the Secretary's guidance and determining what the appropriate end strength is based on that.

What aggregate active end strength do you believe is necessary to meet the demands placed on the Military Services by the 2022 NDS and associated operational plans?

The aggregate active end strength should be based on the requirements in the National Defense Strategy and associated operational plans. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with the Secretary in building the next National Defense Strategy, and I would work to determine what that number is and to ensure the Department meets that target.

Role of the Reserve Component

Historically, the reserve components have been positioned as a strategic reserve to be used in the event of significant armed conflict involving the United States. In the post-9/11 era, reserve forces have been used more extensively to support both contingency operations and ongoing military requirements in a garrison environment. Today, in addition to being an operational reserve, members of the reserve component are used continuously as a part-time workforce for the Department of Defense to perform its ongoing training and to meet readiness requirements.

In your view, should the reserve components serve as a part-time workforce, an operational reserve, a strategic reserve, or some combination of those?

Secretary Hegseth is committed to restoring lethality in our fighting force and supporting President Trump's agenda to build peace through strength. The reserve components are a vital component of the total force. If confirmed, I would ensure the nature of the reserve components are considered as a part of the holistic department strategy to achieve peace through strength.

In light of your answer, do the reserve components require increased levels of full-time support and oversight by the active component, including improved equipment, increased training, adequate compensation and reimbursement, effective career management, balanced Professional Military Education requirements, and higher levels of overall resourcing for readiness going forward?

If confirmed, I would work with the Secretary to assess Reserve Component roles, resources, training, and levels to ensure the Total Force is organized, manned, trained and equipped to best meet our national security objectives.

In your view, what legislative reforms should be made in order to facilitate easier transitions for members of all components between active and reserve status?

If confirmed, I would work with the Secretary to determine what reforms are necessary to ensure the Total Force can attract and retain the talent necessary to meet our national security objectives.

Operational Tempo (OPTEMPO)

Since the end of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the military services continue to operate at a historically high OPTEMPO, which senior civilian and military leaders in the Department of Defense have deemed “unsustainable.” What is your plan to adjust OPTEMPO in the Armed Forces to ensure that servicemembers and their families are healthy, fit, adequately rested, and have a sustainable lifestyle so that they are prepared for a potential future major conflict?

Despite the end of large-scale U.S. troop deployments to Iraq and the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan, I understand that the military’s operational tempo remains high. If confirmed, I would work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, the Secretaries of the Military Departments, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Military Service Chiefs to ensure that the Department is sending the right forces to accomplish national objectives and to refine our deployments, rotations, and domestic training to ensure that our OPTEMPO is sustainable. We must continue to maximize readiness for any future conflict while simultaneously avoiding exhausting the force.

Recruiting and Retention

The 2024 National Defense Strategy Commission stated that “The DoD workforce and the all-volunteer force provide an unmatched advantage. However, recruiting failures have shrunk the force and raise serious questions about the all-volunteer force in peacetime, let alone in major combat.” In addition, DOD studies indicate that only about 23% of today’s youth population is eligible for military service, and only a fraction of those who meet military accession standards are interested in serving.

Do you agree with the premise that the shortage in the number of American youth eligible, qualified for, and interested in serving in the Armed Forces poses an existential threat to national security?

Yes, I do. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with the Secretary to help the Department address this significant challenge.

In your opinion, why are so few individuals in the 17-24 age range eligible for service, and what can be done to increase the pool of individuals qualified for, and interested in military service?

I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review this important matter and be prepared to engage on it.

What programs, policies, or tools does the Department need to increase the propensity to serve of today’s youth?

I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review this important matter and be prepared to engage on it.

If required to choose between maintaining high recruitment and retention standards and achieving authorized end strength levels, which would be more important, in your view?

President Trump and Secretary Hegseth have made it clear that the Department must recruit the most capable individuals and ensure every Service member meets the high standards to serve and defend this Nation. As the Secretary has eloquently laid out, the Department should not lower its standards, but rather should inspire young Americans to strive to meet those standards.

Do you believe the total military compensation system, including deferred and non-cash benefits, is adequate to recruit and retain the number of highly qualified individuals needed for military service?

I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review this important matter and be prepared to engage on it.

Do you believe the Armed Forces recruits and retains a diverse workforce, representative of the nation?

It is a matter of strength and pride for our Nation that Service members come from all walks of life across America to be part of a unified team, and in my view the Department is right to welcome those who meet its high standards. The Secretary has rightly made it clear that those high standards should be the same for all, regardless of race, sex or ethnicity, in keeping with the best traditions of the American military.

Do you believe it is important that servicemembers possess the ability, including that acquired through training, to work effectively with fellow servicemembers from different geographic areas, backgrounds, education, and experience to maximize the effectiveness of the Armed Forces?

Yes. Throughout America's history, the military has been a leading force in building strong teams out of young Americans from across our country. As Secretary Hegseth has made clear, the unity of our military is its strength.

Assignment Policies for Women in the Service

Since 2015, all military occupations and units have been open to the assignment of any service member who can meet the occupational standards, including women. Do you believe in the fundamental principle that any person, regardless of gender, who meets occupational standards for a particular job should be afforded the opportunity to compete for and perform the job?

My view is that every Service member, regardless of sex, who can meet objective occupational and readiness standards for a career field should have the opportunity to compete for jobs in that field.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

Despite significant efforts by the Military Services to enhance their response to sexual assaults, including measures to care for victims and hold assailants accountable, the prevalence of sexual assault and unwanted sexual conduct, primarily for female servicemembers aged 17 to 24, remains too high.

Do you believe the policies, programs, and resources, including the DOD Restricted (Confidential) Reporting Policy, that DOD and the Military Services have put in place to prevent and respond to sexual assault, and to protect service members who report sexual assault from retaliation, are working? If not, what else must be done?

Sexual assault harms our warfighters and our military readiness. It has no place in the military. I know the Department has committed significant resources and undertaken numerous efforts to address sexual assault. If I am confirmed, I intend to learn more about the specifics of these efforts to continue to help rid the force of this criminal behavior.

If confirmed as the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, you would recommend additional authority from Congress to improve the Department's programs to prevent sexual harassment and sexual assaults?

Given both the Department's and Congress' ongoing efforts, it is my impression that significant authority already exists to further these initiatives. I commit to learning more, if confirmed, about the authorities that exist and, if necessary, I would work with this body to recommend any necessary changes.

If confirmed, what specific role and tasks would you establish for yourself in DOD's program of preventing and responding to both sexual harassment and sexual assault?

If confirmed, I would work to ensure that our policies, programs, and resources are as strong as possible to eliminate sexual assault and other behaviors that are not only criminal and dangerous but also undermine our Service members' ability to perform their missions and undercut cohesion and trust. We must have ready, lethal warfighters who can deploy and fight as a cohesive unit.

In your view, why hasn't the Department been more successful in preventing sexual assaults?

I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review this important matter and be prepared to engage on it.

Congressional Oversight

In order to exercise legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress receive timely testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information from the executive branch.

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to appear and testify before this committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to provide this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs such witnesses and briefers, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information, as may be requested of you, and to do so in a timely manner without delay? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to consult with this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs, regarding your basis for any delay or denial in providing testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information requested of you? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to keep this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this committee and its subcommittees, and their respective staffs with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to respond timely to letters to, and/or inquiries and other requests of you or your organization from individual

Senators who are members of this committee? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes