

**Senate Armed Services Committee**  
**Advance Policy Questions for Admiral Lisa M. Franchetti, USN**  
**Nominee for Appointment to be Chief of Naval Operations**

**Duties and Responsibilities**

**Section 8033 of title 10, U.S. Code, describes the duties and responsibilities of the Chief of Naval Operations.**

**1. What is your understanding of the duties and responsibilities of the Chief of Naval Operations?**

Under the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of the Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations is responsible for organizing, training and equipping the operating forces and shore activities of the Navy in support of combatant, fleet and component commanders; represents the Navy on the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and serves as the primary maritime advisor to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense. Additionally, recent law updated the Navy's mission to include peacetime promotion of national security interests.

**2. What background and experience do you possess that qualify you to perform these duties and responsibilities?**

I have acquired broad naval and joint experience during my 38 years in the Navy. I have had command at the ship, squadron, strike group, and fleet levels. As a Flag Officer, I have served as the Commander of U.S. Naval Forces Korea; Commander, U.S. Sixth Fleet, Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO; Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Warfighting Development (N7); and Director for Strategy, Plans and Policy (J-5) on the Joint Staff. I have served as the Vice Chief of Naval Operations since September 2, 2022.

**3. Do you meet the joint duty requirements for this position?**

Yes.

**4. Do you believe that there are any steps that you need to take to enhance your ability to perform the duties and responsibilities of the Chief of Naval Operations, particularly in regard to serving as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and assisting the Secretary of the Navy in performing certain acquisition-related functions?**

If confirmed, I plan to conduct in-depth discussions with key Navy personnel, other U.S. Government agencies, industry leaders, and subject matter experts outside the government in preparation for this assignment. Should I be confirmed as CNO, I commit to having an open dialogue with Congress, seniors, subordinates, and the civilian chain of command, and will insist

on a continuous, data-driven, and rigorous assessment of our readiness and the strategic environment.

**5. If confirmed, what innovative ideas would you consider providing to the Secretary of the Navy for enhancing the organization, training, and equipping of the Navy?**

The Navy must continue to capitalize on ideas that enhance, expand, and accelerate our warfighting advantage. Working with the Secretary of the Navy and the Commandant of the Marine Corps, I would seek to leverage the most impactful innovative efforts from across the Fleet. For training, I would continue to drive Ready Relevant Learning and Live Virtual Constructive efforts to make training more effective and realistic. I would advise the Secretary of the Navy to pursue technologies and capabilities that increase range, accuracy, deception, and overall lethality.

**6. What are your goals, if confirmed, for the transformation of the Navy to meet new and emerging threats?**

I would continue to drive the Navy towards becoming a more lethal force. If confirmed, I intend to conduct in-depth discussions and assessments with key Navy personnel, U.S. Government agencies, industry leaders, and subject matter experts outside the government to better understand potential capabilities and solutions. We must leverage all our tools and resources to stay ahead of emerging threats, while striving to be as agile and adaptable as possible. A primary driver for this transformation is our dedicated and talented uniformed and civilian workforce.

**In addition to the duties enumerated in Section 8033, it provides that the Chief of Naval Operations shall perform such other military duties as are assigned to him by the President, the Secretary of Defense, or the Secretary of the Navy.**

**7. In light of the lines of effort set forth in the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS), what other military duties do you anticipate the Secretary of Defense or the Secretary of the Navy would assign to you, if confirmed?**

Along with the Marine Corps, as America's away team, the Navy is constantly on call to respond to crises wherever they may occur around the globe. This requires a ready force. As Vice Chief, I have focused on ensuring our fleet material condition and readiness can support both planned and unplanned requirements, providing combat-credible forces to the Combatant Commanders. If confirmed, I will continue that focus, and additionally work to coordinate Navy's modernization efforts with the Joint Force. I will ensure Navy stays aligned with other Department of Defense efforts, and will also work closely with our allies and partners.

**8. If confirmed, what duties and responsibilities would you assign to the Vice Chief of Naval Operations?**

Per 10 U.S.C. 8035, the Vice Chief of Naval Operations has such authority and duties with respect to the Department of the Navy as the Chief of Naval Operations, through the approval and delegation of the Secretary of the Navy. If confirmed, I will work with the Vice Chief to delegate authorities as necessary and appropriate, subject to the Secretary of the Navy's approval.

**The Joint Chiefs of Staff**

**Section 921 of the FY17 NDAA made changes to section 151 of title 10, U. S. Code, concerning the service of members of the Joint Chiefs (other than the Chairman) as military advisors to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense.**

**9. What is your assessment of the authorities of, and process by which members of the Joint Chiefs provide military advice and opinions to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and civilian leadership of the Department of Defense (DOD)?**

It is my understanding that, if confirmed, I will be permitted, and expected, to provide my best military advice to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense. As a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, my advice must first be addressed to the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, but I am committed to providing the best recommendation(s) based on the situation, facts, and circumstances for which I am asked for advice and/or an opinion.

**10. If confirmed, would you commit to provide your best military advice to the President, National Security Council, Homeland Security Council, and civilian leadership of the Department of Defense, even when your advice differs from that of the Chairman or the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?**

Yes.

**Use of Military Force**

**11. In your view, what factors should be considered in making recommendations to the President on the use of military force?**

If confirmed, my recommendations to the President and Secretary of Defense on the use of military force will be consistent with U.S. domestic and international law. The Department of Defense and the United States Navy exist to defend the nation and protect our national interests. Any use of military force should be consistent with the United States Constitution and informed by the national objectives to be achieved. As only one element of National power, the use of military force should be assessed after the other powers, diplomatic, informational, and

economic measures have failed to defend the nation or protect our national interest. The decision to use military force should then be guided by a clear and definable military objective, and clear end-state. To be most effective, this decision must have the support of the American public and ideally be in concert with our allies and partners. However, if required to defend the nation and protect our allies, the United States must be ready, willing, and able to respond when required.

## **Major Challenges and Priorities**

### **12. What is your vision for the Navy of today? For the Navy of the future?**

The U.S. Navy is manned by the world's greatest Sailors. In the face of increased global competition, America's national security demands the Navy maintain advantage – under, on, and above, the seas. Throughout history, the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps have served as the nation's "away" team. We will continue to sail, fly, and operate everywhere international law permits. The U.S. Navy stands ever-ready to prevail decisively in combat at sea, while focusing on deterring potential adversaries and underpinning the security of global commerce and the international rules-based order.

To sustain America's advantage at sea in the face of increasing global competition, the Navy needs a lethal force that balances current readiness and future modernization to respond to the National Defense Strategy, deter in peace, and, if necessary, decisively win in conflict. This will require a continuous review of doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities to ensure that we maximize our advantages and field a force capable of winning across the entire spectrum of conflict of day-to-day campaigning to major combat operations.

The Navy today, and in the future, will require the right mix of manned and unmanned assets capable of delivering lethal effects not only across the traditional warfighting domains (air, surface, and subsurface), but also the emerging warfare areas such as cyberspace and space operations. To enable this, the Navy requires a robust and secure network infrastructure to link widely distributed forces together as well as resilient logistics and secure and modern installations to sustain them. The Navy must rapidly modernize the force and integrate disruptive technologies such as artificial intelligence, cyberspace tools, quantum computing, additive manufacturing, and robotics. Balancing our requirement to field this future fleet while maintaining the sustainable forward posture and presence that keeps America safe and prosperous is our central challenge.

We seek to continue to build a globally distributed Navy capable of shaping the security environment by campaigning forward to put us in a position of advantage. This enables access, allowing the Navy to campaign effectively to deter adversaries while reassuring our allies and partners and maintaining the rules-based order at sea. Should the need arise, the Navy and Marine Corps team will be capable of defeating aggression as part of the Joint Force in wartime.

**13. What do you consider to be the most significant challenges you will face if confirmed as the Chief of Naval Operations?**

China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) continues the largest, fastest, most comprehensive military buildup since World War II. Both China and Russia are mounting a sustained challenge to the rules-based international order, which has delivered peace, stability, and prosperity to the world for decades. The Naval Force (Navy and Marine Corps team) in coordination with the Joint Forces, allies, and partners must continue to build appropriate manpower, capabilities, and capacities to deter and, if necessary, prevail against these challenges.

**14. What plans do you have for addressing each of these challenges, if confirmed?**

The Naval Services are uniquely organized and equipped to provide forward deployed combat-credible forces to control the seas and project power – from both land and sea. By campaigning forward, the Navy and Marine Corps team provides the United States a strategic advantage by deterring aggression, supporting diplomacy, building partnerships, and protecting America's interests across the spectrum of conflict.

If confirmed, I am committed to prioritizing investments in the nation's premier strategic deterrent capability, the Columbia class SSBN. I am also committed, if confirmed, to delivering a more ready and capable fleet to campaign forward and win in conflict. With our Marine Corps teammates, this will be done by accelerating our Force Design imperatives to support Distributed Maritime Operations (DMO), Expeditionary Advanced Basing Operations (EABO), and Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment (LOCE) to maintain credible deterrence. For the Navy, our Force Design priorities to support DMO are to 1) Expand distance with longer range and more lethal fires; 2) Leverage deception to degrade enemy surveillance systems; 3) Harden our defense to disrupt attacks on the force; 4) Increase distributed operations to fight from multiple threat axes; 5) Ensure delivery by developing resilient logistics; and 6) Generating a decision advantage by accelerating our decisions cycles with secure, survivable, and cyber-resilient systems.

Underpinning every action, I am committed to building a world-class organization that makes the Navy the service of choice both in the military and civil service. Our people are, and will continue to be, the foundation of our strategic advantage.

**15. Given the major challenges you identified above, what other priorities would you set for your term as Chief of Naval Operations, if confirmed?**

If confirmed, my priority is to protect our national interests across the globe by ensuring the fleets are resourced, trained, and ready to maintain maritime dominance. The U.S. Navy's ability to rapidly respond to crises in any theater of operations is one of our hallmarks. I will work with the Joint Force to ensure we are collectively poised to meet the pacing threat and address emerging challenges, as future conflict will likely range from the seabed to space. Additionally, I will work with our allies and partners to address our shared challenges, recognizing that our interoperability and common values are among our greatest advantages over our adversaries.

## **Civilian Control of the Military**

**16. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to ensure that your tenure on the Joint Chiefs of Staff epitomizes the fundamental requirement for civilian control of the Armed Forces embedded in the U.S. Constitution and other laws?**

Civilian control of our military is a fundamental principle in our democracy and ensures our military is accountable to our political leadership. If confirmed, I am committed to always providing my best military advice to the President, National Security Council, Homeland Security Council, and Secretary of Defense. In addition, I am committed to working with Congress and supporting its important oversight responsibilities for our nation's Armed Services.

**17. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to ensure that the Secretary of Defense and the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy are fully engaged in preparing guidance for and reviewing contingency plans?**

If confirmed as the Chief of Naval Operations, I would provide my best military advice to the Secretary of Defense and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy on contingency plans as they relate to the peacetime promotion of the national security interests and prosperity of the United States and for prompt and sustained combat incident to operations at sea. As a member of the Joints Chiefs of Staff, if confirmed, my advice would first be addressed to the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, and I am committed to providing the best recommendation(s) based on the situation, facts, and circumstances for which I am asked for advice or opinion.

**18. How would you define effective civilian control of the military? 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?**

The principle of civilian control of the military places ultimate authority over U.S. armed services in the hands of civilian leadership, with civilian responsibility and control of the military balanced between the executive and legislative branches of the government. The Constitution gives Congress powers on matters concerning the armed forces, including the power to provide and maintain a Navy and to establish the rules and regulations for the military. Congress authorizes and appropriates funds which the military requires to operate; the Senate provides advice and consent to the President for nominations to senior DOD civilian and military positions. Congress also performs important oversight functions by requiring annual posture hearings regarding DOD plans and programs. Finally, both collectively and by committee, Members of Congress shape decisions affecting the military and, as such, play an important role in civilian control of the military.

**19. As a military officer, you take an oath to support and defend the Constitution. How do you balance this obligation with the responsibility to provide your best military advice to civilian leadership, even when that advice may differ from civilian political priorities?**

As a military officer, I have an obligation to remain non-partisan. My responsibility is to formulate my best military advice based on facts, analysis, a consistent framework, and shaped by my 38 years of experience. Defense Department policy and regulations encourage members of the armed forces to carry out their obligations of citizenship while refraining from partisan political activity. I understand and accept these limits on publicly expressing my private views and am committed to providing the best military advice to civilian leadership.

**20. In your view, what is the appropriate role for the Department when supporting law enforcement in state or national emergencies?**

Defense support to civil authorities is initiated by a request for DOD assistance from civil authorities or is authorized by the President or the Secretary of Defense. It is limited by the Posse Comitatus Act and DOD policy, and any support must be consistent with the limits Congress placed on military support to law enforcement. Response begins at the local level with public officials and responders at the county, city, municipality, or town affected by the incident. The military has a historic and enduring role in supporting civil authorities during times of emergency, but ultimately the military's role is in support of a request from civil authorities.

**If confirmed as the Chief of Naval Operations, you will testify regularly before Congress, and may be asked to comment on partisan political matters.**

**21. What is your view of your responsibility to provide your best military advice to Congress while also ensuring that you and your office remain apolitical, recognizing that you serve as a model for other senior uniformed officers and the entire armed forces?**

One of the founding principles of our democracy is the doctrine that places the control of the military in the hands of our civilian political leadership. As a leader in the military, it is our solemn obligation to remain non-partisan and to provide best military advice to our political leadership if and when asked. If confirmed, you have my commitment to provide my best military advice.

**2022 National Defense Strategy**

**The 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) identified China as the “most consequential strategic competitor and the pacing challenge for the Department” and stated that Russia poses an “acute threat,” as illustrated by its brutal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. The NDS also identifies “[m]utually-beneficial Alliances and partnerships” as “an enduring strength for the United States.”**

**22. In your view, does the 2022 NDS accurately assess the current strategic environment, including prioritization among the most critical challenges and enduring threats to the national security of the United States and its allies? Please explain your answer.**

Yes, the National Defense Strategy (NDS), developed with advice from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the Services Chiefs, and Commanders of the Combatant Commands, accurately assesses the current strategic environment with the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a pacing threat and Russia as the acute threat. It further identifies the PRC as the most consequential strategic competitor to the United States and the only competitor capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological capabilities to mount a sustained challenge to the rules-based international order. The challenges we face are numerous and complex. The strategic prioritization provides the emphasis on how we commit resources to meet them. Based on my experience, I am confident that the NDS accurately sets the course for DoD action.

**23. In your view, does the 2022 NDS correctly specify the priority missions of the DOD and the capabilities by which DOD can achieve its objectives in the context of the current strategic environment? What do you perceive as the areas of greatest risk?**

Yes, the NDS correctly specifies DOD's priority missions – the PRC remains the most consequential strategic competitor for the immediate future. Russia still constitutes an acute threat. Beyond challenges from these potential adversaries, we must continue to address the strategic environment at a level needed to maintain strategic deterrence and posture to deter regional aggression while preparing for an uncertain future. As these challenges demand more capability and capacity from the Navy, we must prepare the Fleet and Force to fulfill the requirements of deterring peer nations and prevailing in conflict if necessary. I would be willing to discuss more detail in a classified setting.

**24. Is the Navy adequately sized, structured, and resourced to implement the 2022 NDS and the associated operational plans? Please explain your answer.**

Naval Forces are in high demand supporting the eleven (11) Combatant Commands (CCMD), seven (7) with geographic areas of responsibility (including Space), and four (4) with global functional areas or domains. As a force provider, I believe the Navy can globally employ sufficient, capable forces to meet the requirements established in the current NDS. However, as we look to the future force required, every study conducted since 2016 highlights a need for a larger Navy with a mix of manned and unmanned platforms. The recent Battle Force Ship Assessment Requirements report highlighted the need for 381 manned ships. If confirmed, I am committed to working within the Department of Defense and Administration to ensure the force structure is sized to meet the missions assigned.



**25. If confirmed, how would you address any gaps or shortfalls in the ability of the Navy to meet the demands placed on it by the 2022 NDS and the operational plans that implement the strategy?**

If confirmed, I will continue to prioritize a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent as foundational to every priority in the NDS. We also must continue to maintain and even increase our readiness while taking care of our people and improving the quality of their service, and I have focused on these priorities as Vice Chief. A strong nation requires a Navy that is manned, trained, and equipped to meet the requirements of the NDS. If confirmed, I am committed to providing my best military advice on actions to address gaps and shortfalls to the Secretary of the Navy, Secretary of Defense, and if asked, the President, and Members of Congress, to ensure that any risks to our ability to meet operational plans to implement the NDS are well understood and considered.

**26. If confirmed, what changes or adjustments would you advise the Secretary of the Navy to make in the Navy's implementation of the 2022 NDS?**

The Navy's forward-deployed, combat-credible, conventional forces further strengthen integrated deterrence, fulfilling an enduring role that enables and bolsters numerous elements of national power and influence while providing persistent deterrent and rapid response options across the globe. If confirmed, I would review: 1) Efforts to maximize bi-lateral and multi-lateral interoperability with allies and partners in advanced combat-credible operations; 2) Investment accounts that maximize our capabilities and capacity, to include maximizing the munitions needed for a high-end, sustained war fight, as these are critical to the Navy's readiness both for deterrence and for warfighting; and 3) Investments associated with the 30-year shipbuilding plan and the shore infrastructure to support it, to create the capacity needed to maintain the current and future force structure required to meet the NDS.

**27. Does the Navy have the requisite analytic capabilities and tools to support you, if confirmed as the Chief of Naval Operations, in developing and implementing the force structure, sizing, and shaping plans required to position the Navy to execute the operational plans associated with the 2022 NDS? Please explain your answer.**

The Navy has numerous analytic capabilities and tools including intelligence analysis, exercises and experimentation, modeling and simulation, war-gaming, and others. The Navy leverages these tools to develop and implement force structure, sizing, and shaping plans to ensure Navy's ability to execute operational plans associated with the 2022 NDS. Existing capabilities and tools demonstrate the benefit of analytic implementation. If confirmed, I would have the Navy's analytic enterprise conduct a continuous review of these efforts to ensure the Navy's analytic technologies, tools, and techniques account for the complex and competitive environment both today and in the future.

## **Overall Readiness of the Navy**

### **28. How would you assess the current readiness of the Navy—across the domains of materiel and equipment, personnel, and training—to execute the NDS and associated operational plans?**

As the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, ensuring the readiness of our Force is my top priority. If confirmed, I would continue to make readiness one of my top priorities to deliver a ready and lethal force capable of day-to-day campaigning and high-end conflict. The Navy and Marine Corps represent the Nation's away-team, deployed forward, and supporting our national interests, while being ready to respond in crisis and conflict. The current and future security environment demands ready ships, aircraft, submarines, expeditionary forces, cyber/information forces, and special operations forces that are combat-credible. Across the domains of materiel and equipment, personnel, and training, Navy has implemented and is executing several readiness improvement initiatives, consistently prioritizing readiness since 2017. While more work remains to be done in order to reach our readiness goals, I am committed to ensuring our Navy is ready today and tomorrow.

### **29. In your view, what are the operational challenges for which *current and future* Navy forces should be trained and ready in the context of day-to-day activities, as well as for contingencies?**

As the Nation's forward deployed, day-to-day, force, the Navy and Marine Corps team operates in a battlespace that is complex and increasingly becoming more lethal. Our adversaries are looking to undermine international norms by conducting malign activities in what is referred to the "gray zone." These activities include economic, military, cyber, and information operation activities beyond the regular activities and norms expected of States, and below the use of kinetic military force. As the day-to-day contact force, the Navy and Marine Corps team is uniquely equipped to contest gray zone activities by our adversaries, particularly in the maritime and cyberspace domains. As we campaign forward, our forces must be ready and trained to contest, expose, and attribute these malign behaviors to impose reputational cost and galvanize international resistance. If required, our forces must be ready win in conflict.

### **30. In what specific ways has the Navy improved or not improved its state of readiness across the domains of materiel and equipment, personnel, and training?**

Since 2013, the Navy has steadily improved readiness across all the readiness pillars. As the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, ensuring that our Navy is ready has been my top priority. Although we have made improvements, there is still work to be done. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring that readiness remains one of our top priorities, to include the following areas:

- Overall Navy retention remains healthy, but Navy continues to experience a particularly arduous recruiting environment and is using all available levers in FY23 to meet our goals. Navy is prioritizing manning for sea billets and has increased the number of Sailors on operational sea duty by 7,000 for all sea duty units since 2017, but thousands of sea billets remain unfilled. Based on the success of the Aviation Manning Experience

(AMEX) program, Navy has implemented programs like the Surface Manning Experience (SURFMEX) to better understand each Sailor's training, qualifications, and ship-class history, which will enable the Department to fill billets with people who are the best fit for the job.

- Continued focus on improving aviation maintenance and readiness of aircraft. Navy continues to make solid progress on getting aircraft in and out of maintenance on time. In addition, we are working with industrial base partners to improve the performance of our Service Life Extension/Modification (SLM) Program for F/A-18s, recently standing up SLM capability at Fleet Readiness Center Southwest to increase throughput.
- Continued improvements in driving down ship depot maintenance delays. In both the private and the public shipyards, we are seeing trends in a positive direction. Data and advanced analytics now inform the plan for each maintenance period and yield improved processes for better-scoped work. Since FY19, days of maintenance delay on major CNO Surface Ship Availabilities in private shipyards have been reduced by 39 percent, and on-time completion steadily increased from 34 percent in FY19 to 41 percent in FY22 for all availabilities, despite the additional impacts associated with the COVID pandemic. Public shipyards also have seen improvements over the last several years, with maintenance delays on submarine and aircraft carrier availabilities reduced by 40 percent since FY19, and on-time completion steadily increasing from 29 percent in FY19 to 33 percent in FY22 for all availabilities. Today, we are projecting about 700 days of maintenance delays in the public yards for both submarines and aircraft carriers, which is an improvement from over 1,500 days of delay in 2019. The goal is to drive this number down to the only acceptable number – zero.

**31. If confirmed, what would you do to restore full spectrum Navy readiness, and under what timelines?**

If confirmed, I will continue to prioritize readiness and taking care of our people as the Navy's top priority, while making progress on the capabilities we need to maintain our combat credibility far into the future. I will maintain a holistic approach to readiness, including personnel, equipment, supply, training, ordnance, networks, and infrastructure. While my strategic outlook will span the next three Future Years Defense Programs, the urgency for meaningful readiness improvements needs to continue at pace.

**Budget**

**32. If confirmed, by what standards would you measure the adequacy of the Navy budget?**

If confirmed, I would measure the adequacy of the Navy budget by the risk level in executing the National Defense Strategy and our ability to pace the threats in the strategic environment. With acute and persistent threats to our national security, we will undoubtedly continue to be challenged in balancing our investments in the future fleet while sustaining our current readiness (operations, maintenance, munitions, people and training) to campaign forward. These foundations keep America safe and prosperous. Stable and predictable funding from Congress will be as equally important as adequate funding.

**Section 222a of title 10, U.S. Code provides that not later than 10 days after the President's submission of the defense budget to Congress, each Service Chief shall submit to the congressional defense committees a report that lists, in order of priority, the unfunded priorities of his or her armed force.**

**33. What are your views of this statutory requirement and the utility of unfunded priorities lists?**

I understand that the Unfunded Priorities List (UPL) is directed by 10 U.S.C. 222a, which requires senior military leaders provide Congress a list each year with the budget submission. As I understand it, UPLs are provided to Congress and highlight executable ways to enhance or accelerate capabilities and reduce warfighting risk, beyond what may have been provided in the President's budget request. Within the President's budget request, I am committed to providing my best military advice on the most effective balance of capabilities that advance the goals of the NDS.

**34. If confirmed, do you agree to provide your unfunded priorities list to Congress in a timely manner?**

Yes, if confirmed, I will comply with all my Title 10 responsibilities.

### **Alliances and Partnerships**

**The 2022 NDS stresses the importance of U.S. alliances and partnerships and considers these relationships a critical strategic advantage.**

**35. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to strengthen existing U.S. alliances and partnerships, build new partnerships, and exploit opportunities in international cooperation?**

Our ability to integrate with our allies and partners is a key advantage and stands in sharp contrast to our adversaries. If confirmed, I will strengthen U.S. alliances and partnerships through visits, exchanges, education, exercises, and operations, all designed to build trust and enhance interoperability. I will seek to promote shared values in order to build new partnerships. I will also seek to enhance international cooperation and relationships by identifying and addressing our mutual challenges, while focusing on the capability and access requirements that advance U.S. security interests.

**36. What are the major challenges for strengthening existing alliances and partnerships or building new ones, including for improving interoperability and shared operational concepts? What steps would you recommend, if confirmed, for overcoming these challenges?**

The Navy and Marine Corps team have a strong network of allies and partners across the globe. U.S. Naval Forces represent the partner of choice for many developed and emerging nations.

The key to success is to ensure unity of effort across the operational lines of effort. Areas that require continued focus and improvement include expanding efforts to ensure interoperability, information sharing, continued multi-lateral training and operations that execute shared tactics, techniques, and procedures, and development of like-minded values and leaders. If confirmed, I am committed to strengthening not only long-standing alliances and partnerships, but expanding and building new partnerships through military exercises such as the Navy's Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC), Baltic Operations (BALTOPS), and UNITAS exercises, as well as humanitarian civilian assistance missions such as Pacific Partnership and Continuing Promise.

### **Lessons Learned from Post-Mishap Investigations**

**The report of the post-mishap investigation into the June 17, 2017 collision between the *USS Fitzgerald* and a Philippine-flagged container ship found that the collision was avoidable and resulted from an accumulation of “smaller errors over time,” ultimately resulting in a lack of adherence to sound navigational practices. Similarly, the report of investigation into the collision of the *USS John S. McCain* and merchant vessel *Alnic MC* on August 21, 2017, also was avoidable and resulted primarily from crew complacency, over-confidence, and lack of procedural compliance.**

**37. What has the Navy done to counter the “smaller errors over time” and the “complacency, overconfidence, and lack of procedural compliance” that resulted in these otherwise “avoidable” collisions?**

The Navy has implemented sweeping training and continuous assessment reforms to the Surface Fleet. The Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) career training continuum has been standardized to include required hours and qualifications, improved Operational Risk Management (ORM) training, crew rest and fatigue management, pass/fail high density, night-time and no-notice extremis seamanship and navigation scenarios, and ten individual career-wide Go/No Go Mariner Assessment/Competency Check Milestones. All Navy homeports now have established and are expanding seamanship and navigation simulators, where bridge and combat information watch teams are qualified by courses and instructors certified to the International Maritime Organization's Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping. Training, assessment, and certification criteria for watch teams, up to the ship's Commanding Officer, are standardized throughout the fleet. Finally, Commanding Officer standing orders, the direction from the Commanding Officer to their crew, are based on a standard set of baseline orders.

**38. If confirmed, specifically what more would you do to correct for the deficiencies that were found to have caused these two collisions?**

As a result of the collisions in 2017 and the fire that destroyed *USS Bonhomme Richard* (LHD-6) in 2020, the Navy implemented sweeping changes targeted at safe operations through compliance with established safety standards; increasing fleet effectiveness by focusing on improving overall fleet manning and training; and ensuring long-term sustained readiness by driving toward a stronger culture of operational excellence. As part of these changes, the Navy implemented a permanent and formal oversight process referred to as the “Learning to Action Board” to continually monitor compliance, identify risks, and implement corrective actions.

This board is co-chaired by the Undersecretary of the Navy and the Vice Chief of Naval Operations. If confirmed, I am committed to improving the Navy's culture of organizational learning through continued review, implementation and assessment of lessons learned, and developing organizations capable of self-assessing, self-correcting, and always learning. In addition, I will work with our Fleet Commanders, our Safety Command, and our Systems Commands to assess our unit readiness to ensure operational excellence, and to prioritize programmatic and materiel changes necessary to continue improving ship operational safety, leadership development, and overall quality of life for our Sailors.

**The John S. McCain NDAA for FY 2019 included 10 provisions related to the readiness of Navy surface ships, each of which require action by the Secretary of the Navy and/or the Chief of Naval Operations: sections 322, 323, 334, 335, 524, 525, 526, 527, 911, and 915.**

**39. To date, what actions has the Navy taken to implement these 10 provisions of law?**

To date, the Navy has made targeted changes to a series of policies for integrated training, readiness, and generating and employing forces and continues to implement the provisions outlined in the 2019 NDAA focused on improving surface ship readiness. These policies clearly establish roles and responsibilities for the chain of command, streamline administration, and create a single material and readiness standard for the Fleet. Similarly, there is an incorporated data analytics and assessment review process for leadership to identify areas for further investigation. The 10-year limitation on forward deployment of naval vessels has been fully implemented to provide the best prepared ships and lessen the burden to overseas maintenance infrastructures. To man ships at their most capable, we continue to work to determine the threshold of Sailors necessary to conduct operations to meet the Navy working week, operational at-sea and in-port requirements, and crew rest and fatigue mitigation policies. Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) seamanship and navigation curriculums are certified to meet the International Maritime Organization's Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping. The Navy has also fully implemented 10 individual SWO Go/No Go Mariner Assessment/Competency Check Milestones. All SWO watch records are now kept in Mariner Skills Logbooks which are audited as part of the overall qualification process.

**40. If confirmed, what further actions under the purview of the Chief of Naval Operations will you take to implement these provisions?**

In addition to implementing the provisions contained in the 2019 NDAA, the Navy has established the Learning to Action Board, co-chaired by the Under Secretary of the Navy and the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, and a Naval Safety Command, led by a 2-Star Flag Officer to build a culture of excellence by continuously monitoring and assessing our fleet units to identify, assess, and implement mitigation measures to reduce operational risks.

If confirmed, I am committed to continuing our assessments to determine if additional measures should be implemented to make us a more combat effective organization. To be a combat effective organization, we must have a culture that is capable of self-assessing, self-correcting,

and always learning. I am also committed to continuing the refinement of command and control structures by streamlining administrative, training, and readiness relationships within the Fleet. I will also prioritize manning our Navy at established levels prescribed by our manning models. The men and women who serve, operate, and maintain our Navy are our single most important resource. I will continue to emphasize the professional training and qualification of our Sailors throughout their careers.

## **Joint Operations**

**Naval operations are becoming increasingly joint as Marines plan to deploy in larger numbers and on a wider range of ships; the U.S. Army and Air Force invest in counter-maritime capabilities; and both air and naval forces continue to develop and implement capabilities to defeat anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) networks.**

**41. Are the Services' current roles and mission assignments appropriate in light of today's Joint warfighting requirements? Should certain roles and missions be realigned or divested? Please explain your answer.**

Navy's current roles and mission assignments are appropriate for today's Joint warfighting requirements. Navy's forward-deployed, combat-credible conventional forces strengthen integrated deterrence and fulfill an enduring role that bolsters elements of national power and influence; while providing persistent rapid response options across the globe. The flexible employment of forward deployed decisive naval power remains the nation's most potent and versatile instrument of military power and influence. Navy's core functions of sea control, power projection, deterrence, maritime security, and sealift are essential to ensure the collective success of the Joint Force across the spectrum of conflict in all domains.

As we evaluate the present and future requirements for Joint warfighting, we recognize naval operations require continued integration with the Marine Corps, Army, Air Force, Space Force, and Special Operations Forcer. The need for continued inter-Service integration is evident as we adapt to project power across all domains and in missions such as Anti-Submarine Warfare, Cyber Operations, Logistics and Sustainment, and A2/AD Countermeasures. If confirmed, I am committed to working transparently and collaboratively with the Joint Chiefs to regularly assess roles and missions that need to be realigned or divested to meet the pacing threat and address emerging challenges, as future conflict will range from the seabed to space.

**42. Which other Service doctrines and capabilities offer the greatest opportunity for synergy with the Navy in joint operations?**

The Navy leverages the guidance provided in the National Defense Strategy, National Military Strategy, and the Joint Warfighting Concept to drive change in our concepts like Distributed Maritime Operations, with an eye toward greater integration, while looking for opportunities to better incorporate maritime capabilities into other Service concepts and doctrine. Navy also fully supports Joint concepts such as Army Operational Concepts 2040, the Air Force Future Operating Concept, and the Concept for Integrated Maritime-Space Operations in Contested Environments, all underpinned by Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2). These

efforts are supported by the Navy's Analytic Master Plan and the Strategic Education Alignment Plan to ensure key decisions are both threat-informed and data-driven.

Increased cross-service integration is essential to winning against any adversary, today and in the future. The Navy is integrating our capabilities with the Marine Corps to maximize the effectiveness of their Stand-In Forces supporting Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment (LOCE) and Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO). We also continue to work closely with the Army, Air Force, and Space Force to share sensor data, synthesize intelligence, and enable effects against targets. Finally, we are in lock-step with the Coast Guard in mutually supporting our basing needs and complementing each other's service-specific maritime missions.

**43. What innovative ideas are you considering to increase Service interdependence and interoperability to accomplish missions and tasks in support of DOD objectives in joint operations?**

The Navy is working with the Joint Force to leverage emerging technologies to better integrate maritime capabilities across the Joint Force, and has discussed Common Command, Control, Computing, Communications, Cyber, Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance and Targeting (C5ISR) systems, emerging space capabilities, and increased integration and collaboration through exercises, war games, experimentation, modeling, simulation, and analysis with the other Services. We are also working with the other Services to create a common Electronic Warfare technology infrastructure to foster rapid development and future upgrades. Under the Joint All Domain Command and Control (JADC2) umbrella, the Navy continues to deliver the Naval Operational Architecture (NOA) through Project OVERMATCH, working deliberately with Air Force, Space Force, Army, and USMC to identify and deploy service interoperability opportunities in the areas of networking, tools and data standards, and battle management aids.

**The Air Force is moving to a disaggregated architecture for Air Battle Management. The Navy, on the other hand, is investing heavily in the E-2D Advanced Hawkeye and P-8 Poseidon for managing operations of naval forces.**

**44. In your view, why are the Air Force and the Navy pursuing different strategies?**

The Navy has led the way in investments in the airborne Command and Control force by fielding the E-2D. As a mobile airborne sensing and network platform, the E-2D is a critical node in distributed maritime operations, integrating counter air and surface fires while connecting Joint forces both afloat and ashore. These efforts are aligned to sustain interoperability with the Joint force in a similar fashion as USAF's coming investments in the E-7 Wedgetail. Both efforts ensure that highly trained and skilled tactical operators on platforms equipped with advanced command & control networks and sensors provide dynamic broad area Command and Control of Joint and Coalition forces.

The P-8 Poseidon provides unique Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance for the maritime domain, with a specific mission tailored to support the Navy's Theater Undersea



Warfare mission. The P-8 is the most capable tactical aviation platform in the world designed to locate, track, and if necessary, attack adversary submarines and undersea unmanned systems.

**45. What is your understanding of the Navy’s approach to airborne battle management and how do the Navy and the Air Force intend to execute joint airborne battle management in a high-end fight?**

As a Joint force, the Navy and the Air Force will continue to share Command and Control of operational forces in combat and are continuing to collaborate at all levels to modernize architecture and forces. Today, the Navy’s E-2D seamlessly operates within theater specific Command and Control structures, executing air battle management of Joint and Coalition forces in lieu of, as well as, side by side with the Air Forces E-3 Sentry and Control & Reporting Centers and will continue to do so in the future with the USAF’s E-7 Wedgetail and Tactical Operations Centers. If confirmed, I would work to maximize unity of effort in supporting our Joint forces. The Navy, through efforts to modernize Naval Open Architecture in support of the broader JADC2 effort, strives to deliver systems and networks required to coordinate and direct aircraft and weapons in the high-end fight.

**Acquisition**

**In recent National Defense Authorization Acts (NDAAs), Congress expanded and refined the acquisition-related functions of the Chief of Naval Operations.**

**46. If confirmed, how would you assist the Secretary of the Navy in the performance of certain acquisition-related functions, while ensuring compatibility with the duties and responsibilities of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, and Acquisition (as established in title 10, U.S. Code, sections 8014 and 8016)?**

If confirmed, I intend to build on my existing close partnership with the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (ASN) for Research, Development, and Acquisitions (RD&A), working to identify potential improvements to requirements development, resource allocation and acquisition management processes for the Secretary of the Navy, while ensuring the combat readiness of naval forces.

**47. If confirmed, what actions would you take to improve all three aspects of the acquisition process—requirements, acquisition, and budgeting?**

We need to make every possible effort to ensure that our requirements, acquisition and budgeting processes out-pace our competitors. If confirmed, I will continue to collaborate closely within the Department of the Navy and with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Congress, and industry so we can more efficiently and effectively get the best capabilities in the hands of our Sailors at a pace that gives them significant warfighting advantage.

**48. If confirmed, what actions would you propose, if any, to ensure that requirements are realistic, technically achievable, and prioritized?**

If confirmed, I will continue close coordination with the Fleet and Intelligence Communities to ensure relevance and prioritization of requirements. Early coordination with the Test and Evaluation and Acquisition communities is needed in the requirements generation process to ensure feasible, testable requirements are created, along with metrics to measure compliance progress.

**49. If confirmed, what specific measures would you recommend to control “requirements creep” in the defense acquisition system?**

We must be disciplined in the execution of our programs. We must take particular care in setting the right requirements up front and then holding the line on any changes. The later in the program new requirements are added, the more costly those additions usually are. If confirmed, I will continue to ensure that the Navy’s Resources and Requirements Review Board regularly convenes to approve and validate any additional requirement to programs after the system requirement/functional system engineering review, approving only urgent, essential additional requirements.

**50. If confirmed, how would you utilize your authority to arrest the exponential escalation in cost that, in recent history, has marked the acquisition life-cycle of Service platforms and weapons systems?**

If confirmed, I will strive to strike a balance between the acquisition of new technologies, the current fleet readiness, and cost. This will require some capability tradeoffs and compromises, but with continued close coordination with ASN (RD&A), we will ensure discipline and prudence in the acquisition life-cycle of Service platforms.

**51. In your view, in whom should accountability for large-scale acquisition failures and extraordinary cost overruns vest?**

I am a firm believer that authority and accountability must be aligned for leadership to succeed. Accountability for acquisition failures lies with those who have the authority to manage them, including everyone in the chain of command from the SECNAV and CNO down to program managers and requirements officers.

**52. In your view, are there other acquisition-related roles or responsibilities that should be assigned to the Chief of Naval Operations and to the other Service Chiefs?**

The roles and responsibilities of the Service Chiefs in the acquisition process are appropriate. Continued, regular coordination with the acquisition community is the key to successful program execution. If confirmed, I will continue to review the authorities provided, and if necessary, recommend additional authorities that could enhance the acquisition process.

**53. If confirmed, how would you ensure the “process” of programs of record does not limit service investment in portfolios of capabilities or mission threads?**

Each year during Program Objective Memorandum (POM) development, the Navy applies a strategy-driven, analytically-based process, including both programs of record and other capability investments, to prioritize recommended investments and divestments competing for Navy resources within our available Total Obligation Authority (TOA). All issues competing for resources (programs of record and otherwise) are aligned to Defense and Navy strategic priorities, and our process ensures we apply the right resources to our portfolios of capabilities, mission threads, and programs of record.

**54. If confirmed, how would you resource enablers (for example, authorities to operate or data or certification) that Program Managers / Program Executive Officers see as outside of their requirements?**

We will continue to monitor and account for the cost of these activities, and will also increase the use of enterprise data management applications, to ensure enablers are resourced/shared efficiently at either the Program or Program Executive Offices(PEO)/Systems Command (SYSCOM) level (as appropriate).

**55. How would you enable processes for the Navy that empower acquisition professionals and reduce institutional policy barriers to enable cross service requirements development and capabilities discussions?**

Navy will continue to make strides in the training and professionalization of our requirements community and acquisition professionals. By working across communities within the Navy (ASN(RD&A), SYSCOMs, OPNAV) and without (Joint Staff, Services, 4th estate) we can ensure that acquisition and requirements professionals with an enterprise-wide view are integrated into the OPNAV staff and into requirements management training.

**A natural tension exists between the objectives of major defense acquisition programs to reduce cost and accelerate schedule and the need to ensure performance meets requirements and specifications—the objective of the test and evaluation function.**

**56. Has the Secretary of the Navy assigned to the Chief of Naval Operations responsibility for those aspects of the function of research and development relating to test and evaluation? If so, how would you exercise this responsibility, if confirmed?**

The Secretary has assigned the Chief of Naval Operations responsibility for those aspects of the function of research and development relating to operational test and evaluation for Navy acquisition programs. If confirmed, I will engage with the necessary stakeholders to ensure that testing is adequate, operationally realistic, and directly informs fielding decisions.

**57. What is your assessment of the appropriate balance between the desire to reduce acquisition cycle times and the need to perform adequate test and evaluation?**

The appropriate balance must be based on an assessment of the known risks. Understanding the risks will enable the right balance between the desire to move quickly and with collecting the data required to ensure weapons systems performance is known and acceptable prior to fielding. If confirmed, I will focus on reducing the bureaucratic burden slowing the testing community while still maintaining adequate testing to ensure data exists to make sound decisions during product development.

**58. Under what circumstances, if any, do you believe it appropriate to procure weapon systems and equipment that have not met all criteria outlined in the plan for operational effectiveness and operational suitability?**

Test and evaluation of all systems, regardless of acquisition approaches, is critical. There is not a circumstance where weapons systems and equipment should not be procured without demonstrations of effectiveness, suitability, survivability and safety.

However, there may be areas the Department can reduce the level of testing and rigor to expedite fielding of capability. With regard to the procurement of equipment, where a robust and mature commercial market exists, there is an opportunity to leverage existing test and user data to support reduced government testing and expedited fielding.

**59. Are you satisfied with the Navy's test and evaluation capabilities, including the test and evaluation workforce and infrastructure?**

The Department's test and evaluation capabilities are critical in delivering new technologies that have been proven ready for Fleet deployment. If confirmed, I will continue to assess these capabilities, including the test and evaluation workforce and infrastructure, to ensure we are adequately resourced and fully capable of supporting the development and test and evaluation of new technologies.

**60. How do you believe test and evaluation can better focus on mission accomplishment rather than requirements verification?**

The new Navy/Marine Corps Capabilities Based Test and Evaluation approach aligns test and evaluation activities and program deficiencies directly to mission tasks and operational conditions. This allows the program manager to prioritize activity to address deficiencies with the greatest operational impact first and enables more informed decisions earlier in the program lifecycle. This approach will enable the Navy to "test like we fight" and provide reporting in a mission context early and throughout the acquisition program.

**61. Is the test and evaluation community sufficiently adapting to best practices that accommodates iterative development as opposed to a serial process and late discovery of issues?**

The Navy test and evaluation community is rapidly adapting to incorporate best practices to support Navy programs that can benefit and leverage iterative and accelerated development strategies. There are several programs that are looking to incorporate agile and other iterative approaches to accelerate delivery of needed warfighting capability. Developmental and operational test and evaluation teams are fully integrated with these programs and evolving processes and procedures to execute Capability Based Test and Evaluation within the required timelines. If confirmed, I will continue to work with OSD and the other Services to share and leverage test and evaluation best practices.

**62. What are your views on the appropriate roles of Office of the Secretary of Defense developmental and operational testing organizations with respect to testing of Navy systems?**

I support the established role of OSD for the testing of Navy systems. OSD oversight provides an independent assessment of the adequacy of the testing of Navy and Marine Corps systems. They also have visibility across the other services which presents an opportunity to apply lessons learned and best practices in other services to improve the Department's ability to deliver effective warfighting capability at the speed of relevance and more efficiently.

If confirmed, I will ensure Navy Developmental Testing/Operational Testing (DT/OT) organizations, as well as Navy program offices, work closely with OSD in the testing and assessment of Navy systems.

**63. Do you think the current operational test and evaluation system also provides for the flexibility to assess commercial technologies that might be acquired or fielded by the Department of Defense through means or processes that are not traditional acquisition programs of record?**

I believe that the current system does provide for the flexibility to assess commercial technologies. I believe that the commercial industry is dis-incentivized by the nature of the DOD funding cycle as it limits what can be transitioned into a program of record. Stable and predictable funding solidifies strategic planning, incentivizes our commercial partners, strengthens our industrial base and safeguards our Sailors.

If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the bureaucratic limitations associated with the process are optimized for expeditious transfer.

## **Joint Acquisition**

### **64. What are your views regarding the merit and feasibility of joint development and acquisition programs?**

I fully support the joint development of acquisition programs where it makes sense. If a program is intended to provide capabilities to the Joint Warfighter and multiple Services, and if joint development is expected to result in the more efficient use of DOD resources, then I believe it has merit.

### **65. What additional programs would you consider to be candidates for joint development and acquisition?**

Common Command, Control, Computing, Communications, Cyber, Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance and Targeting (C5ISRT) systems and counter-C5ISRT systems; all space-based capabilities; meteorology and environmental monitoring; Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD), including defense against hypersonic weapons; counter-uncrewed systems; Positioning, Navigation and Timing (PNT); and contested logistics.

### **66. What are your views on joint, enabling or cross-cutting capabilities that may not be treated as acquisition programs, such as JADC2? Do you have sufficient authority to advocate or manage Navy capabilities to ensure there are no seams in planning or execution of such efforts?**

The Navy has sufficient authority to advocate for and manage joint, enabling and cross-cutting capabilities. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Navy continues to make prioritized investment recommendations to ensure our networks, data, tools, and infrastructure support the entire spectrum of operations from competition to crisis. The Navy will continue to deliver the Naval Operational Architecture (NOA) through Project OVERMATCH, which is the Navy's contribution to JADC2, and will continue to develop battle management aid architectures, tools, and data standards to support decision making at machine speed.

## **Recapitalizing the Fleet**

**Despite the Navy's 355-ship requirement, it is currently operating with only 289 battle force ships. Additionally, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) concluded that the Navy has underestimated the costs for its FY 2019 30-year shipbuilding plan by approximately 30 percent.**

### **67. Do you consider the 355-ship force structure requirement to be appropriate given the current and future strategic environment? If not, please describe what changes need to be made.**

The Navy's current force structure is sufficient to meet all adjudicated and assigned missions. However, as we look to the future, every analytical assessment since 2016 calls for a larger Navy. The recent Battle Force Ship Assessment and Requirement Report assessed the

requirement as 381 manned ships. The analytic work supporting this assessment reflects the tenets of the 2022 National Defense Strategy and is aligned to the Department of Defense Planning Scenarios.

**68. Do you agree with the CBO's assessment that there is significant cost risk associated with the Navy's shipbuilding plan?**

I am acutely sensitive to the cost of our Navy – both the future force we are building as well as today's force that we are sustaining. The Navy and the shipbuilding industrial base leadership are closely monitoring and aligned in controlling and reducing the cost of the Navy ship acquisition programs and improving contract performance. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring our cost estimates are accurate and reflective of the current economic factors.

**69. What actions do you believe are necessary to execute the Navy's shipbuilding plan within the Navy's budget estimates?**

The Navy needs to be funded to maintain steady procurement profiles and to continue to work with the industrial base to grow and improve the shipbuilding workforce to maintain cost, schedule and performance.

**70. How would you characterize the risks to national security posed by the current shortfall in battle force ships and tactical aircraft?**

The Navy's current force structure is sufficient to meet all adjudicated and assigned missions. However, as we look to the future, every analytical assessment since 2016 calls for a larger Navy. The recent Battle Force Ship Assessment and Requirement Report assessed the requirement as 381 manned ships. The analytic work supporting this assessment reflects the tenets of the 2022 National Defense Strategy and is aligned to the Department of Defense Planning Scenarios. Shortfalls in force structure increase the risk in our ability to support Combatant Command requirements in the execution of the tasks assigned within the National Defense Strategy. I would be happy to provide additional views regarding risk in a classified forum.

**71. What adjustments to the respective shipbuilding programs are necessary and appropriate to reduce the risk of erosion in cost, schedule, or performance? To reduce the operational risk?**

The key factors that impact shipbuilding program cost, schedule, or performance are generally associated with the proper development of cost estimates, the technical maturity of the design, the readiness of the underlying technologies to be incorporated, and the industrial base's readiness and capacity to build these platforms. The Navy continuously monitors and reviews cost, schedule and performance of the shipbuilding programs at the highest level of leadership. In addition, it is critical that the Navy work closely with our industrial base partners early in the program to ensure requirements and schedules are reviewed to better capture cost and schedule performance objectives. If confirmed as the Chief of Naval Operations, I will be responsible for the development of the requirements and to assist the Secretary of the Navy in decisions

regarding balancing resources and priorities, and associated trade-offs among cost, schedule, technical feasibility, and performance on major defense acquisition programs. I am committed to working closely with the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, and Acquisition to ensure we establish the conditions to deliver these programs at cost and on schedule.

**72. What additional adjustments would you consider if the Navy's shipbuilding program comes under further fiscal pressures, either due to reduced total resources or cost growth in individual programs?**

The Navy requires the necessary resources to carry out assigned missions as outlined in the National Defense Strategy. If confirmed, my priorities would be to first ensure our Navy is properly manned, trained, maintained and equipped to respond when called. We must ensure we properly balance the resources provided across the entire portfolio from current readiness to future capabilities to ensure our Navy is always ready. This will require us to build and deliver new capabilities as some of our older platforms near the end of their service life. The Columbia Class SSBN program will remain the Navy's number one procurement priority. Other programmatic adjustment recommendations would be based on the magnitude of any resource gaps, while balancing readiness, capabilities, and capacity. I am committed to working with the Secretary of the Navy to drive costs down across all our programs, activities, and operations, and to maximize the resources provided to enable the Navy to provide ready and relevant forces.

**Improving Government Technical Control in Shipbuilding**

**A June 2018 Government Accountability Office report found that the last eight combatant lead ships cost a total of \$8 billion more than the initial budget; were delivered at least six months late; and were marked by dozens of deficiencies.**

**73. Do you believe acquisition performance on recent lead ships has been satisfactory?**

No. The Navy and the shipbuilding industrial base leadership are closely monitoring and aligned on improving the performance across the board in Navy ship acquisition programs. Ongoing and forthcoming ship programs are embracing leadership and problem-solving best practices to reduce risk to shipbuilding programs through land-based testing (e.g. Constellation class FFG), design maturity metrics (e.g. Columbia Class SSBN), and modern digital engineering (e.g. aviation platforms).

**In a March 27, 2019 hearing before the Seapower subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee, the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, and Acquisition acknowledged the challenges of building lead ships and highlighted four initiatives to improve performance: (1) better integration of requirements and acquisition; (2) improved sub-system prototyping; (3) matching necessary government talent to program needs; and (4) investing in the right technologies.**



**74. Do you agree with the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, and Acquisition that each of these four initiatives are worth pursuing to improve performance on lead ships? Please explain your answer.**

Yes, we have learned and incorporated lessons from previous lead ships and these four initiatives as outlined by the ASN (RD&A) are staples of risk mitigation to ensure success in building and delivering lead ships. These initiatives include processes such as land-based engineering and testing sites, which are critical for testing and integrating ship systems. If confirmed, I look forward to working with ASN (RD&A) to continue improving performance on lead ships.

**75. What other initiatives do you believe should be explored to improve on recent lead ship performance?**

I support initiatives that involve our industry partners earlier in the design and acquisition process. Pairing ship designers from the government and industry provides a collaborative environment for the team (government and industry) to understand the requirements to build the ship and will help inform the detail design before production. The initiative will also afford the shipbuilders time to improve production processes. The Navy has adopted this initiative for our DDG (X) program and if confirmed, I am committed to working with ASN (RD&A) to refine the initiative.

**Nuclear Enterprise**

**76. Do you agree that modernizing each leg of the nuclear triad and the National Nuclear Security Administration weapons complex is a critical national security priority?**

Yes. All three legs of the Triad are reaching the end of their design lives. . Full scope modernization is critical to ensuring that our nuclear deterrent remains safe, secure, and effective. The relatively benign security environment of the last two and a half decades is no longer guaranteed, and we must invest now to preserve the credibility of our nuclear deterrent for the future.

**77. What is your assessment of the efficacy of current nuclear modernization acquisition programs with respect to nuclear certification of the systems at issue?**

I assess that the Navy's transition plan for the Ohio-class to the Columbia-class (CLB) SSBN program and the TRIDENT II Life Extension (D5LE) to the TRIDENT II D5LE2 program will maintain the Navy's current level of nuclear certification through the 2080s.

The CLB SSBN Program is the Navy's number one acquisition priority and must meet Initial and Full Operational Capability (IOC and FOC) requirements in order to ensure strategic deterrent mission requirements have no gaps. CLB is currently on schedule to deliver by the contracted 84-month timeline. The Navy has a robust plan to support CLB post-construction testing and certification to ensure nuclear certification requirements are met prior to the ship's first strategic deterrent patrol.

TRIDENT II D5LE2 is the second extension of the existing TRIDENT II D5. Funding for the D5 Life Extension 2 (D5LE2) is necessary now to extend the life of the Trident II through the 2080s. D5LE2 requires time and appropriate funding to ensure successful redesign and critical maturation of technology to ensure it meets the required nuclear certification in time for its first deployment in FY39 on Columbia Hull 9.

**78. Do you believe the current Navy program of record for the *Columbia*-class submarine is sufficient to support the full modernization of the Navy's leg of the nuclear triad?**

Yes. The Columbia-class SSBN Major Defense Acquisition Program will meet the Navy's established requirements for a survivable strategic deterrence platform. In conjunction with the fielding of the successor to the D5LE, D5LE2, the combined weapons system will ensure the credibility of the sea-based leg of the strategic nuclear triad into the 2080s.

**79. What are your ideas for working across the Joint Force to mitigate the risk that all three legs of the nuclear triad will be "aging out" simultaneously at the end of the 2020s?**

The current nuclear triad acquisition programs of record are each individually designed to ensure that gaps do not arise in their respective capabilities for air, sea, and land. The Columbia-class SSBN program is phased to maintain continuity of sea-based strategic deterrence as the Ohio-class SSBNs are retired.

It is important that the Air Force and Navy work together to ensure we manage the constrained industrial-base that provides some common components, including rocket motors, to ensure each service's efforts do not impact the others.

Additionally, in conjunction with the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Nuclear Weapons Council, we are actively working together to identify options available to both services to mitigate any potential technical or programmatic risks as both services transition their strategic deterrents over the next two decades to ensure that all strategic deterrent mission requirements are met.

**In 2014, then-Secretary of Defense Hagel directed a comprehensive review of the DOD nuclear enterprise in response to incidents involving U.S. nuclear forces and their senior leadership. The report included recommendations to improve personnel management, enforce security requirements, increase deliberate senior leader focus and attention, enact and sustain a change in culture, and to address numerous other concerns identified. Almost 10 years later, responsibility for addressing these recommendations and monitoring implementation of corrective actions has been transferred from OSD to the Military Services.**

**80. Based on your experience, is the Navy maintaining appropriate focus on implementing the corrective actions related to the Nuclear Enterprise Review?**

The Navy is grateful for the work that went into the Nuclear Enterprise Review. I am confident that actions taken to address the findings of the Nuclear Enterprise Review will result in a Nuclear Enterprise that is better positioned to respond to evolving threats around the globe. A reliable, secure, and credible nuclear deterrent serves as the backbone of the National Defense Strategy while reassuring our partners and allies of the United States' resolve.

**81. If confirmed, what will be your role in ensuring that the Navy continues its efforts to improve the morale, welfare, and quality of life of the sailors charged to execute and support the Navy's nuclear mission?**

The morale, welfare, and quality of life of all sailors in the Navy are important to me. Specific to the Navy's nuclear mission, it is vital to ensure that these sailors understand the importance of their mission to the Navy and the Nation.

Commensurate with other critical rates in the Navy, I will continue to support special and incentive pays where appropriate, which have mitigated manning shortfalls, especially within the Active Duty Component. Special pay must increase to keep pace with inflation and are crucial to sustain healthy manning and address the military/civilian pay gap.

If confirmed, I will continue to advance the Navy's Quality of Service efforts initiated in the last year. Specifically, the Navy identified key Quality of Work and Quality of Life requirements and established specific lines of effort to strengthen programs that positively impact mind, body, and spirit (e.g., fitness, nutrition, housing, mental health, and Wi-Fi access). These programs will improve the lives of Sailors and their families, starting with Sailors on ships in maintenance availabilities.

**Columbia-class Submarines**

**Navy leaders have testified that the *Columbia*-class program will require significant investment and will result in equivalent reductions within the Navy budget, if a higher Navy topline or outside funding is not provided.**

**82. What is your recommendation for funding the *Columbia*-class program?**

CLB is the Navy's #1 acquisition priority, with no further margin for program delay. The Navy must fully fund CLB to meet U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) requirements for the first patrol no later than October 2030 to replace retiring Ohio-class SSBNs.

The CLB program will continue to represent a significant proportion of the total Shipbuilding and Conversion budget as it enters full production. CLB represents about 1-2% of the overall DOD budget which is consistent with budget share when the Sea Based Strategic Deterrent was last recapitalized decades ago. Recognizing that this is a generational recapitalization, it is

important to ensure other required Navy programs continue to be maintained throughout the CLB construction timeline.

**83. What additional authorities do you believe are necessary to make acquisition of the *Columbia*-class program more efficient and effective?**

The Navy appreciates continued support of National Sea Based Deterrence Fund (NSBDF) authorities for the *Columbia*-class SSBNs, and has found success reducing procurement costs and sending clear signals to the industrial base from this authority. The Fiscal Year 2024 President's Budget continues investment in initiatives to reduce construction schedule risk and enable cost savings. Navy continued funding for Integrated Enterprise Plan initiatives (Multi-Program Material Procurement, Continuous Production, and Production Backup Units). The Navy has determined expansion of the Continuous Production authority to include additional critical components could benefit production of future SSBNs.

Additionally, Incremental Funding (Full Funding) Authority received in FY21 minimizes CLB impact on Department of Navy budgetary resources, which reduces annual funding requirements compared to Full Funding requirements.

Expanding the current NSBDF continuous production authority to include additional components may enable schedule risk mitigation and create a steadier demand signal to ensure suppliers and sub-tier suppliers support serial production of *Columbia*-class submarines.

**Navy leaders have testified that the Navy needs to procure a minimum of 12 *Columbia*-class submarines and avoid schedule delays in the *Columbia*-class program in order to ensure the first deterrent patrol occurs in 2031.**

**84. Do you agree that the Navy must buy a minimum of 12 *Columbia*-class submarines to meet requirements?**

Yes. The planned *Columbia* SSBN force of 12 is a reduction from the force of 14 *Ohio*-class SSBNs currently in service and represents a floor in *Columbia* SSBN force structure. Requirements analysis assumed that the required deterrent presence would not be reduced, so this smaller force of 12 *Columbia* SSBNs must have a higher proportional availability in order to provide the same two-ocean deterrent presence as the larger force of 14 *Ohio*-class SSBNs. This improved availability is enabled by the life of ship reactor core design for *Columbia*, which reduces the length of the planned mid-life overhaul as compared to the mid-life refueling overhaul for *Ohio*-class SSBNs.

**85. In your view, what are the most significant risks associated with meeting established cost, schedule, and performance requirements for the *Columbia*-class program?**

The submarine industrial base is entering a period of significant demand, similar to that experienced from 1980 to 1997. Since that time, the submarine industrial base retracted with a reduced number of vendors and the loss of an experienced workforce. In concert with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Navy is addressing industrial base risk by targeting investments to support supplier development, shipbuilder infrastructure, strategic outsourcing, workforce development, government oversight, and technology. If confirmed, I am committed to supporting any additional investments to ensure we deliver *Columbia* on time, while also ensuring our Fast Attack Submarine production goals are achieved.

**86. In your view, are there additional authorities Congress could provide to the Navy to ensure the *Columbia*-class remains on schedule?**

The Navy appreciates continued support of NSBDF authorities for the *Columbia*-class SSBNs and has found success reducing procurement costs and sending clear signals to the industrial base from this authority. The FY 2024 President's Budget continues investment in initiatives to reduce construction schedule risk and enable cost savings. Navy continued funding for Integrated Enterprise Plan initiatives (Multi-Program Material Procurement, Continuous Production, and Production Backup Units). The Navy has determined expansion of the Continuous Production authority to include additional critical components could benefit production of future SSBNs.

Additionally, Incremental Funding (Full Funding) Authority received in FY21 minimizes CLB impact on Department of Navy budgetary resources, which reduces annual funding requirements compared to Full Funding requirements.

Expanding the current National Sea Based Deterrence Fund continuous production authority to include additional components may enable schedule risk mitigation and create a steadier demand signal to ensure suppliers and sub-tier suppliers support serial production of *Columbia*-class submarines.

**87. Do you assess that *Columbia*-class submarines will have the capabilities and attributes needed to perform their unique mission in the 2030s?**

Yes. The *Columbia*-class design process was robust and thoroughly leveraged the best intelligence estimates of the DOD Intelligence Community. The *Columbia*-class SSBN will carry 16 TRIDENT II (D5) missiles, will have a 42-year service life that will not require refueling, and will maintain sufficient survivability to address projected future threats through the 2080s, with the same success the Ohio-class SSBN had against present threats throughout its lifetime. Like previous classes of SSBNs, the *Columbia*-class will rely primarily on stealth for survivability. The Key Performance Parameters for stealth are designed to ensure the platform remains survivable against all presently known and credible future threats.

**88. What is your understanding of the current cost estimates for the *Columbia*-class lead ship and follow-on ships, respectively?**

The program is funded to the current estimate with an average unit procurement cost of \$7.12B (CY17\$).

**89. How confident are you that the program will be able to produce *Columbia*-class submarines that meet current cost and schedule estimates?**

I remain confident that Columbia will deliver within the Acquisition Program Baseline Average Procurement Unit Cost (APUC) threshold.

Due to challenges in the Submarine Industrial Base (SIB), schedule remains a concern. Columbia is the Navy's #1 acquisition priority. SIB investments are underway with \$2.3 billion across FY18-FY23 currently in execution across 6 lines of effort; Supplier Development, Shipyard Infrastructure, Strategic Outsourcing, Workforce Development, Government Oversight and Technology Opportunities. This much-needed resourcing is purposefully designed to build and strengthen the SIB's capacity, capability and resiliency supporting the growth necessary to meet the required one Columbia + two Virginia production cadence. Columbia has a DX contract rating (highest national security priority), which the Navy is leveraging to ensure priority with the shipbuilders over other programs to mitigate schedule until the investments in the SIB can deliver 1 Columbia + 2 Virginia Fast Attack Submarines (SSN)s per year. Current Navy and Shipbuilder focus in CY2023 is concentrated on driving performance for the first hull, USS DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

**90. What is your understanding of mitigation options DOD should consider in the event the *Columbia*-class program incurs schedule delays that prevent the lead ship from deploying in 2031?**

The Navy, in 2021, incorporated up to five Pre-Inactivation Restricted Availabilities (PIRA) for Ohio-class SSBNs into the Navy's workload schedules to enable life extensions beyond their current service life. The first could occur in FY-29. Under the Navy's plan of record, these five PIRAs would be used to extend the availability of Ohio-class SSBNs in the event of individual or systemic program delays in the delivery of Columbia-class SSBNs and mitigate the impacts to strategic platform operational availability.

Additionally, in conjunction with the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Nuclear Weapons Council, we are actively working together to identify options available within the Air Force and Navy to mitigate any potential technical or programmatic risks as both services transition their strategic deterrents over the next two decades to ensure that all strategic deterrent mission requirements are met.

## **Attack Submarine Force Levels**

**The Navy’s current requirement for attack submarines is 66. However, the Navy projects that the number of attack submarines will fall as low as 42 boats in 2028 and remain below the 66-boat requirement until 2048.**

**91. What options, including improved maintenance and life extensions of current submarines, as well as increased new construction, exist to ensure the Navy deploys attack submarines sufficient to meet the requirements of the combatant commanders and other intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance needs?**

The Navy is mitigating the SSN inventory by extending and selectively refueling Los Angeles-class submarines.

The Navy remains focused on continued improvement in maintenance, modernization, and sustainment outcomes while providing a stable plan to support the current and future fleet. The Commander, Submarine Forces (SUBFOR) is the single accountable Commander for the on-time execution of public shipyard SSN availabilities. Accountability was assigned to SUBFOR to improve availability performance to increase operationally available SSNs. SUBFOR established a new North Star of 80% of SSNs operational at all times and, since May 1, 2023, SSNs operationally available has increased from 60 to 67%.

The Navy continues to work to strengthen the public/private sector and maintain a healthy industrial base for submarine maintenance and new construction.

- For new construction, investments in the SIB focus on six key lines of effort: strategic outsourcing, workforce development, proficiency, supplier base expansion and development, and new technologies. These proactive steps are intended to improve the SIB, which is essential for Virginia-class submarine (VCS) schedule recovery and Columbia on-time delivery. For in-service, the Navy has developed a 15-year SSN Maintenance Strategy and identified key investments that will increase confidence in execution of planned maintenance in both the public and private shipyards for FY2024 and beyond.

**92. What should the Navy do to get the *Virginia*-class program back on schedule?**

The U.S. SIB is currently experiencing a generational increase in demand. The U.S. Navy increased its authorization rate for SSNs to two VCSs per year in 2011, however shipbuilders have been challenged to meet that delivery cadence and are currently delivering the equivalent of 1.2 boats per year. The Navy’s focus is on stabilizing VCS construction cadence at 1.4/year rate by end of CY 2023 and to build to at least 1.5/year by end of CY 24 and full recovery of 2/year by CY 28.

SIB investments are underway with \$2.3 billion across FY18-FY23 across 6 lines of effort:

- Supplier Development: Add capability and/or capacity to existing suppliers, develop new suppliers to reduce single/sole-source risks for resiliency and robustness, and improve first time quality.

- Shipyard Infrastructure: Accelerated investments in facilities, footprint, and machines/fixtures.
- Strategic Outsourcing: Shift non-core workload away from two major shipbuilders to free up footprint and focus for shipbuilder-only work.
- Workforce Development: Train current and future trades, build adequate hiring pool for vendors and shipbuilders.
- Government Oversight: Increased Supervisor of Shipbuilding (SUPSHIP) oversight of vendor base as result of strategic outsourcing of traditional shipbuilder work, lessons learned from historical quality and schedule adherence challenges.
- Technology Opportunities: Implement additive manufacturing, non-destructive test imaging technology to remove known production risk areas and bottlenecks.

This investment is purposefully designed to build and strengthen the SIB's capacity, capability and resiliency supporting the growth necessary to meet the required one Columbia + two Virginia (1 + 2) production cadence.

**93. What risks are incurred by allowing the attack submarine force levels to remain below 66 boats until 2048?**

The Navy's Fast Attack Submarine Fleet is in very high demand by the Combatant Commanders given their unique capabilities. The Navy is meeting all Joint Staff adjudicated missions, but there is a continued demand signal additional assets. The Navy's assessed objective is to achieve 66 ships in the inventory. The Navy will continue to maximize the employability of the SSN force through the Fleet Response Training Program and strengthening the SIB to achieve and maintain the one Columbia + two Virginia (1+2) capability/capacity, which is foundational to all other areas of concern, including AUKUS. The Navy is continuing to address SIB risks through supplier development, shipbuilder infrastructure, strategic outsourcing, workforce development, government oversight, and technology. Additional facilities and strategic outsourcing are planned and the Navy is executing actions to support (1+2) serial production.

**94. If confirmed, how will the Navy deal with the transfer of *Virginia*-class submarines to Australia under the AUKUS agreement between the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom?**

The AUKUS agreement is a strategic imperative that bolsters the security interests of the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom in the Pacific. Both the U.S. inventory of fast attack submarines and the success of AUKUS rely on a strong and resilient U.S. domestic submarine industrial base and continued investment in the submarine industrial base. As part of the agreement, Australia stands ready to contribute to the U.S. submarine industrial base pending the final approval of the Congress and the Administration if codified in law. This investment along with other Navy initiatives will help reduce maintenance delays for in-service submarines. Since May of 2023 the Navy has increased the number of available submarines from 60% to 67%. The Navy has established an availability objective of an 80% for Fast Attack Submarines. Meeting this objective, as well as meeting required new production cadence will more than offset any impact of transferring submarines to Australia.



## **Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD)**

**The Navy plays an important role in defending the nation against the threat of long-range ballistic missile attack and in defending allies, friends, and deployed forces against theater ballistic missile threats.**

### **95. Do you view ballistic missile defense as a core Navy mission?**

In accordance with the DoD Directive 5100.01, “Functions of the Department of Defense and Its Major Components,” ballistic missile defense is a core Navy function. The Navy, in partnership with the Missile Defense Agency, continues to provide ready Naval forces for the ballistic missile defense of the Joint Force, the homeland, and our allies and partners, and should continue to be relied upon as a rapidly deployable, emergent solution set. The responsibility for delivering lethal capabilities from the sea remains with the Navy, while responsibility for land-based missile defense should remain with land-based forces.

### **96. What is the Navy’s current requirement for ships equipped with BMD Capability?**

The FY16 Force Structure Analysis (FSA) determined that 54 BMD capable ships are required by FY25. We are on track to exceed that requirement with 56 BMD capable ships in FY25.

### **97. What is the Navy’s current inventory of ships equipped with BMD capability?**

The PB-24 Program of Record delivers 49 BMD ships (cruisers and destroyers) by the end of FY23 and 71 BMD ships by the end of the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP).

### **98. To the extent there is a shortfall between ships with BMD capability and the associated requirement, what options should be explored to reduce this shortfall and when does the Navy anticipate meeting the requirement?**

We are on track to exceed the requirement of 54 BMD capable ships required by FY25, and Navy and Missile Defense Agency (MDA) are continuously collaborating and evaluating threats against our capabilities. Efforts such as DDG Mod 2.0 (back fit of SPY-6 radars and Surface Electronic Warfare Improvement Program (SEWIP) 3 electronic warfare suites) are prime examples of investments made to stay ahead of both today’s and tomorrow’s threat.

## **Amphibious Fleet Requirements**

### **99. What is your view of the need for and size of the Navy’s amphibious fleet?**

The Navy’s amphibious fleet with embarked Marine Forces is the premier multi-domain force in the world capable of operating on land, in the air, at sea, and in cyberspace. Campaigning forward this force provides our national leaders with flexible options to respond across the full spectrum of conflict. As such, the validated requirement for the Navy’s Amphibious force is 31

ships that are comprised of 10 LHA/LHD ships and 21 LPD/LSD ships. If confirmed, I am fully committed to ensuring we maintain and modernize the amphibious fleet to sustain 31 ships.

**100. Do you consider the Landing Ship Medium to be an integral aspect to logistics in the Indo-Pacific and the Marine Corps' Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations concept? If so, how will you control requirements to ensure the affordability and timeliness of the platform?**

The Medium Landing Ship (LSM) will be a key enabler to naval expeditionary operations in the Indo-Pacific, providing distributed shore-to-shore maneuver, mobility, and sustainment for the Stand-In Force (SIF), such as Marine Littoral Regiments (MLR), in a contested environment.

We are working closely with the Marine Corps and committed to engaging with our industry partners to ensure the LSM achieves the right balance of affordability and capability, including learning lessons from Marine Corps experiments and exercises with Marine Littoral Regiments.

**101. What is your assessment of the plan to halt production of the LPD-17-class amphibious ships while we investigate cheaper alternatives for modernizing the amphibious fleet?**

The Navy awarded Huntington Ingalls Shipbuilding a contract earlier this year to build LPD-32. The optimal cadence to build these ships is every two-years, or in shipbuilding terms referred to as "two-year centers." To prevent any halt in production, the next ship would likely need to be procured in FY-2025. Given the timeline to the next procurement, the DOD-directed a short-term study on Cost Reduction and Alternatives to Flight II LPD-class ships designed to review Navy and Marine Corps requirements to support ARG/MEU formations, to determine if any adjustments to ship design or scope is required. The LPD-17 FLT II design represents the most advanced and proven amphibious ships in the world. The Navy requires a platform similar to this ship to modernize the force as the older WHIDBEY ISLAND Class LSDs reach the end of their service life.

**Frigate**

**102. Do you support the Navy's acquisition strategy for the new frigate?**

Yes, I support the Navy's acquisition approach for the Constellation class Frigate.

**103. At what point should we consider expanding frigate production to a second source?**

The Navy has prepared the acquisition landscape for a potential second source by including general language within the FFG-62 Acquisition Strategy regarding procurement of the Technical Data Package (TDP) in FY24 (funded in FY22). These efforts directly support preparation for the planned acquisition of additional FFG-62 class ships.

Second yard sourcing will be made in the future and informed by the production of the first ship of the class and ongoing studies to determine the optimal build rate for these ships consistent with projected industrial base capacity. Second yard sourcing will also be dependent on achieving a stable FFG-62 class design to best ensure a successful class requiring minimal re-work.

### **Ready Reserve Force (RRF) recapitalization**

**DOD has asked for authority to purchase additional foreign-built ships to recapitalize the Ready Reserve Force (RRF). Acquisition of new sealift ships would not start until after the end of the current future years defense program.**

#### **104. What is your understanding of the Navy's recapitalization strategy for the RRF and the affordability of acquiring 19 sealift vessels as outlined in the latest 30-year shipbuilding plan?**

United States Transportation Command estimates 90% of unit equipment flowing to theater will move via organic and commercial sealift assets. To meet this delivery demand, the validated cargo carrying capacity required for Ready Reserve Force (RRF) is 10.55 million square feet (SqFt).

Over the next 10 years, 70% of the RRF will reach its expected service life. As detailed in the 30-year shipbuilding plan, the RRF will need to purchase approximately 55 vessels over the next 20 years to maintain the required capacity.

Procuring used Roll-On/Roll-Off vessels is the fastest and most cost-effective recapitalization approach to meet surge sealift requirements. The Navy, along with the Maritime Administration, purchased five used vessels from both domestic and foreign markets in FY22 and FY23; these vessels are being refitted for their new mission and will join the RRF by FY24. The Buy-Used process is an agile and affordable option for buying vessels that meet operational requirements.

The Navy is planning to procure up to 4 used vessels in FY-24 as part of the recapitalization plan, and would reach the authorized limit of nine used vessels by FY24. Authorizing additional used vessel purchases enables the Navy to leverage the commercial market by purchasing at reasonable cost, at the rate required to close the sealift capacity gap, and increase readiness with younger, more reliable vessels. The Navy's FY24 budget submission requested the removal of the vessel purchase quota limitation.

#### **105. To what extent do you believe the Navy has identified the appropriate mix of used and new ships to continue to meet sealift and auxiliary requirements?**

The Navy's 30-year shipbuilding plan and FY24 budget request recapitalizes sealift and auxiliary forces to meet Combatant Command requirements using an integrated three-phase approach that 1) modernizes existing ships, 2) procures cost effective used commercial vessels to address near-term surge sealift capacity gaps, and 3) identifies requirements for new construction sealift ships.

The Navy and Marine Corps are developing capability requirements for a Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) Next Generation Ship in support of the Marine Corps Global Positioning Network concept. The lead ship delivery is planned for FY32 to align with the retirement of the oldest MPF ships.

As part of the intra-theater lift requirement, the Navy is defining requirements for the newest class of at-sea resupply ships, the Next-Generation Logistics Ships (NGLS). NGLS will augment existing Combat Logistics Force (CLF) ships, adding more capacity in theater for the distribution of logistics commodities. The Navy is also finalizing requirements for the LSM, which will provide distributed maneuver and mobility support for littoral expeditionary forces, such as Marine Littoral Regiments in contested littoral environments.

As part of the integrated solution to address tactical lift, the Navy is investing in Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC) service life extensions and procuring its replacement, the Ship to Shore Connector (SSC). The SSC provides the capability to land credible combat power across beaches not accessible by conventional landing craft, thus enabling the Marine Corps and Navy to project combat power ashore from the sea. The SSC provides a one-for-one enhanced replacement platform for aging LCAC. The Navy is also replacing the aging Landing Craft Utility (LCU) fleet with the LCU 1700, which recapitalizes the capabilities and flexibility in a more fuel efficient, cost effective, and updated design.

The Navy's integrated strategy addresses near-term lift needs while establishing strategically-placed long-term lift solutions to support employment across the competition continuum.

### **Tactical Fighter Programs**

**The Air Force Research Laboratory's "Loyal Wingman" program seeks to pair unmanned aircraft with a fifth-generation fighter. The Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment report on Future Carrier Air Wings makes recommendations as to the use of unmanned aircraft to augment "5th Gen" fighters.**

#### **106. How do you envision such manned-unmanned teaming manifesting in naval aviation and with strike-fighters in particular?**

These technologies offer significant opportunity for developing a continuum of manned and unmanned teaming across all warfighting domains. In regards to strike-fighter aviation, unmanned assets can significantly enhance and act as a force multiplier by increasing range, weapons capabilities, ISR enhancements, and distribution of the strike force in contested environments. If confirmed, I will work to mature or expand such capabilities to address warfighting threats.

**The Navy had divested all legacy Hornets (F/A-18C/D) from its active component squadrons, with full divestiture to be completed by 2030.**

**107. What is your understanding of the rationale for the Navy’s legacy Hornet divestiture plan?**

The Navy completed its divestment of legacy Hornets in FY22. The Fleet’s legacy Hornet divestiture occurred once there were enough higher capability F/A-18E/F Block II aircraft to fill the required deploying squadrons. That allowed for “best of breed” legacy aircraft to be transferred and consolidated in the USMC, test squadrons, Naval Aviation Warfighting Development Center (NAWDC), and the reserves.

**108. What priority has the Navy set for transition to the Super Hornet (F/A-18E/F) (i.e., in what order will Reserve squadrons, Naval Aviation Warfare Development Center, test squadrons, and the general fleet inventory be transitioned)? What is the rationale for this order of prioritization?**

The Navy has completed its divestiture of legacy Hornets from active component squadrons, reserve squadrons, and Naval Aviation Warfare Development Center (NAWDC). The Navy maintains a few legacy Hornets in the test community in order to support Marine Corps aviation testing requirements.

**109. What is your understanding of what the Navy is doing to improve depot throughput for legacy Hornets and to apply lessons learned to the looming service life extension program for the Super Hornet?**

The Navy has divested in legacy Hornets and is only maintaining depot support for the few legacy Hornets in test community that support Marine Corps aviation testing requirements. The Navy took the lessons learned from the Legacy Hornet Service Life Extension Program and applied them to the F/A-18E/F Service Life Modification (SLM) program. F/A-18E/F SLM inductions have already begun and the first batch of 10,000 flight hour aircraft with Block III capabilities are currently in work at Boeing St. Louis, and Boeing San Antonio locations.

**110. What is your understanding of the Navy’s plan and timeline for upgrading its Super Hornet fleet? What capabilities are being added to maintain the Super Hornet’s relevance in the high-end fight?**

Major Super Hornet upgrades are being executed via the Service Life Modification (SLM) effort. SLM of existing Super Hornet Block II aircraft to Block III standards provide the advanced capability and capacity required to support the carrier air wing at a fraction of the cost of a new procurement aircraft. These upgrades are currently ongoing and will continue as a lever to manage Strike Fighter inventory capacity and capability going forward.

**111. Given the new capabilities the E-2D Advanced Hawkeye will bring to the battlespace, and the new tactics and concepts of operation it will enable, does the Navy perceive a need for expeditionary squadrons of E-2Ds? Why or why not? In your view, what would be the benefits and/or drawbacks of establishing expeditionary E-2D squadrons, similar to those for the EA-18G Growler?**

The E-2D is a critical enabler of strike group power projection and integrated air & missile defense with its inventory and manning structured to support the nine deploying carrier air wings. While today, the E-2D is supporting the Joint demands of Global Force Management by filling gaps caused by E-3 divestment, the long-term implication of supporting expeditionary operations would require significant investments in inventory, support structure and manpower. The Navy believes that E-2D is not the best platform for these operations and that the current carrier air wing contribution to the Joint Force and the Combatant Commanders supports the National Defense Strategy.

**There has been much discussion about the importance of networking and connecting all Navy and Marine Corps capabilities across air, land, and sea platforms.**

**112. What is the Navy/Marine Corps team doing to make machine-to-machine command and control, across multiple domains, a reality?**

The Navy and Marine Corps is applying advanced technologies, including automation, machine-to-machine collaboration and coordination, machine learning, and artificial intelligence to Command and Control functions. Across the Navy, to include Systems Commands and the Office of Naval Research, we are developing technologies to exchange, fuse, and analyze data in support of human decision making that support Naval Operational Architecture, which is the Navy's contribution to Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2).

**113. Have the Navy and Marine Corps developed and refined the joint operational concepts that will govern this integrated fight?**

Yes. The Navy and Marine Corps continue to refine and exercise Distributed Maritime Operations (DMO) and Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment (LOCE) as key aspects of the Navy's contribution to the Joint Warfighting Concept. Our Navigation Plan (NAVPLAN) Implementation Framework is an example of how we have worked as an integrated team to provide naval capabilities to the joint fight.

**114. What is being done to ensure that the Navy and Marine Corps airborne data links are resilient against peer competitors and interoperable—not only with each other—but with the Air Force and Army platforms as well?**

The Navy was designated as the Link-16 and Tactical Targeting Network Technology (TTNT) waveform sponsor by DOD Chief Information Office. The Link-16 waveform is utilized by all U.S. Services and over 50 nations to include NATO. Office of the Secretary of Defense has also designated the Navy as the lead service for Link-16 and the Multifunctional Information Distribution System-Joint Tactical Radio System (MIDS-J). In this role, the Navy continues to

synchronize the fielding of modernized systems and networking solutions across the Joint Force for interoperability in the contested environments we expect to face.

**Current technologies allow “low probability of intercept/low probability of detection” datalinks to connect 4th and 5th generation aircraft. As well, other platforms, operating across multiple domains can be networked.**

**115. Who is leading this effort for the Department of the Navy, and what progress is being made?**

The Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Information Warfare, (OPNAV N2N6) is leading this effort for the US Navy and is coordinating this effort with the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint services. Further details may be provided in a classified forum.

### **The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter Program**

**The follow-on modernization for the F-35 is scheduled to bring key warfighting capabilities to the fleet, but the budget and schedule remain in flux.**

**116. Are you concerned about the affordability and executability of the Department’s plan for Block 4 Continuous Capability Development and Delivery (C2D2)? Why or why not?**

The Department of the Navy has made significant investments in follow-on modernization and development efforts for the F-35C program. These investments remain focused on supporting the delivery of Tech Refresh-3/Block 4 capabilities, at capacity, to the warfighter in a tactically relevant timeframe. In order to keep pace with an ever-evolving adversary, we must continue to rapidly develop and integrate new technologies into this 5th generation aircraft. Given the complexity of these technologies and subsequent integration efforts, affordability, and executability challenges have persisted. These challenges have been exacerbated by execution headwinds ranging from test aircraft shortages, to lab and personnel capacity limitations. There have also been development cost overruns that have placed financial strain on the program. For example, Tech Refresh-3, the hardware foundation required to deliver Block 4 capabilities through the C2D2 methodology, has exceeded \$1B in cost overruns and remains well behind schedule. All this to say, yes, I am concerned about the affordability and executability, however, our team has identified where the challenges lie and is actively working with the respective program offices and industry to address them.

**117. What do you view as the biggest challenges to successful integration of the F-35 into the carrier air wing?**

The F-35C is integrated into three carrier air wings and has completed two successful operational deployments. Adjustments to procurement ramp and aircraft delivery delays due to Tech Refresh-3 development will be the biggest challenge to successful integration into future carrier air wings.

**118. If confirmed, what will be your role in leading capabilities and requirements development to increase the role of unmanned aerial combat systems in the Navy?**

If confirmed, I will remain committed to developing and integrating unmanned and autonomous systems to the Fleet, to get much needed capabilities to the warfighter. This includes capabilities such as communications; intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, targeting; refueling; and logistics. Integration of such systems with manned systems will reduce risk to the force, provide access to areas otherwise denied to manned platforms, increase force capability and provide distributed intelligent battlespace awareness. If confirmed, I am committed to fully assessing the potential for an increased role in unmanned aerial combat systems for the Navy.

**119. What do you envision as the balance between manned and unmanned combat aircraft in the Navy's future force structure?**

The Department of the Navy must develop and field unmanned systems to ensure the naval forces have the necessary capabilities to address future threats. The Department has begun development of key unmanned systems and enabling technologies. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring that the Department carefully assesses, develops, fields and sustains the required unmanned capabilities to ensure success in any future conflict.

**120. Considering the addition of the MQ-25, Unmanned Surface Vessels, and Unmanned Undersea Vessels to an already growing fleet of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (i.e., TRITONS, FIRESOOTS, SCAN EAGLES, BLACKJACKS), how will the Navy train personnel to operate and maintain these systems inside the current Fleet?**

The Navy will take advantage of the use of simulators and distributed training to focus on warfighter proficiency while also gathering important data about interoperability and operations between unmanned systems. In terms of maintaining these systems, it will be important to determine similarities between operating systems in order to streamline maintenance and troubleshooting.

**Munitions**

**Navy munitions inventories—particularly for precision guided munitions and air-to-air missiles—have declined significantly due to high operational usage, insufficient procurement, and a requirements system that does not adequately account for the ongoing need to transfer munitions to our allies. Due to draw down of certain weapons systems to support Ukraine, the Department of Defense has begun efforts to increase production and bolster the industrial base.**

**121. If confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure the Navy has sufficient inventories of munitions to meet the needs of combatant commanders?**

The Navy does a very thorough job calculating Navy obligations for munitions inventory requirements. However, it was never designed to consider what naval weapons allies and



partners would need and when they would need them. Despite budgetary and production challenges associated with some of our highest-end weapons, the overwhelming majority of the Navy's critical munitions are closing the gap on inventory objectives. The Navy will ensure the munitions portfolio continues to be founded on Navy warfighting principles and theater commanders' priorities, and is appropriately resourced to meet NDS objectives. As our adversaries continue to modernize their inventories, driving an increasing demand for more capable weapons, the Navy will balance capability development with inventory sustainment as we evolve to meet future challenges. If confirmed, I will continue to prioritize funding for munitions and continue to assess warfighting demands for weapons inventories.

**122. What changes in budgeting and acquisition processes would you recommend to facilitate faster Navy munitions replenishment rates?**

A stable top line and budget enactment at the beginning of every fiscal year is critical in ensuring production lines remain unimpeded. Continued support from the Congress to continue multi-year buys for high demand, high performance munitions has been a critical enabler. This has promoted stability in the Defense Industrial Base and allow vendors, and sub-tier vendors, to better manage long-term workforce issues which drives down costs and ensures schedule adherence.

Collectively, we need to better define the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) requirements to ensure those demands are properly captured in planning figures to support the Defense Industrial Base maximum production rates and ensure we can meet national priorities while supporting our partners' defense requirements. Lastly, we need to continue to work with the acquisition community to mitigate the impact of obsolescence through a disciplined use of advance procurement funding to address parts investments ahead of need.

In addition, I would recommend an assessment be conducted at the sub-vendor levels to determine if additional industrial base investments are required to expand capacity.

**123. Do you believe the Patriot PAC-3 MSE integration with Aegis provides a viable path to increase air defense capacity on Navy ships?**

Yes. PAC-3 MSE has proven performance against advanced threats and has been employed by the Army. The Navy is investing in various testing efforts and conducting fully informed studies to determine efficacy of the missile in maritime environments. Those tests will take place over the next year and will guide our decisions for integration and deployment.

**Equipment Readiness**

**124. What is your understanding and assessment of the methods currently used for estimating the funding needed for the maintenance of Navy equipment, particularly ships and aircraft?**

At the core, maintenance funding is determined by fleet operational availability requirements each year for materially ready and deployable ships, aircraft, and other equipment to ensure

combat-ready forces necessary to respond to national objectives in joint, naval, and combined operations. In addition, through data analytics and efforts like Performance to Plan (P2P), Navy has identified root causes and key drivers to improve maintenance capacity and throughput, reduce delays, remove barriers to performance, and increase mission capable rates. Navy's maintenance funding includes these performance improvement initiatives, such as funding to award ship maintenance contracts 120 days before the start of an availability (A-120) to improve on-time completion of the availabilities.

**125. Do you believe that increased investment is needed to reduce the backlog in equipment maintenance?**

Yes. Since 2013, the Navy has steadily improved equipment maintenance, but there is still work to be done, particularly in reducing surface ship and submarine maintenance delays. Overall, manpower, operations, and maintenance costs continue to grow above the rate of inflation, requiring increased investment. In addition, preventing further maintenance delays and backlog in the future requires strategic investments today, including investing in the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP) and the Fleet Readiness Center Infrastructure Optimization Plan.

**126. How important is reduction of the materiel maintenance backlog to improvements in readiness?**

Getting ships and aircraft out of maintenance on time is critical to achieving our operational availability goals. When maintenance is delayed, it pressurizes the other phases of the Optimized Fleet Response Plan for that unit and also causes ripple effects into future workload schedules for that port. As the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, I have made it one of my top priorities to reduce maintenance delays and ensure that our Navy is ready, and if confirmed, I will continue to do so.

**Navy leaders assert that continued implementation of an improved deployment framework—the Optimized Fleet Response Plan (O-FRP)—will stabilize rotational deployments and render them more predictable.**

**127. What is your understanding of the O-FRP?**

OFRP is the Navy's readiness production model designed to generate (supply) forces to meet Joint Force employment demands. OFRP consists of maintenance, training, and sustainment phases; it is based on Navy's concept of tiered readiness, maximizing employability of our forces for the high-end fight, while preserving required maintenance and modernization, training, and acceptable levels of operational and personnel tempo. The construct is designed to:

1. Provide ready forces for rotational deployments to meet worldwide presence requirements and sustain forces ready to meet crisis and contingency response requirements.
2. Man, train, and equip to build and certify integrated combat teams to high-end standards and to enable dynamic and agile employment during deployment.
3. Enable maintenance and modernization to meet the expected service life of all platforms.

4. Reset the force in stride to sustain long-term Navy readiness generation.

**128. To what extent has O-FRP been successful in stabilizing rotational deployments and making them more predictable?**

By design, OFRP provides a more predictable force generation and deployment schedule, and most classes of ships have seen moderate improvement in deploy-to-dwell ratios between rotational deployments. OFRP shifted the force generation model to a nine-year production plan based on a 36-month cycle with one deployment and sustainment period to stabilize the resourcing demand signal. That said, strategic discipline in global force management is also an important element to ensure schedule stability for our Sailors and their families, but real-world events and the Joint Force demand for maritime forces does continue to drive some unpredictability, including operational deployment extensions and associated unplanned growth work that can also lead to maintenance extensions.

**129. To what extent will O-FRP need to adapt to meet the demands of Dynamic Force Employment?**

OFRP does not need to change to support Dynamic Force Employment (DFE). The advanced and integrated training provided to maritime forces under OFRP enables dynamic and agile, worldwide force employment. The Navy's maritime forces are uniquely ready to execute DFE when prioritized over already scheduled forward presence.

**130. To what extent has O-FRP improved, maintained, or degraded the material readiness of the fleet?**

OFRP continues to provide the anticipated benefit of longer-term schedule stability that preserves maintenance time in order to drive the material condition and readiness of the Fleet, and we need to ensure this trajectory is maintained. Ensuring the Navy's maintenance and modernization requirements are fully funded in a timely manner is imperative to our ability to generate the forces needed to support the National Defense Strategy. Additionally, the Joint demand for Naval forces exceeds the available capacity. Overconsumption drives schedule shifts and adds unplanned growth work that creates additional maintenance complexity for our already stressed shipyard industrial complex. When shipyard availabilities go longer than planned, the impact is either a shortened sustainment phase or an extension of the overall OFRP cycle.

**131. What metrics should Congress use to track the material readiness and material condition of Navy ships and aircraft, as well as the effectiveness of O-FRP?**

In accordance with Title 10, readiness ratings and supporting information are reported to Congress in the Semi-annual Readiness Report (SRRC). Ultimately, the SRRC is derived from unit readiness levels that are reported in the Defense Readiness Reporting System (DRRS) using resourcing and training category metrics (C-levels). The C-levels reflect the status of the unit's resources measured against the resources required to undertake the unit's wartime missions, assessing personnel, equipment availability and condition, and training indicators.

Additionally, Navy provides Congress with annual Board of Inspection and Survey (INSURV) reports in accordance with Title 10. These reports depict how well over time the Navy is maintaining individual ships and classes, taking into consideration Sailors' ability to effectively operate and maintain ship's equipment.

Funding stability is also a critical metric for Navy's material readiness success. Predictable, on-time, and adequate funding is key to meeting material and operational readiness production timelines. Sustained and predictable funding of key force generation enablers like manpower, spare parts, ordnance, and shipyard industrial base improvements is essential to effective OFRP execution. Navy's continued focus on maintenance and readiness, including the health of our shipyards, will continue to pay dividends if properly funded.

### **Indo-Pacific Region**

**China's robust anti-access, area denial (A2/AD) capabilities—including long-range ballistic and cruise missiles, advanced integrated air defenses, electronic warfare, and cyber—pose a significant challenge for U.S. forces. The Commander of United States Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) and the Chiefs of the Military Services have often emphasized the importance of distributed, adaptive, and resilient basing in the Indo-Pacific region to address the challenge posed by China's advanced A2/AD capabilities. China has also embarked on a significant shipbuilding program that outpaces that of the United States.**

#### **132. What are the key areas in which the Navy must improve to provide the necessary capabilities and capacity to the Joint Force to prevail in a potential conflict with China?**

The traditional, platform-centric approach to developing new capabilities is, by itself, insufficient to support the force design we need in this critical decade. Modern warfare requires secure, integrated systems to manage the information needed to generate a decisive advantage, close complex kill chains, and logistically sustain a distributed, forward deployed force. We should design every platform, weapon system, and support facility considering those requirements. Our naval force will focus on a force structure that includes long-range fires, unmanned systems, and Counter-C5ISR (Command, Control, Computing, Communications, Cyber, Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance, and Targeting) initiatives. It will consider contested logistics environments. It will be informed by artificial intelligence. It will be a fully integrated force capable of employing lethal and sustainable effects while defending naval forces against complex threats.

#### **133. How should the Navy adapt to this shifting maritime balance in the Indo-Pacific?**

The Navy's Distributed Maritime Operations (DMO) concept is a foundational Naval operating architecture designed to increase combat effectiveness in contested environments. The execution of this architecture is predicated on fielding and delivering new capabilities and enhancing our capacity to fight from multiple axes. The execution of the architecture requires the adoption of

key technologies such as unmanned systems, long-range fires, and Counter-C5ISR (Command, Control, Computing, Communications, Cyber, Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance, and Targeting) systems. In addition, given the expanse of the Pacific our force must have assured logistics to support contested conflict. Accordingly, the Navy is developing new logistics platforms and developing new concepts to supply distributed forces across a large geographic area. We must also leverage new technologies such as artificial intelligence to speed up our decision cycles and help reduce routine tasks. In addition, our network of Allies and Partners provides a critical warfighting advantage. We must continue to develop and sharpen our ability to operate together to achieve tactical, operational and strategic objectives, as well as develop new partnerships.

**134. The United States maintains a critical advantage in undersea warfare. What investments is China making to erode this advantage? What is your assessment of how successful these efforts have been? How should the Navy respond?**

China is heavily investing in new technologies and systems in order to improve its undersea capabilities. These investments include advanced capabilities for their nuclear and conventional-powered submarines, improved sensors and weapons for their surface forces, more capable maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft, and the continued development of unmanned systems for use in the undersea domain.

While these new capabilities have the potential to challenge our advantage in the undersea domain, China will still require years of technology development, training, and systems integration before being able to present a risk to our undersea capabilities.

The Navy is maintaining our advantage by designing, building, delivering and modernizing SSNs with acoustic superiority, advanced weapons, payloads, and sensors. SSN(X), in initial development now, will continue to outpace our adversaries far into the future.

In addition to the capabilities provided by our SSNs, the Navy continues efforts to increase our global-wide area surveillance coverage which will improve Theater Anti-Submarine Warfare capabilities. The Integrated Undersea Surveillance System (IUSS) provides continuous, broad-area persistent surveillance and cueing for tactical force prosecution against latest generation threat submarine / surface ships. The continued critical investment (procuring and installing) of IUSS is vital in the support to the Theater Undersea Warfare Commanders.

**135. How would you assess the threat to Navy forces and facilities from Chinese missile forces?**

I assess the threat to U.S. Navy forces and facilities from Chinese missile forces as significant. China has developed and is continuing to develop a very capable and advanced force. They have developed and fielded a variety of advanced hypersonic, ballistic, and cruise missiles capable of hitting targets across maritime, land, and air domains.

Specifically, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Rocket Force's short-, medium-, and intermediate-range conventional missiles are a significant threat and pose a risk to U.S. forces

and bases in the region. In 2020 the PLA Rocket Force demonstrated a capability against moving targets at sea.

**136. In your assessment, have Navy investments, operational concepts, and/or posture shifts to date sufficiently addressed this threat?**

Yes. The Navy has invested in terminal defense studies to determine system performance against advanced threats and has used that information to inform future Navy investments. The Navy has many efforts underway to expand Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) capability in the Fleet. This includes DDG Mod 2.0 which will back-fit SPY-6 radars and Surface Electronic Warfare Improvement Program (SEWIP) block 3 Electronic Warfare suites onto DDG FLT IIA ships. Sea Based Terminal (SBT) Increment 3 software upgrades deliver in 2025, expanding terminal defense capability against several threats across multiple ships. The SM-3 BLK IIA and SM-3 BLK IB Ballistic Missile Defense capabilities integrated with the SPY-6 radars will provide layered defense and improved performance against more complex threats in both the regional and homeland defense arenas. The MDA Glide Phase Interceptor (GPI) program, planned to deliver in FY34, will develop a new interceptor as well as modify the existing Aegis Weapon System (AWS) to defeat hypersonic threats in the glide phase of flight. Navy and MDA investments coupled with Navy and Joint operational concepts allow us to outpace current threats.

The Navy is further addressing these threats with focused investments in key areas of missile defense, long range fires (e.g. hypersonic weapons), Counter-C5ISR systems, maneuver, and manned-unmanned teaming. These investments will be applied through operational concepts such as DMO and LOCE - the details and maturity of these investments and concepts is held at a higher classification.

**137. Do you believe the planned joint force mix of tactical aircraft is sufficient to counter current and future threats in INDOPACOM, where the “tyranny of distance” is such a major factor?**

The capabilities of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) have advanced exponentially in recent years. However, the Joint Force is postured to meet all challenges in the INDOPACOM AOR across all domains. Within the Naval Force, Naval Aviation offers advantages of flexibility and operational reach, from a highly mobile and survivable platform. The mobility of the CVN, coupled with advanced tactical aircraft, long-range weapons, and an organic tanking capability soon to be enhanced with the MQ-25, allows Naval Aviation to challenge any adversary.

**138. Do you believe DOD has sufficient sealift and airlift capabilities to support the Naval Forces throughout INDOPACOM for both training and contingency purposes?**

Yes. I believe the Navy is prepared to meet United States Transportation Command’s (TRANSCOM) strategic sealift requirement but requires implementation of our three-phase recapitalization/acquisition plan of 1) modernizing existing ships, 2) procuring cost-effective

used commercial vessels to address near-term surge sealift capacity gaps, and 3) identifying requirements for new construction sealift ships.

The Navy provides sealift through Afloat Prepositioning Forces, government-owned / commercially operated Roll-On/Roll-Off ships (ROROs) with a 5-day activation requirement, and commercial ROROs managed under the Maritime Security Program (MSP) with a 17-day response time if activated. The MSP also assures access to heavy lift and containerships. Additional commercial contracted shipping assets are provided through the Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreement (VISA) and Voluntary Tanker Agreement (VTA) to augment the U.S. Navy.

Navy Unique Fleet Essential Airlift (NUFEA) comprises C/KC-130T and C-40A aircraft and, combined with the Carrier-Onboard Delivery (COD), provide time-critical organic intra-theater connection for cargo and personnel between the TRANSCOM drop point and the Fleet. During Distributed Maritime Operations, the extended range of the C-40A makes it the primary air asset. NUFEA is challenged to meet the Navy's peacetime capacity requirements and has very limited capabilities to support requirements in a contested environment.

**139. What alternative concepts of operation, platforms, and basing opportunities exist to address potential shortfalls in this area?**

Continued investments to replenish our aging sealift are improving the Navy's ability to meet requirements. The FY24 legislative proposal to remove the vessel purchase quota limitation is vital to affordably recapitalizing the Ready Reserve Force. Future innovative investments to basing and platform modernization work seamlessly with DMO, EABO, and LOCE operational concepts to compete, deter, and win in the INDOPACOM AOR. These concepts help us maintain a competitive advantage by integrating Navy and Marine Corps sustainment and lethality capabilities. DMO, EABO, and LOCE concepts enable the USINDOPACOM Commander to distribute platforms across the region but still concentrate their fires and effects.

To support these operating concepts, the Navy requires platforms that are adaptive and resilient. Sustainment platforms, such as the Next Generation Logistics Ship, T-AKE, and T-AO 205, are capable of moving fuel, personnel, ordnance, and supplies across the Indo-Pacific. They are critical connectors between our enduring and contingency nodes. We exponentially increase our redundancy and flexibility by moving toward more platforms capable of refueling, rearming, and resupplying the fleet. The Navy is exploring options to address airlift shortfalls.

We continue to make strides in basing opportunities through partnerships with nations affected by China's expansion. DOD recently established an agreement with Papua New Guinea - a prime example of our progress toward improving access and our ability to sustain the fleet. Additionally, we are exploring innovative construction techniques and processes to deliver cost effective ways to meet short Fleet required timelines with the capacity and configuration required to defend our nation and our allies and partners.

## **AUKUS**

**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-propelled submarines and increasing collaboration on a range of advanced technology initiatives.**

### **140. What are your views of the AUKUS partnership?**

I fully support the AUKUS partnership, and if confirmed, will work with Congress to enable its success. Australia and the UK have stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the United States' as two of our greatest allies for more than a century. The AUKUS partnership is emblematic of the depth and breadth of our trilateral relationship. AUKUS provides a generational opportunity to help sustain peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific and worldwide, uplift all three industrial bases, and benefit each country's national security.

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

Yes. Four AUKUS-related legislative proposals were submitted for Fiscal Year 2024 for Congressional consideration to effectively implement the AUKUS partnership. These proposals would:

- 1) Authorize the transfer of two Virginia class submarines to Australia and permit maintenance of U.S. Navy ships in foreign ports by foreign workers.
- 2) Provide authority to receive payments from Australia for the Virginia class submarines sold, as well as Australia's agreed financial contribution that would be used to increase U.S. submarine industrial base capacity, capability, and workforce development.
- 3) Provide authority to train and certify Australian contractors who conduct maintenance on U.S. SSNs under Foreign Military Sales.
- 4) Alter the U.S. defense export control system providing a pathway for a range of license-free defense trade among Australia, the UK, and the U.S. while retaining certain International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) requirements that help protect our defense technology.

If confirmed, I will continue to work with Congress to obtain the necessary funding, legislative authorizations or clarifications in future fiscal years that would be required to enable this critical partnership.

### **142. How do you envision supporting the transfer of Virginia-class submarines to Australia without decreasing the operational capacity of the US Navy with respect to attack submarines?**

If confirmed, I will work closely with Congress to ensure we safeguard the operational capacity of the U.S. Navy and obtain the requisite authorities to enable the transfer to Australia. The sale of between three and five Virginia Class SSNs will reduce U.S. inventory in the short term, but investments in the Submarine Industrial Base (SIB) are expected to restore capacity by



producing more new construction submarines per year and reducing maintenance delays of our in-service submarines. In addition, the establishment of a U.S./UK rotational presence in Western Australia and Australia operating its own sovereign SSN force increases Allied SSN presence in the Indo-Pacific. Boosting the number of SSNs operated by nations that abide by international rules and norms will dramatically complicate potential adversary plans to execute hostile actions in and around the Indo-Pacific.

## Europe

### **143. What are the key areas in which the Navy must improve to provide the necessary capabilities and capacity to the Joint Force to meet NDS priorities in the European AOR?**

Today's warfighting environment requires a Navy capable of managing information across the joint force and to use this information to support complex kill chains. We must continue to leverage technologies that provide a combat advantage by increasing our inventory of critical munitions that support long-range fires, adopting unmanned technologies, and incorporating critical counter-C5ISR (Command, Control, Computing, Communications, Cyber, Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance, and Targeting) systems. Our Navy is investing in critical technologies and warfighting enablers to provide us a decisive advantage and will continue to deliver the Naval Operational Architecture (NOA) through Project OVERMATCH, which is the Navy's contribution to Joint All Domain Command and Control (JADC2), and will continue to develop battle management aid architectures, tools, and data standards to support decision making at machine speed.

### **144. Given recent advances in Russian attack submarine capability, such as the deployment of the new Russian submarine *Severodvinsk*, do you believe the U.S. advantage in undersea warfare is eroding? What additional capabilities or capacity can the Navy provide in Europe to maintain the U.S. advantage in undersea warfare?**

By building and deploying advanced and significantly quieter submarines with new technologies and capabilities, such as the Severodvinsk I and II class submarines, Russia is seeking to challenge the U.S. advantage in the undersea domain. However, we are maintaining our advantage by designing, building, delivering and modernizing SSNs with acoustic superiority, advanced weapons, payloads, and sensors. SSN(X), in initial development now, will continue to outpace our adversaries far into the future.

In addition to the capabilities provided by our SSNs, the Navy continues efforts to increase our global-wide area surveillance coverage which will improve Theater Anti-Submarine Warfare capabilities. The Integrated Undersea Surveillance System (IUSS) provides continuous, broad-area persistent surveillance and cueing for tactical force prosecution against latest generation threat submarine / surface ships. The continued critical investment (procuring and installing) of Fixed Surveillance System, especially the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) operational underwater segment, is vital in the support to the Theater Undersea Warfare Commanders.

## **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea**

**Officials of the Department of Defense, including previous Chiefs of Naval Operations, have advocated for accession by the United States to the Law of the Sea Convention.**

**145. Do you support United States accession to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea?**

Yes.

**146. How would you respond to critics of the Convention who assert that accession is not in the national security interests of the United States?**

The United States played a major role in drafting the Convention, and it is favorable to U.S. interests on all significant issues as a result. Further, our Navy already acts in a manner consistent with the Convention's navigational and overflight provisions. Accession would not impose any additional constraints on the Navy's ability to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows.

**147. In your view, what impact, if any, would U.S. accession to the Law of the Sea Convention have on ongoing and emerging maritime disputes such as in the South China Sea and in the Arctic?**

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea would give our objections to excessive maritime claims a stronger legal foundation that does not rely exclusively on customary international law. When protesting excessive maritime claims asserted by the People's Republic of China in the South China Sea, the Russian Federation in the Arctic region, and others, the United States would come from a position of increased authority and influence.

## **Unmanned Systems**

**The FY 2024 budget request and FYDP include significant investment in Navy unmanned aerial (e.g., MQ-25), surface (e.g., LUSV and MUSV), and undersea systems (e.g., Orca and Razorback).**

**148. What is your vision for these unmanned systems and others in the Navy?**

Unmanned systems paired with manned platforms expand capacity and provide increased flexibility that is central to the success of Distributed Maritime Operations. The Navy is building a mix of high-end warfighting systems and affordable and attainable systems that provide mass and scale to challenge our adversaries. The Navy continues to expand the range and lethality of these systems by tapping into the innovation base of our Service, the Joint Force, and our country. We will continue to develop the hybrid fleet to deliver effects in all domains, leveraging our advancing capabilities and operational learning across the Fleet and with our Allies and partners.

**149. To what extent will these unmanned systems interoperate with manned naval platforms and utilize existing Navy communication links?**

Unmanned systems, in today's fleet and in the future, will operate under direct control by operators on manned vessels and ashore, while also with increasing levels of autonomy. Overall, unmanned systems and their operational effects will be tightly integrated with manned platforms to achieve operational and warfighting effects. The Navy's unmanned systems portfolio is diverse, but many utilize existing C2 systems and networks. As unmanned systems and capabilities evolve, Navy will focus not solely on new platforms, but on holistic capabilities that include platforms and take into account required networks, autonomous capabilities, and all other enabling technologies.

At first, we expect these systems to extend the reach and lethality of our manned systems. However, in the future we look to have a less linear approach and more of a web-like structure where these systems not only extend the reach and lethality but also expand the decision making and sensing of our traditional systems. Manned-unmanned teaming will evolve based on responsible and rigorous systems engineering and operational learning approaches that will build and affirm our operational trust, allowing the delegation of pre-decided functions and tasks that support our operational commanders' objectives. These efforts are underway today in our experimentation plans, daily use of prototypes, and ongoing fleet operations.

**150. Do you believe the experiments occurring at Task Force 59, Surface Development Squadron 1, and other exercises are proving the operational relevance of unmanned capabilities to the fleet?**

Yes. These organizations and others are leading the way in experimentation and fielding to better provide the feedback needed to improve the systems, our concepts of operations, and our trust in unmanned capabilities. Further, as these efforts move at a rapid pace, they stress our system of requirements definition and acquisition to help us find efficiencies to prevent our own processes from being our weakest point. It will be critical to continue to leverage the forward presence and incorporation of our allies and partners to unlock learning at scale and deliver the pace required to succeed.

**151. How do you plan to balance the timely transition of unmanned prototypes into procurement with the need for risk reduction to avoid wasted resources, such as the cancellation of the Remote Multi-Mission Vehicles in 2016 after approximately \$1 billion was spent?**

The Navy continues to focus on understanding how best to effectively develop and deliver unmanned capabilities to the Fleet in concert with our industry partners. The Navy cannot afford to field operationally insufficient capabilities, and those capabilities that are integral to our strategic objectives will be supported with systems of systems engineering rigor to prevent costly advances on immature solutions. One way we are doing this in Unmanned Surface Vessels (USVs) is through multiple lines of effort to demonstrate reliable Hull, Mechanical and Electrical systems (e.g. land-based systems engineering sites set up for Large USV and Medium USV), navigation, perception, autonomy, and experimentation. Areas of interest that involve smaller,

more attainable systems allow the Navy to take more informed risk, create force flexibility through service-based models, and look to find partnerships with industry to leverage moving more commercially proven capabilities into operations in a more timely manner.

### **Operational Energy**

**The Department defines *operational energy* as the energy required for training, moving, and sustaining military forces and weapons platforms for military operations, including the energy used by tactical power systems, generators, and weapons platforms. Longer operating distances, remote and austere geography, and anti-access/area denial threats are challenging DOD's ability to assure the delivery of fuel. As the ability to deliver energy is placed at risk, so too is the Department's ability to deploy and sustain expeditionary Air Force units around the globe.**

#### **152. What are your ideas for future capabilities that would enable expeditionary Navy forces to operate through the assured delivery of energy to the warfighter?**

The Navy is currently examining the use of smaller fuel distribution systems for large and small ships, all the way down to unmanned systems for the delivery of critical logistics, to include energy, in austere environments. The Navy's future Medium Landing Ship (LSM), Fleet Oiler (T-AO), and Next Generation Logistics Ships (NGLS) are examples of systems the Naval team is working on. Aside from fuel distribution systems, the Navy is working on ways to make our platforms more efficient to keep them on the battlefield longer, without replenishment. New technologies in battery storage, electric drive systems, and efficient auxiliary and ancillary equipment are examples of initiatives that I will continue to advocate for if confirmed to give our forces a tactical advantage on the battlefield.

#### **153. What are your ideas for reducing the risk associated with the Navy's dependence on vulnerable supply lines?**

The first idea is to transition to a push model in supply and logistics vice the current "just in time delivery", or "pull" model. To start this transition, we need to accelerate the installation of improved logistics planning and predictive tools, together with the hardening of logistics computer systems to prevent cyber-attacks and infiltration. Strengthening our relationships and interoperability with partners and allies will result in a more comprehensive sustainment model that improves agility, responsiveness and resilience of supply lines.

Another idea that shows promise is a renewed focus on energy demand reduction efforts aimed at going farther for the same amount of fuel. For example, Navy's work on DDG-51 class ships over the past decade has enhanced the platform's range by about 7%.

If confirmed, I would be an advocate for more flexible and non-traditional means for energy distribution and storage. I would partner with industry to explore unmanned systems and other technologies to deliver, generate and store fuel and energy, while at the same time examining technologies such as hydrogen and microgrids that could provide our forces with a tactical advantage.

## Cyber

**The readiness of the Cyber Mission Forces assigned to U.S. Cyber Command is substantially below acceptable levels. This shortfall is due primarily to the lack of sufficient numbers of personnel in each of the services in three critical work roles that are especially demanding: tool developers, exploitation analysts, and interactive on-net operators.**

**154. What is your understanding of the causes for the Navy's shortfalls in recruiting, training, and retaining personnel qualified for these work roles?**

The Navy has taken, and continues to take, aggressive steps to increase readiness in Cyber. Like all organizations, the demand for Cyber expertise has expanded faster than manpower and training were previously structured to support. Our aggressive action to correct has turned the tide, and Navy readiness for Cyber is rapidly improving in order to meet the demands of U.S. Cyber Command.

**155. What is your understanding of the Navy's plans to correct this shortfall?**

The Navy remains fully committed to meeting DOD and USCYBERCOM Cyber Mission Force (CMF) requirements both in readiness and directed growth. We have prioritized fixing readiness while still aggressively working to grow the force. To do this, Navy established Cyber Qualification Training Teams (CQTT) and implemented improvements in Force Generation to streamline training and to fix processes prior to growing the Navy CMF from 40 to 44 teams.

**The mission of U.S. Cyber Command (CYBERCOM) is offensive and defense warfighting in the cyber domain. However, so far, General and Flag Officers selected to serve as Commander of Cyber Command have been intelligence specialists rather than line officers. If confirmed, you will be a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and an adviser to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense.**

**156. Do you think that CYBERCOM as a warfighting command could or should be led by an officer trained and experienced in commanding combat units and joint operations?**

USCYBERCOM is led by General and Flag Officers trained and experienced in commanding joint operations, with extensive experience in cyber and intelligence fields. This broad foundation allows Commander, USCYBERCOM to offer detailed, intelligence-backed recommendations to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense.

## Electronic Warfare (EW)

**157. What is your vision for the future of Navy EW capabilities?**

Navy EW capabilities for the future will be distributed and connected to enable coordinated hard kill and soft kill to defeat anti-air and anti-ship missile threats. Future Navy EW capabilities will be aligned with the Joint Force and leverage Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning to

adapt and overcome dense and complex contested environments. The Navy is also committed to the development and sharing of tactics, techniques, procedures, and technologies that strengthen the Defense Department's EW posture.

**158. What is your assessment of the adequacy and efficacy of EW training that Navy personnel receive in a Navy environment in specific airframes? In a joint environment with other Military Services?**

Navy personnel, including those trained to employ the F/A-18E/F, EA-18G, and E-2C/D, receive live EW training at the Fallon Range Training Complex (FRTC) and in our simulated environments. The Navy is continually leveraging improvements to Live, Virtual, and Constructive training and incorporation of the Joint Simulation Environment to ensure the training received remains adequate and effective against high-end threats.

**159. What is your assessment of the Electronic Protection capabilities of Navy systems in relation to the offensive electronic warfare threat from peer and near-peer adversaries, especially in light of the Northern Edge exercises?**

The Navy has incorporated improvements to Electronic Protection (EP) capabilities across our tactical platforms in response to lessons learned from Northern Edge. These improvements are ongoing and will continue to adapt to our understanding of the modern threat.

**Spectrum**

**160. Electromagnetic spectrum plays a critical role in many DOD missions. In what ways does the Navy rely on spectrum to support warfighter requirements?**

The electromagnetic spectrum is critical to the effectiveness of Navy's warfighting capability, in peacetime and at war, at home and abroad. The Navy needs continuous and uninterrupted access to the electromagnetic spectrum to develop calibrate, test, train, maintain, integrate and operate sensors that identify, characterize, and neutralize threats. Any limitations on Electro Magnetic (EM) Spectrum use severely degrade the Navy's warfighting contribution to the Joint Force.

**161. In your view, which warfighter spectrum requirements will be essential to competing with Russia and China on a future battlefield?**

Our Navy must be able to train the way we intend to fight. The S-band, where Navy's core anti-air warfare and ballistic missile defense radars and missiles operate, is absolutely critical to compete with Russia and China.

**In March 2023 testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Secretary of Defense Austin stated that, with respect to losing "S-band" spectrum, "it be devastating, ... it would take us somewhere north of 20 years to try to recover from -- from the loss of that -- that spectrum. Parts of that spectrum are vital to our national defense and the protection of the homeland. And -- and, you know, in order to describe exactly -- well, you know what the -- what the specific platforms are, but we would have to go to a classified**

session to speak in detail about this. But I would tell you that this is not something you can fix overnight once you break it. It'll take 20 years plus to recover from that.”

**162. What Navy systems might be affected by this loss of “S-band” spectrum, in your view?**

The Navy’s most exquisite and capable radars and missiles operate in the S-band. Other key capabilities operate in the S-band, to include communications, air traffic control, weather radars, and radio frequency (RF) signatures measurement. Additionally, Navy operates six Major Range and Test Facility Bases (MRTFBs) in the Continental United States (CONUS). Loss of the S-band across these facilities will negatively impact Navy’s ability to calibrate, test, train, maintain, integrate and modernize these critical capabilities.

**163. Were DOD required to “vacate” or leave the spectrum “S-Band” instead of sharing, what would be the potential operational and monetary costs to the Navy, in your view?**

Operationally vacating the S-band would be devastating to Navy’s readiness, and impact modernization for decades. Because of the dominant use of the S-Band by our most exquisite systems, and the interdependence of the systems and munitions in this band, the potential monetary costs would be staggering given the number of systems that would require total overhaul and rework.

**164. How long would it take for the Navy to move its systems to a different area of the spectrum, in your view?**

It would take decades to recover from the loss of S-band. For many systems, because of what we need them to do, they must be designed in a specific part of the spectrum and cannot operate elsewhere. In these cases, we may never recover.

**Science, Technology, and Innovation**

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

**165. What do you see as the most significant challenges (e.g., technical, organizational, or cultural) to U.S. development of these key technologies, or gaining access to such technologies from the commercial marketplace?**

The Department of the Navy continues to emphasize acceleration and agility to keep technological advantage and to deliver capabilities faster than our adversaries. It is my understanding that authorities provided by Congress have been particularly beneficial, allowing the Department to develop innovative methods for effective management and mission execution at warfare centers and laboratories.

However, there are some challenges, that if confirmed, I would direct review on to ensure the Navy is capable of delivering relevant technologies at speed to the warfighter. Areas for review include:

- 1) Organizational. The Navy's Science & Technology and Research & Development workforce is one of the most technically capable organizations in the world. However, organizational processes can slow the Navy ability in developing, moving, and scaling new technology and delivering it to the warfighter. These processes are not straightforward -- the path from an engineer's bench to a warfighter's hand are complicated.
- 2) Cultural. The Defense ecosystem is generally risk averse, where failure is not tolerated in acquiring new technologies, because of funding implications. Technology insertion can upset very long lead-time Navy programs, such as shipbuilding, with little incentive for program managers to take on that risk. Those are challenges, but we also have successes such as the Office of Naval Research's Future Naval Capability Program, which consistently delivers technology that our acquisition organizations then field.
- 3) S&T Talent Competition. The challenge to our ability to leverage and utilize technologies rapidly and effectively is one of a competition for talent. The best and the brightest across our nation are being pulled to other areas and not focused on utilizing these technologies for military applications.
- 4) Private Sector ROI. The Navy is aware of what technologies are out in the private sector their potential but is challenged to incentivize the private sector to work on systems with marginal return on investment. It will take a public private partnership. Accordingly, the Navy research community must work more closely with industry and other organizations such as Defense Innovation Unit.

**166. How well do you think those Department investments in these technologies are appropriately focused, integrated, and synchronized across all Military Departments and Agencies?**

The Navy's S&T investments are based on multiple inputs from across the S&T Enterprise. All of these inputs come together to assess where the Navy is appropriately invested, and which ones need additional investments to achieve Navy objectives. With that in mind, as a naval service we must focus on AI, quantum sciences and computing, advanced autonomy, cyber-security, as well as advanced operational prototypes for the next generation of directed energy weapons and autonomous systems,



The unique environment that the Navy works in, from the seabed to the ocean surface, to space is something the Navy must research because no other service is as subject to the effects, limitations, and opportunities that the oceans present. In other environments, we have strong collaboration with other Services and OSD. However, we own the undersea environment and must prioritize it accordingly.

**167. In your view, how has the Navy prioritized limited R&D funding across your technology focus areas? Specifically, where is the Navy either increasing or decreasing focus and funding?**

I believe R&D research is vital to provide for future technologies that support innovative capabilities in shipbuilding, aviation, weapons, expeditionary equipment, and asymmetric capabilities. The Navy prioritizes research and development in order to innovate and modernize the force while maintaining and enhancing readiness. Specifically, the Navy investments in fundamental research to support continual advancements in many cutting-edge areas to include AI, quantum sciences and computing, advanced autonomy, cyber-security, as well as advanced operational prototypes for the next generation of directed energy weapons and autonomous systems.

**168. In your view, how is the Navy balancing revolutionary capability advancements as compared to “quick win” incremental improvements that can be rapidly fielded?**

The Naval S&T portfolio is balanced across the following areas: basic research to build the scientific foundation for future technologies; initiatives that can provide disruptive technologies to the warfighter; S&T programs that directly transition to the acquisition community; and prototype development and experimentation with the Fleet and Force to rapidly learn and iterate.

I believe it is important to maintain a robust portfolio that invests in foundational, evolutionary, and revolutionary opportunities. Matching Fleet capability gaps with emerging technologies will enable us to prototype and experiment to rapidly field technology.

**169. What efforts is the Navy making to identify new technologies developed commercially by the private sector and apply them to military and national security purposes? What are the challenges that you perceive to increasing collaboration between the private sector and Navy?**

The Navy’s over 50,000 scientists and engineers maintain awareness of the cutting-edge advancements across the private and public sector. The Navy maintains awareness of industry performers and the private sector through its interactions with the venture capital private equity community, and the university innovation ecosystem. In addition, the Department of the Navy has established 18 Technology Bridges referred to as “NAVALX” specifically focused on building a network of partners to bridge the gap between technology innovators in the private sector, DoD, and academia, to naval mission owners with problems to solve. There are 16 Tech Bridges in the United States and 2 Tech Bridges overseas (Japan and United Kingdom). Each of the 18 Tech Bridges are partnered with a local Navy R&D activity that provides the legal

authorities needed to foster innovation, and a local group that helps build the industry network of problem solvers.

**170. If confirmed, how can the operational experience of the warfighter better be integrated into the research and development process? Are there appropriate places to interject warfighters in the interaction between the DOD research and engineering community and the private sector?**

Warfighter's operational experiences are a critical source for the DOD research and engineering community to understand existing technology gaps and limitations and are used to shape government and private sector research investments. Warfighters are engaged early in the R&D process to ensure emerging technologies meet anticipated Fleet requirements and align with operational sustainment processes and systems. Initial tabletop exercises, followed by operational experimentation as prototypes are developed, ensures that as technologies mature, they continue to align to the warfighters needs. We must continue to ensure our warfighters are able to assess and shape our technologies throughout their development.

**171. If confirmed, how would you leverage experimentation and prototyping opportunities to look at new technologies and concepts that might be beneficial for the Navy, or better support the Navy role in joint operations?**

Our experimentation and prototyping opportunities serve to bridge the capability gaps between the Naval Research Enterprise (NRE) research and engineering technical expertise and the operational environment and challenges being faced each day by our warfighters. We are able to drive current research successes into emerging technology prototypes and allow them to participate in service level experimentation to assess the military utility of the prototypes and to explore new operational concepts enabled by these technologies. These events provide warfighters the opportunity to work directly with the prototypes and provide feedback on technical issues and operational utility that can be acted upon by our research and development community to more quickly deploy these solutions.

**172. In your view, what steps must DOD take to protect and strengthen our National Security Innovation Base to ensure that critical information is protected?**

I believe that it is absolutely critical that the Department take proper steps to protect American intellectual property and technology. The Navy is taking risk-based steps to develop security and information management procedures built on partnerships with academia and industry. These procedures focus on a shared understanding of the specific research requiring protection and seek to protect research which is deemed critical by the Navy due to potential military application, as well as patents and intellectual property owned by the performer. If confirmed, I will ensure the Navy remains partnered closely with other DOD and federal security, intelligence, counterintelligence, law enforcement agencies to implement innovative, enhanced protection methodologies to guard the military technological capability advantages of the future.

**One of the main objectives of the defense research enterprise is to develop advanced technologies that will be of benefit to the warfighter. In this regard, it is critical that**

**advancements quickly transition from the development phase into testing and evaluation and ultimately into a program of record for the deployment of capability to the warfighter.**

**173. If confirmed, how will you ensure that a greater percentage of the technologies being developed by Navy labs transition into programs of record for deployment to the warfighter? How would you ensure that appropriate technologies are transitioning more quickly into programs of record?**

Our Naval Research Laboratory, Naval Warfare Centers, and the Office of Naval Research, regularly develop new technologies for the fleet, and many of these technologies are successfully transitioned into programs of record. Close coordination between the technology developers and acquisition programs is key to ensuring rapid transition of these new technologies to the fleet. The Navy has been investing significant energy in improving this coordination and will continue to focus on aligning our science and technology investments with priority warfighting gaps. If confirmed, I will continue to support and, as required, enhance these efforts to ensure that the Navy positioned to seamlessly move capability from the bench to the Fleet.

**174. How do you see the Navy's laboratory facilities contributing to your goals for developing technology for the warfighter? Do you think Navy laboratory facilities are keeping pace with the needs of the Navy? If not, what do you think could be done to improve the Navy's ability to modernize its laboratory infrastructure?**

If confirmed, I will continue to work closely with the Secretary of the Navy to support and improve the Navy laboratory enterprise. The Navy laboratory enterprise is our technical bench playing a critical role from science and technology development to providing technical expertise to acquisition programs to sustaining the Fleet. The Navy laboratory enterprise works closely together via our Naval Research and Development Enterprise (NRDE) to address workforce challenges, emerging technology requirements and infrastructure. The NRDE has been making great strides in positioning the Navy to be ready to support future emerging technologies and they are collaboratively working together on a number of enterprise initiatives to include developing an infrastructure modernization roadmap. I support the important work the NRDE is doing and look forward to supporting them in any way possible.

### **Technical Workforce**

**A significant challenge facing the Navy today is a shortage of highly skilled data scientists, computer programmers, cyber and other scientific, technical and engineering talent to work at Defense laboratories and technical centers.**

**175. In your view, what are the pros and cons of having Navy Active duty military personnel trained and working as scientists, engineers, software coders, and in other technical positions across the Navy's research, development, and acquisition enterprise?**

Active Duty personnel working in these technical positions maintain the resident level of knowledge within the Navy. This allows us to stay at the leading edge of technological

advancements without looking to contractor and private industry, while continuing to analyze for new inventive solutions to hard problems while on the front line. Additionally, as some technology becomes obsolete in the private sector, our Active Duty personnel become the experts in these fields, and in many cases are required to re-engineer previously proprietary technology to maintain the sea readiness of our Fleet.

They can also quickly assess technical work for military application, ensuring potentially game changing technologies are not left on the shelf. By being in uniform and staying current on operational matters, they ensure these skills do not atrophy. Especially as these Sailors ascend into leadership roles in research, development, and acquisition offices, it is critical that they have enough technical mastery to be able to be fully responsible and accountable for the work of their team, just as we demand technical expertise of our line officers.

These personnel are hard to develop, as they need to learn a warfare domain and also achieve technical mastery in a field of active research. People who can do this are often hard to retain, or to keep current on both skillsets. However, the upside is huge, many of our most successful technological applications in warfighting have involved uniformed military at the forefront or behind the scenes.

**176. How do you propose to leverage other initiatives in the Navy or in DOD to help with these challenges, such as the Defense Civilian Training Corps or the work being done through the Industrial Base Analysis and Sustainment program to support the submarine industrial base workforce?**

Navy Commands and leadership work across organizations to recruit and retain a skilled workforce, particularly in support of the submarine industrial base/shipyard community. One such approach used to expedite the readiness of the industrial base force is the Accelerated Training and Promotion Program (ATPP). Approved by Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the ATPP enables Commands to offer a strong recruitment and incentive package, to include training that expedites the career progression of the workforce. Another program used to recruit top quality science and engineering talent is the SMART (Science, Mathematics, and Research for Transformation) program. The Navy also continues to leverage intern programs to quickly integrate post-secondary students in the technical fields – we learned that when we familiarize these students with our work, they are more likely to permanently join the workforce and contribute to the mission.

The Navy has also pursued special salary rate requests for shipyards, such as the Norfolk Naval Shipyard, which will better enable us to offer more competitive wages to better recruit and retain employees who may be enticed by highly-competitive private sector wages. Navy Commands are also hosting and participating in non-traditional hiring events that target men and women who are seeking to either continue their service (veterans) or pursue service for the first time as a member of the Navy workforce. Use of direct hire flexibilities authorized for the industrial base workforce enables the Navy to directly hire these individuals and quickly assimilate them to the team.

If confirmed, I am committed to piloting new programs that will incentivize recruitment of a skilled workforce, expediting the onboarding of new hires, and promoting career progression. The proposed Defense Civilian Training Corps (DCTC) will provide yet another opportunity to entice critical talent to the Navy, by providing targeted education and development in an ROTC-like program for the civilian workforce. I will work with Congress to ensure the Navy has the necessary authorities and compensation reform to incentivize and retain our talented civilian workforce.

### **Suicide Prevention**

**On May 17, 2022, Secretary Austin established the Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee (SPRIRC) to conduct a comprehensive review of clinical and non-clinical suicide prevention and response programs across the force.**

**177. If confirmed, what specific role and tasks would you establish for the Navy in implementing the SPRIRC's recommendations?**

Taking care of our people will always be a top priority and I am laser focused on reducing the number of suicides. Every suicide is a tragedy, and one is too many. The Navy is working with the Office of the Secretary of Defense to develop SPRIRC implementation plans and, if confirmed, I will work with urgency to implement the guidance.

**178. If confirmed, specifically what would you do to ensure that sufficient suicide prevention and mental health resources are available to deployed sailors, as well as to sailors and their families at home station?**

The Navy recognizes the importance of and is committed to ensuring access to a full continuum of suicide prevention and mental health resources for our Sailors when they are deployed and forward-based, as well as for our Sailors and their families when at home stations. Mental health and behavioral health services are available worldwide from Navy installation counseling centers, on the waterfront, in operational units through embedded mental health providers, at military medical treatment facilities, and via virtual health platforms. Further, non-medical mental health services are available through Fleet and Family Support Centers, Military and Family Life Counseling, and Military OneSource. Navy Chaplains also provide confidential counseling and are important to ensuring spiritual readiness and resiliency of the naval force. Our resiliency and suicide prevention efforts enhanced mental health coordination assure Sailors are directed to the most appropriate service – the right care, at the right level, at the right time – to meet their needs and support overall Force readiness.

If confirmed, I will continue to advance initiatives that increase access for our deployed and forward-based Sailors, to include expansion of virtual mental health and embedded mental health (EMH) services and advocate for additional resources necessary to meet the needs of our Sailors and their families.

**The Navy conducted an investigation into command climate and sailor quality of life onboard the USS *George Washington* (CVN-73), and came to several conclusions regarding systemic challenges that impact carriers undergoing extensive maintenance or construction.**

**179. If confirmed, how will you implement the recommendations to improve quality of life for sailors attached to a ship undergoing maintenance or construction?**

As Vice Chief of Naval Operations, I chair a Quality of Service cross functional team charged with overseeing the implementation of the CVN-73 investigation recommendations and reporting results to the Chief of Naval Operations and Secretary of the Navy. If confirmed, I will ensure that this cross functional team continues its work.

### **Military Health System Reform**

**Section 702 of the NDAA for FY 2017, as modified by Sections 711 and 712 of the NDAA for FY 2019, transferred the administration and management of military hospitals and clinics from the Military Services to the Defense Health Agency (DHA).**

**180. Do you support the purpose and implementation of section 702 of the FY 2017 NDAA, as clarified by sections 711 and 712 of the FY 2019 NDAA?**

Yes, I support the transfer of the military medical treatment facilities (MTFs) to the authority, direction and control of the Defense Health Agency (DHA).

**181. In your view, is the Navy medical force properly sized to meet the joint medical requirements set forth in operational plans implementing the 2022 NDS and the most recent Joint Medical Estimate?**

Given the FY 2023 NDAA requirement to maintain the medical force at its current size, the Naval medical force meets defined operational requirements and stabilizes the Military Health System by providing medical personnel to the MTFs. If confirmed, I stand committed to working across the DOD to support the finalized requirements of Integrated CONUS Medical Operations Plans and the Joint Medical Estimates for future conflicts.

**182. In your view, do Navy medical providers possess today the critical wartime medical readiness skills and core competencies required to provide effective and timely health care to sailors and Marines engaged in combat or contingency operations?**

Yes. Through professional education, credentialing, and stringent privileging programs, Navy medical providers possess critical wartime medical readiness skills to deploy world-wide and provide effective and timely health care to Sailors and Marines. Navy medicine is continually improving our provider readiness through our Knowledge, Skills, and Ability program to ensure a provider's clinical currency allows best practice and outcomes across their expeditionary scope

of practice. Navy is committed to meeting this requirement through utilization of our MTFs as the primary training site, augmented by civilian partnerships as required.

### **End Strength**

**The Navy's Active duty end strength has grown from an authorized 323,600 in FY 2015 to 341,736 in FY 2023. The FY 2024 President's Budget would fund an additional 5,200 sailors. To achieve this rapid growth the Navy has lowered enlistment standards for new recruits and relaxed retention timelines for experienced sailors.**

#### **183. Do you believe Navy end strength must continue to grow?**

Yes, the Navy is required to meet the operational environment today and in the future which requires continued growth to ensure that our units are manned to the highest level of readiness for effective, efficient, and safe operations, and we are able to grow our end strength for emergent warfighting requirements like cyber, space, robotics, unmanned, and AI. We also need to grow end strength to support quality of life and quality of service for our Sailors that sacrifice so much. However, the end strength requested in the FY24 President's Budget Request reflected what was assessed to be achievable given the recruiting environment at the time the budget was built. The end strength required to properly man the Fleet is much greater. The Navy will be required to grow for many years in order to meet current force structure requirements, and further grow if the force structure expands. If confirmed, I will continue to ensure Navy maintains high standards for those we bring in and retain, as this is formative to our success and credibility in combat.

#### **184. Will you commit to ensuring that, if confirmed, the Navy maintains sufficiently high recruitment and retention standards, even if such standards result in the Navy not achieving authorized end strength levels?**

The Navy continues to sustain focus on improving access and recruiter performance in an extremely challenging recruiting environment and through end strength mitigation initiatives. The Navy has realized success through expansion of various policies without lowering standards. Every Sailor is qualified for the rating in which they are assigned.

If confirmed, I commit to upholding our high recruiting and retention standards. The Navy will continue to be an institution that everyone in America can aspire to join, knowing that a Navy career would be professionally rewarding and personally fulfilling. Those standards are based on demonstrated practice throughout training, Fleet certification and operations, so we will continue to build potential Future Sailors up to meet those standards, such as with the Future Sailor Prep Course, rather than relax the standards to make strength numbers.

**185. In light of the manpower and personnel concerns raised by after-action reviews of the *Fitzgerald* and *McCain* accidents at sea, what are your greatest force management concerns?**

My greatest force management concern is our ability to fully man our sea duty units and provide our Sailors with the quality of life they have earned. As of 29 August, we had 18,838 billet gaps in our sea duty units for an 88.1% fill rate (Apprentice 17,319, Journeyman 1,923, and Supervisor 404). The current recruiting environment is increasing our challenge to fully man our sea duty units, which require temporary manning actions to ensure our deployed ships are fully manned.

**186. How would you address those concerns, if confirmed as the Chief of Naval Operations?**

We are aggressively pursuing actions to optimize our workforce and address shortfalls by transforming the Navy enlisted advancement and distribution systems into a market-driven, billet-based talent management system. In addition, we are maximizing use of financial incentives both for accessions, retention, and sea duty, as well as expanding advancement opportunities throughout the Fleet. We also continue to assess our training pipeline, billet structure, and tour lengths to support Fleet priorities. If confirmed, I will continue to direct actions that will make maximum use of our talent and preserve flexibility and Sailor choice.

**187. In your view, is the Navy's current end strength sufficient to implement the 2022 NDS and execute the associated operational plans? If not, what end strength do you believe is necessary to meet the demands placed on the Navy by the 2022 NDS and associated operational plans?**

Yes, Navy's end strength supports force structure growth that puts us on pace in support of the Thirty Year Shipbuilding Plan. With the nation's current recruiting challenges, achieving the end strength profile is not expected until fiscal year 2027 at the earliest.

**188. If Active Navy end strength is increased in FY 2024, what specific parameters would you use to determine what the corresponding Navy Reserve end strength should be in order to support those active forces?**

Reserve end strength is determined in the same manner as Active end strength – based on Fleet requirements as determined by Fleet and shore manpower requirement determination validation processes. We do not have a mandated ratio of Active to Reserve end strength or requirements. Rather, each requirement is validated independently as a component of activity manpower documents for both Active and Reserve Component Forces.

**189. What additional force shaping authorities and tools does the Navy need, in your view?**

No additional force shaping authorities are required as Navy continues to meet or exceed force retention forecasts, and we have the policy flexibility we need within current authorities. We



have continued to be able to evolve retention and force management policy, such as High Year Tenure Plus, Advance to Position, and Senior Enlisted Marketplace within our existing authorities.

If confirmed, I will work with Congress to ensure the Navy has the necessary authorities to incentivize and retain our talented Sailors and civilian workforce.

### **Navy Reserve**

#### **190. In your view, what is the appropriate relationship between the Active Navy and the Navy Reserve?**

The Reserve Component is a critical partner in the Navy Total Force, where we view missions in terms of capabilities first and then decide where the capability should reside. The value of the Navy Reserve is in both their strategic capacity to provide Sailors and units for mobilizations in support of Global Force Management requirements, as well as their operational capacity to provide daily support to the Fleet through flexible access options. Additionally, unique civilian skills are highly leveraged in advancing Navy's capabilities.

#### **191. What is your vision for the roles and missions of the Navy Reserve? If confirmed, what new objectives would you seek to achieve with respect to the Navy Reserve's organization, force structure, and end strength?**

As part of the Navy's Total Force of Active and Reserve Sailors supported by government civilians, Navy Reserve Sailors provide both flexibility and strategic depth to address demands along the entire spectrum of armed conflict as well as during times of humanitarian crisis. They also bring value through scalable utilization options to meet Navy requirements. Approximately 25 percent of the Navy Reserve delivers operational support on any given day, increasing Total Force operational capacity. The Navy's employment of its Reserve Component provides responsive and flexible options to meet Navy mission requirements. If confirmed, I will support efforts to leverage our Navy Reserve capabilities in appropriate areas where our Reserve Component could increase Total Force efficiency and effectiveness in executing the mission.

#### **192. Are you concerned that continued reliance on the Reserve Component to execute operational missions—both at home and around the globe—is adversely affecting the Navy Reserve's ability to meet its recruiting and retention missions? Why or why not?**

No. Navy Reservists have always been resolute in their desire to contribute to the operations of the Navy around the world. In FY23, volunteerism for individual augmentation (IA) missions was at an all-time High of 90 percent and retention in the Navy Reserve is in excess of 85%.

**193. In your view, does the Navy Reserve serve as an operational reserve, a strategic reserve, or both? In light of your answer, should the Navy Reserve be supported by improved equipment, increased training, and higher levels of overall resourcing for readiness going forward?**

The Navy Reserve provides both confident strategic depth and valuable operational support. The Navy's integrated approach to Total Force employment, where the Reserve Component works side-by-side the Active Component, enables Reserve Sailors and Reserve units to train for strategic requirements, while also supporting Navy's day-to-day operations. Accordingly, if confirmed, I will ensure the Navy Reserve has the necessary resources needed for proper integration with their Active counterparts.

### **Recruiting and Retention**

**The National Defense Strategy Commission asserted unequivocally that the most critical resource required to produce a highly capable military is highly capable people, in the quantity required, willing to serve. Yet, DOD studies indicate that only about a quarter 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.**

**194. If confirmed, how would you ensure that the Navy maintains sufficiently high recruitment and retention standards, even if such standards result in the Navy not achieving authorized end strength growth?**

Navy continues to sustain focus on improving access and recruiter performance in an extremely challenging recruiting environment and through end strength mitigation initiatives. Navy has realized success through expansion of various policies without lowering standards. Every Sailor is qualified for the rating in which they are assigned.

If confirmed, I will continue to ensure Navy maintains high standards for those we bring in and retain, as this is formative to our success and credibility in combat. To reduce any pressure to relax our standards, I would plan to grow our recruiting force and ensure we use all statutory authorities afforded the Services by Congress to recruit and retain Future Sailors.

Today's youth are less likely to have a close family member who has served. If confirmed, I would seek new ways of reaching this key population who don't have prior service influence in the home. I would also take a close look at the markets we recruit from, to ensure we are reaching eligible Future Sailors where they are, rather than aiming where they historically have been.

**195. Rather than relying solely on ever-higher compensation for a shrinking pool of volunteers, what creative steps would you take, if confirmed, to expand the pool of eligible recruits and improve Navy recruiting?**

If confirmed, I will continue to review accession standards and our recruitment policies, particularly in the area of physical and medical qualifications to ensure we have the right

standards to maximize eligibility of America's youth. By carefully evaluating individual circumstances and granting waivers where appropriate, we can tap into a broader talent pool. We must also provide opportunities for potential recruits to meet our eligibility requirements. In 2023, Navy established a Future Sailor Preparatory Course (FSPC), with two tracks: Physical Fitness and Academic. The course provides applicants an opportunity to overcome academic or physical fitness barriers to service and increases opportunity to serve without sacrificing the quality needed in the Fleet. Additionally, the Navy must continue to leverage Marketing and Advertising resources in digital spaces that not only speaks to our target audience, but also leverages those most trusted influences on our future Sailors, such as parents, coaches, teachers and Veterans that reinforce future Sailors' decisions to serve our country.

Finally, I would work to expand cooperation between the Navy and local schools to foster development efforts that will reduce the decline in eligibility over time, so that students coming into adulthood meet all the eligibility requirements for service, similar to the approaches we took as a country early in the Cold War to enhance our competence in science and technology. If confirmed, I am committed to pulling all levers to expand our pool of eligible recruits, including working to expand programs such as JROTC, Sea Cadets, and STEM outreach.

**196. What do you consider to be key to the Navy's future success, if confirmed, in retaining the best qualified personnel for continued service in positions of greater responsibility and leadership in the Navy?**

Attracting and retaining the best Sailors in an increasingly competitive talent market requires continued flexibility and transparency in policies and practices. Through career and community management, we continuously develop and retain talent relevant to the Navy through flexible retention and conversion, and by providing clear career development expectations and potential paths for career success. If confirmed, I will continue to explore and promote policies that promote career development and flexibility, and improved quality of service.

**197. In your view, do current recruiting standards—particularly DOD-wide criteria for tier-one recruits—accurately predict recruit attrition and/or future success in the Navy?**

Current accession standards for Tier 1 recruits have been reliable indicators of recruit attrition and overall success in the Navy. In keeping in line with the DOD and the other Services, the Navy continuously evaluates the standards to ensure that we remain aligned with trends thus enabling us to tap into a broader talent pool.

**198. Given the historically low numbers for eligibility to serve, do you believe a reassessment of accessions standards is in order? If so, what accessions standards in your view are outdated or worthy of review?**

Accession standards should continuously be reviewed, particularly in light of the small number of young Americans who are currently qualified to serve. If confirmed, I would work with Congress and other recruiting stakeholders to ensure we set the right standards.

**199. In your view, does the Air Force have the necessary authorities to recruit and retain personnel with critical skills, including cyber?**

Yes. The Navy appreciates all authorities we have received that garner high-yield initiatives and resources to make our efforts more effective and efficient. We remain committed to expanding the qualified applicant pool and will continue to explore opportunities to attract and retain the highest quality candidates into the Fleet.

**U.S. Naval Academy**

**200. In your view, what is the unique value provided by the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA) when compared with the other Navy commissioning sources?**

Each of our Navy commissioning sources provide clear value to the Navy and have been instrumental in our Navy's success for decades.

The Naval Academy's motto, "from knowledge, seapower," speaks to the close alignment of the Naval Academy and Naval Warfare and is reflective of an institution that is singularly focused on the mission of educating future Naval Officers. The unique value of the Naval Academy lies in the immersion of the Midshipmen in the Navy and Marine Corps' culture, values, and history on a full-time basis. At the Naval Academy midshipmen learn and earn degrees in subjects of importance to developing a modern warfighting force. Standard curricula can be enhanced and interwoven with naval specific examples, challenges, and opportunities. Midshipmen also participate in character building, leadership development, and other professionally focused curricula that prepare them specifically for the unique, and challenging, profession of being a Naval Officer. A close bond is built between Naval Academy classmates and company mates, which provides a network of support and trust that has strengthened our Navy as an organization over many years.

**201. If confirmed, what changes to the organization, curriculum, or operations of USNA do you envision recommending?**

The Naval Academy has been instrumental in preparing our officers for the challenges facing our Navy since 1845 and will continue to serve in important role going forward. To prepare for future warfare, the Naval Academy has in recent years expanded its offerings in computer science and cybersecurity, and is completing the development and delivery of its newest majors, Foreign Area Studies and Data Science. In addition to the expansion of majors offered. If confirmed, I will recommend a continued review of the core curriculum provided to every Midshipmen to ensure that Naval Academy graduates have the foundation necessary to lead our Navy in 21<sup>st</sup> century warfare. Just as warfare is ever evolving, a modern educational institution must self-evaluate and look forward, anticipating the challenges to come. If confirmed, I plan to continue to align the curriculum and operations at USNA with future warfighting needs, and meet the mission of developing midshipmen in mind, body, and character to lead effectively as naval officers.

**The National Defense Authorization Act re-emphasized for the third time in the last five years that service academy graduates are expected to serve for at least two-years on active duty prior to pursuing employment as a professional athlete.**

**202. Do you support this requirement?**

Yes. The service academies exist to develop officers who will lead our military in the future. I am focused on developing Navy and Marine Corps Officers and following the policies set forth in the NDAA.

**Military Compensation**

**The Department of Defense has traditionally assessed the competitiveness of military pay by comparing Regular Military Compensation against salaries earned by a comparable civilian demographic.**

**203. Do you agree that the primary purpose of a competitive military pay and benefits package is to recruit and retain a military of sufficient size and quality to meet the objectives of the 2022 NDS?**

Yes, the primary purpose of a competitive pay and benefits package is to recruit and retain the right number of people with the right skills. However, we also offer some special and incentive pays with the purpose of influencing members to take certain assignments, endure specific hazards, or earn needed skills.

**204. What is your assessment of the adequacy of the current military pay package in achieving this goal—particularly given the ever-tightening recruiting market?**

Competitive pay and compensation are essential to our ability to recruit, retain, and provide for the overall quality of service for our Sailors and their families. Military pay is but one component of ensuring our Sailors have a high Quality of Service. We must look at all aspects of quality of life including allowances, housing, healthcare, etc. We are actively participating in the DOD's 14th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, and I look forward to those results. If confirmed, I am committed to improving the Quality of Service of all our Sailors and civilian personnel.

**205. Do you believe the largely “one-size-fits-all” model for military pay adequately rewards individuals for their specialized skills and provides an appropriate incentive to scientists, engineers, and members of other high-value professions to access into the military?**

The current pay system is based on rank/paygrade and years of experience. This serves as an adequate structure for most skills but there are some skills that need additional compensation due to high civilian compensation. Navy has created a pay differential for many skills using special and incentive pays. Navy is not opposed to examining additional pay scales and is aware that Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation has considered this in the past.

**206. What changes, if any, would you recommend to the current military pay and benefits package?**

Overall, the current pay and compensation package is very robust and competes well with civilians with similar training and experience. Rather than applying higher pay raises to every member, I think it would be more efficient to target areas for recruiting and retention with additional special pays and incentives. In addition, we are actively participating in the DOD's 14th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, and I look forward to those results.

**207. What specific recommendations do you have for controlling the rising cost of military personnel?**

We are already doing as much as possible to minimize personnel costs, but in this challenging recruiting and retention environment, our options are limited. Our best tool in controlling the cost of military personnel is to maximize retention and minimize attrition in order to minimize the cost of recruiting and training their replacements.

**Service of Transgender Persons**

**Each of the Service Chiefs has testified before this Committee that in their personal experience, the service of transgender individuals in their preferred gender has had no negative impact on unit or overall military readiness.**

**208. In your personal experience, has the service of transgender individuals in their preferred gender had any negative impact on unit or overall military readiness?**

No, I am not aware of any negative impact on unit or overall military readiness.

**209. In your view, what would be the impact on readiness of requiring the separation of all transgender sailors currently serving in the military? Please provide specific data to support your view.**

We do not want to lose any high performing Sailors. In accordance with DOD Policy, we do not track gender marker changes so we do not know the total number of transgender Sailors in the Navy. To date, less than 700 Sailors have been diagnosed with gender dysphoria.

**Military Quality of Life**

**The Committee remains concerned about the sustainment of key quality of life programs for military families, such as family advocacy and parenting skills programs; child care; spouse education and employment support; health care; and morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) services.**

**210. If confirmed, what quality of life and MWR programs would you consider a priority?**

Quality of Life (QoL) programs that provide predictability and stability throughout the Military lifecycle are critical to sustaining the Total Force and are key elements of overall Quality of Service (QoS). If confirmed, I commit to providing the services that Sailors and their families value. To that end, I will ensure Sailors and their families have a voice in prioritizing the QoL programs and services that support their basic needs, promote health and wellbeing, and support Navy readiness. Furthermore, I will continue the Navy's efforts to increase the capacity and availability of key programs such as childcare and MWR.

**211. If confirmed, how would you work across the Navy, and with the Military Service Organizations and Congress to sustain and enrich high-value quality of life and MWR programs for sailors and their families?**

If confirmed, I will continue to advance the Navy's Quality of Service (QoS) efforts initiated in the last year. Specifically, the Navy identified key Quality of Work and Quality of Life requirements and established specific Lines of Effort (LOE) to strengthen programs that positively impact mind, body, and spirit (e.g., fitness, nutrition, housing, mental and behavioral health, and Wi-Fi access). These programs will improve the lives of Sailors and their families, starting with Sailors on ships in maintenance availabilities. I am committed to enhancing Sailor QoL and work life. Together with Department of Defense, Military Service Organization leaders and experts, we will provide the programs and services our Service members and families deserve. I look forward to working with Members of Congress on these critical issues.

**Military Housing**

**212. What is your current assessment of privatized housing inside the Navy?**

Privatized military housing is essential to meet the housing needs of our Sailors and their families. Since 2019, the Navy has strengthened oversight of Public Private Venture (PPV) partners to deliver quality housing. The Navy also enhanced monitoring of project company performance, tracked occupancy metrics, developed action plans to address Tenant Satisfaction Survey (TSS) results, and improved leadership engagement. We will continue to identify opportunities to further improve our privatized housing inventory.

**213. As it pertains to unaccompanied barracks, do you believe the Navy should utilize waivers to waive habitability and living standards?**

The Navy is working to increase and improve the inventory of unaccompanied housing (UH) through new construction, renovation of current buildings, and expansion of UH PPV partnerships as one of the focus areas of our Quality of Service efforts to ensure that all Navy-provided UH meets DOD standards. Habitability and living standard waivers are considered on a case-by-case basis. The Navy will approve waivers if they improve the Sailor's existing living conditions, such as enabling a move ashore while in homeport or in instances where the location

lacks the capacity needed to house Sailors that do not qualify for Basic Allowance for Housing. The Navy will not approve waivers for UH with life, safety, or health-related issues.

### **Family Readiness and Support**

#### **214. What do you consider to be the most important family readiness issues for sailors and their families?**

I believe the most important family readiness issues for Sailors and their families are access to housing, including unaccompanied housing for Sailors in an industrial environment, healthcare, high quality affordable childcare, spousal employment and mitigating food insecurity. We are addressing these and other issues through our Quality of Service initiatives.

#### **215. If confirmed, how would you ensure that the family readiness issues you identified are properly addressed and adequately resourced?**

Family and Unaccompanied Housing are critically important to our Sailors. Navy utilizes both privatized and government-provided housing for families and for unaccompanied Sailors. Since 2019, the Navy has strengthened oversight of Public Private Venture (PPV) partners to deliver quality housing and developed a tenant Bill of Rights to ensure our Sailors and their families understand their rights and responsibilities. The Navy enhanced monitoring of project company performance, tracked occupancy metrics, developed action plans to address Tenant Satisfaction Survey (TSS) results, and increased leadership engagement. Most aspects of this improved Privatized Housing oversight have been transitioned into our government-furnished housing programs and into unaccompanied housing around the globe to include the Sailor's Bill of Rights and Responsibilities while living in unaccompanied housing. If confirmed, I will work to ensure all of our Sailors receive appropriate, quality housing wherever they may be assigned.

Just as Sailors must have access to quality housing, they must also have access to quality healthcare. I am working today, and, if confirmed, will continue to work with DHA, to ensure all of our Sailors, and their families, have availability, accessibility and awareness of the support services available to them to care for mind, body, and spirit. I intend to ask for, listen to, and act where possible, in conjunction with DHA, upon the voice of the Sailor as we address the myriad of health concerns our Sailors and their families face each day. If confirmed, I will be an advocate for our Sailors' needs.

The lack of accessible, affordable child care is a national issue and an important readiness issue for the Navy. The primary challenges for the Navy, as with the private childcare industry, are staffing and capacity. To get after staffing, the Navy initiated recruitment and retention bonuses, increased salaries, and began providing childcare discounts for staff members (50% for first child, 20% for each additional child). We are aggressively expanding our fee assistance program and are pursuing additional partnerships to add physical space, as a quicker, cost effective alternative to the military construction process. We are also investing in new child development centers in fleet concentration areas to increase our overall child care capacity. I am committed to ensuring mission readiness by addressing the child care needs of our Sailors. If confirmed, I will



continue to search out additional options and work with you, OSD, and other stakeholders to provide high quality, affordable childcare solutions.

Lastly, in order to address food security challenges, I intend to continue my support of Ashore Galley's that offer a variety of nutritious meals and expansion of Navy Exchange Command micro markets in locations throughout the Navy to provide convenient, affordable 24-hour access to a variety of food options, including fresh and nutritious selections. In locations that are "food deserts" for our younger Sailors who may not have readily available personal transport, alternatives such as shuttles may be a viable option to ensure our service members can routinely and readily access nutritious and affordable food options. Additionally, because screening for food insecurity is a critical means for capturing at-risk Sailors, I will continue to support our Fleet and Family Support Programs' screening for economic security, food insecurity, housing insecurity, and financial well-being, and support our Personal Financial Managers who connect our Sailors to the resources they need.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with you, OSD, and other stakeholders to address these important family readiness issues impacting our Sailors' overall quality of service.

**216. If confirmed, how would you ensure that support related to mobilization, deployment, and family readiness is provided to Navy Reserve families, as well as to Active Duty Navy families who do not reside near a military base?**

If confirmed, I will continue to support programs that provide all Navy families with critical Quality of Service support. We will continue to sponsor programs such as the Armed Services Young Men's Association (ASYMCA) fitness memberships for decentralized families. Additionally, I will advance new programs that support childcare for these families. For instance, the Navy recently launched a pilot program called Navy Reserve Force Weekend Drill Child Care (WDCC) to address childcare needs of Reserve Service members and support execution of Inactive Duty Training (IDT), commonly known as weekend drills. The initial WDCC Pilot will be available to eligible Reservists in Jacksonville, FL; Metro San Diego, CA; and Kitsap/Bremerton, WA. All Navy families, including Reserve and decentralized Navy families, are a critical piece of our fighting force and will remain a priority as we find ways to provide the support they need.

**217. In your view, what role do non-medical counseling services provided by DOD Military Family Life Counselors have in promoting the readiness of the force and family?**

Military and Family Life Counselors (MFLCs), supported through Commander, Navy Installations Command, are a key component within the full continuum of mental health resources available to our Sailors and families. Non-medical counseling services, such as MFLCs, address concerns related to relationships, stress or anger management, adjustment difficulties, marital problems, parenting challenges, and coping with loss. These non-medical counseling services complement our clinical mental health services, which typically address more significant mental health difficulties and diagnosed mental health conditions. MFLCs

provide confidential counseling to Sailors and their families, contributing to both the resiliency and readiness of our Naval force.

**The Committee often hears that Active Duty families have difficulty obtaining child care on base and that there are thousands of military families on waitlists to receive infant care.**

**218. If confirmed, what specifically would you do to provide Navy families with accessible, high-quality childcare, at an appropriate cost?**

The lack of accessible, affordable childcare is a national issue and an important Readiness issue for the Navy. I am committed to ensuring mission readiness by addressing the childcare needs of our Sailors. The primary challenges for the Navy, as with the private childcare industry, are staffing and capacity. To get after staffing, the Navy initiated recruitment and retention bonuses, increased employee salaries, and began providing childcare discounts for staff members (50% for first child, 20% for additional children). We are aggressively expanding our fee assistance program and are pursuing additional partnerships to add physical space, as a quicker, cost-effective alternative to the MILCON process. We are also investing in new child development centers in fleet concentration areas to increase our overall childcare capacity. If confirmed, I will continue to search out additional options and work with OSD and other stakeholders to provide childcare solutions.

### **Support for Military Families with Special Needs**

**219. If confirmed, how would you ensure that a sailor with a special needs family member is relocated only to a new duty station at which the medical and educational services required by that family member are available?**

If confirmed, I will ensure we complete the implementation of the Navy's centralized Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) office to include an expanded staff of assignment case managers and a panel of a certified nurses, fully dedicated to verifying the availability of medical and educational services at projected locations prior to the Permanent Change of Station. Our streamlined processes and procedures in the centralized office will provide our families enrolled in the EFMP with a better sense of transparency and integrity in our screening. I will also continue our close partnership with ASN (M&RA), the Office of Special Needs (OSN) and the other Services for full implementation of standardized processes and best practices.

**220. If confirmed, how would you incentivize sailor enrollment in the exceptional family member program (EFMP) balancing the needs of the Navy, the needs of exceptional family members, and the desires of both sailors and their dependents to have a rewarding experience in the Navy?**

If confirmed, my career long message stands to all Sailors. Taking care of our people and their families is the only way our Nation maintains its posture as the strongest fighting force in the world. Streamlined communications and processes will ensure that at every opportunity we try to keep families together. However, when the needs of the Navy prevail and a separation from

family is warranted, our Sailors enrolled in the EFMP will have confidence in the system to know that their family member's medical and educational needs are being met at home.

**221. If confirmed, what new initiatives might you suggest for improving the ability of sailors with a special needs family member to obtain the medical services and support their family member requires?**

If confirmed, my team will work arduously with the Defense Health Agency to continue their efforts with the Department of Defense, Office of Special Needs and the Uniformed Service EFMP to identify the necessary changes needed to ensure a seamless transition of network services. This will identify gaps in the service we provide and encourage recruitment of quality network providers. I will also direct my team of special education attorneys to be vigilant and responsive to our families enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program who experience challenges within the public education system.

**Sexual Assault Prevention and Response**

**Despite significant efforts by the Military Services over the past decade to enhance their response to sexual assaults, including measures to care for victims and hold assailants accountable, the current data continues to show increasing prevalence of sexual assault and unwanted sexual conduct, primarily for female service members aged 17 to 24. These findings echo reports this year of increases in the prevalence of sexual harassment and assault at the Military Service Academies.**

**222. Do you believe the policies, programs, and resources that the Department of the Navy have put in place to prevent and respond to sexual assault, and to protect sailors and marines who report sexual assault from retaliation, are working? If not, what else must be done?**

Navy continues to use the authorities and resources entrusted to us to counter sexual assault and take care of our people. We believe we have the policies and programs in place to respond to sexual assault and to protect our sailors who report sexual assault from retaliation. It is important to note that we are implementing the reforms that Secretary Austin approved following the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military (IRC) and the July 28, 2023 Executive Order implementing the military justice reforms. Likewise, the Navy has taken great care to ensure that the Office of Special Trial Counsel (OSTC) is manned, trained, and equipped with highly experienced and effective Special Trial Counsel to receive, assess, and, if warranted, prosecute cases of sexual assault and unwanted sexual conduct, among other covered offenses, including domestic violence. The OSTC is a key component in how the Navy will build trust in our military justice system and hold assailants appropriately accountable.

Navy has begun hiring an Integrated Primary Prevention Workforce (IPPW). This workforce will increase Navy's effectiveness and capacity for primary prevention efforts and cultural change. The IPPW will be phased in through FY28, with initial priorities on strategic level staff and deployable assets. Navy will continue to work implementation actions to provide Sexual Assault

Response Coordinators (SARCs) and Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Victim Advocates (SAPR VAs) with enhanced skills to assist victims.

Ensuring we are able to provide continuous and quality prevention and response resources to our Sailors, while protecting them from retaliation, is key in this effort. We are focused to ensure recruiting and retention efforts are in place to minimize gapped SARC and SAPR VA positions at installations. Hiring full-time, dedicated integrated prevention personnel is ongoing to inform and support command focus on countering sexual assault and other harmful behaviors.

Navy formalized and implemented the No Wrong Door approach ensuring Sailors that contact a helping professional will receive the appropriate care and support directly or via a warm handoff.

Focusing on Command Climate is critical. Navy is standardizing and incentivizing proven best practice leadership behaviors and problem-solving throughout the force to drive consistent, positive outcomes. This is a foundational movement based upon an environment of inclusion, transparency, and honest assessment. In simple terms, this is Navy's Get Real, Get Better call to action.

**The most recent report on the prevalence of sexual assault and harassment at the Military Service Academies revealed disturbing levels of sexual harassment in particular, placing the Service Academies among the poorest performing military units in incidents of harassment, suggesting an environment conducive to sexual assault and other misconduct.**

**223. What is your reaction to this report, and what actions would you propose to reduce the prevalence of sexual harassment at the Service Academies?**

I find the results of this report very disturbing. It is unacceptable that we have failed to make significant progress in dealing with the challenges of sexual harassment and sexual assault at the U.S. Naval Academy. I believe we must increase our focus on education and culture and continue to hold those that fail to meet our standards appropriately accountable for their actions. In addition, the Navy is executing in accordance with the Secretary of Defense's memorandums dated March 10, 2023 and August 16, 2023 actions to prevent sexual assaults and harassment, and to transform the climate at the U.S. Naval Academy. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Superintendent on efforts and initiatives to better understand the root causes and reduce the prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault at the Academy.

**224. If confirmed, what specific role would you establish for yourself in preventing sexual harassment in the Navy, including within the civilian workforce?**

If confirmed, it is incumbent upon me to foster a culture of inclusion, trust, and accountability throughout the Navy, including our incredible civilian workforce. Harassment cannot be tolerated in any DON work environment. The DON takes seriously any allegation of harassment, as harassment adversely affects our individual and collective effort to accomplish our missions. I am committed to ensuring every report is appropriately reviewed. If confirmed, eradicating sexual harassment will remain a top priority for the Navy.

**225. Do you perceive that you need additional authorities from Congress to improve the Navy programs to prevent sexual harassment and sexual assault?**

Navy has sufficient authorities to address sexual harassment and sexual assault.

**Mental and Behavioral Health Care**

**226. If confirmed, what actions would you take to ensure that sufficient mental and behavioral health resources are available to sailors in theater or at sea, as well as to sailors and families at home station locations?**

The Navy is committed to ensuring access to a full continuum of mental health resources for our Sailors and families. Mental health and behavioral health services are available worldwide from Navy installation counseling centers, on the waterfront, in operational units through embedded mental health providers, at military medical treatment facilities, and via virtual health platforms. Further, non-medical mental health services are available through Fleet and Family Support Centers, Military and Family Life Counseling, and Military OneSource. Navy Chaplains also provide confidential counseling and are important to ensuring spiritual readiness and resiliency of the Naval Force. Our resiliency and suicide prevention efforts and enhanced mental health coordination assure Sailors are directed to the most appropriate service – the right care, at the right level, at the right time -- to meet their needs and support overall Force readiness.

**227. If confirmed, what specifically would you do to ensure that sufficient mental and behavioral health resources are available to Reserve Component sailors and their families who do not reside near a military base?**

The Reserve Component is a critical part of our Navy Total Force and we must support them with the quality of service they deserve, to include mental health resources. Our Navy and Marine Corps Reserve Psychological Health Outreach Program ensures Reservists and their families have access to mental health services prior to deployment, post-demobilization, and before retirement/discharge. For Reserve Component Sailors not near an installation, the Department of the Navy also has partnerships with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Guard Bureau to offer access to counseling and other resources to include virtual health platforms.

**Although the Department has made great strides in reducing the stigma associated with help-seeking behaviors, many service members remain concerned that their military careers will be adversely affected should their chain of command become aware that they are seeking mental or behavioral health care. At the same time, the military chain of command has a legitimate need to be aware of physical and mental health conditions that may affect the readiness of the service members under their command.**

**228. In your view, does the Navy effectively bridge the gap between a servicemember's desire for confidentiality and the chain of command's legitimate need to know about matters that may affect individual service member and the unit readiness?**

Yes. One of the Navy's key initiatives to reduce perceived stigma surrounding mental health and confidentiality is the development of a Mental Health Playbook released in February 2023. The Playbook, designed to aid commanders in preventing, mitigating, or addressing mental health issues, emphasizes the role of the leader in setting the conditions and building a climate of trust, and getting their people the care they need to keep them in the team.

**229. In your view, do non-medical counseling services provided by DOD Military Family Life Counselors have a role in promoting the readiness of airmen and their families?**

Military and Family Life Counselors (MFLCs), supported through Commander, Navy Installations Command, are a key component within the full continuum of mental health resources available to our Sailors and families. Non-medical counseling services, such as MFLCs, address concerns related to relationships, stress or anger management, adjustment difficulties, marital problems, parenting challenges, and coping with loss. These non-medical counseling services complement our clinical mental health services, which typically address more significant mental health difficulties and diagnosed mental health conditions. MFLCs provide confidential counseling to Sailors and their families, contributing to both the resiliency and readiness of our Naval force.

**Audit**

**230. Why is it important for the Navy to achieve a clean audit opinion?**

Annual financial statement audits enhance transparency, validate an organization's accountability of the resources entrusted to it, and drive business process standardization and stronger internal controls. The audit fosters a culture that encourages innovation and transformation, solves problems, and achieves results that maximize the return on the dollars entrusted to the Department, improves the operational effectiveness of the operating forces, and reinforces the confidence Congress and the public have in its naval force. If confirmed, I am committed to working across the Department to achieve a clean audit opinion for the Navy.

**231. What steps has the Navy taken to evaluate unit readiness and commander performance based on audit results?**

As the Department of the Navy (DON) progresses towards an audit opinion, we continue standardizing our processes and systems. One outcome of such standardization is increased visibility and accountability on equipment and supplies across the enterprise, which directly impacts the DON's ability to understand and improve warfighter readiness. The financial statement audit and its remediation efforts support the DON's enduring priorities by instilling rigor into business processes which have both financial and operational benefits. We are

implementing oversight metrics and governance to evaluate performance and track progress towards an opinion.

### **Joint Officer Management**

**The NDAA for FY 2017 modified the Joint Qualified Officer (JQO) system established by the Goldwater-Nichols Act in two significant ways. First, it broadened the statutory definition of “joint matters” to expand the types of positions for which an officer can receive joint duty credit. Further, it reduced from three years to two the minimum tour length required for joint duty credit.**

#### **232. What is your assessment of the effectiveness of the FY 2017 modifications to the JQO system?**

The Goldwater-Nichols Act modifications of 2017 have allowed the Navy to balance career timing and an officer’s primary warfare specialty when assessing JQOs proportional time in a joint tour to the overall career prior to Flag selection. The overall types of positions which were expanded are not all encompassing as the variance of experience vastly depends on the type of joint duty the specific service member lands in following Flag selection.

#### **233. In your view, are the requirements associated with becoming a JQO, and the link between attaining joint qualification and eligibility for promotion to flag officer rank, consistent with the operational and professional demands of Navy line officers?**

Professional demands are routinely balanced by detailers and the service members themselves as joint training and the associated requirements to become a JQO are spread over an officer’s career through touch points where professional demands allow.

#### **234. In your view, what additional modifications, if any, to JQO prerequisites are necessary to ensure that Navy officers are able to attain both meaningful joint and Navy-specific leadership experience and adequate professional development?**

Joint Qualified Officer (JQO) prerequisites are currently aligned appropriately and managed to allow specific experience.

### **Professional Military Education**

**The 2022 NDS asserts that Professional Military Education (PME) should be refocused to foster critical thinking and analytical skills, fluency in critical languages, and integration of insights from the social and behavioral sciences.**

**235. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to enhance the Navy's PME system to ensure that it fosters the skills highlighted in the NDS to develop a cadre of strategic thinkers and planners with both the intellectual and military leadership acumen to merit promotion to flag officer?**

If confirmed, and in full alignment with the Navy's Education Strategy, I will continue to support the continuous intellectual development of our Sailors to further our warfighting advantage. Learning and Development opportunities will be provided to our Sailors continuously over their careers to develop strategically-minded Sailors who can think critically, assume increasing responsibility, and out-think our adversaries to defend the Nation and our global interests. The inclusion of these key skills in our officer and enlisted development pipelines will ensure, aligned with Talent Management and advancement policies, will develop the skills supporting the intellectual and military leadership acumen to merit promotion at every level, including Flag Officer.

**236. In your view, are there opportunities in Navy PME to improve STEM cognizance and cyber fluency across the joint force to ensure that leaders understand and can effectively employ technologies to fight and win our nation's wars?**

The Navy has identified STEM, inclusive of cyber, as a key competency that every leader requires at least a baseline level knowledge and skill. By identifying these areas as a key competency, we are able to identify opportunities to grow our leaders over their career. We also recognize that our approach to development needs to evolve to take advantage of modern approaches to learning including hybrid and distributed learning models. Modular, technology-supported education delivery methods enable more tailored learning, enhanced assessment, increased collaboration, and can be quickly updated for relevancy. DON will provide the total force with scalable, world class, easily accessible, and cost-effective education.

**237. In your view, is there a role for Navy PME in developing basic product management skills across the joint force to ensure that military leaders are proficient in the employment of software and automation in warfighting?**

Yes, there is a role for Navy PME in developing basic product management skills across the joint force. All leaders will need basic awareness, which will also be a part of PME-related development curriculums, of how to leverage automation in warfighting, and understand how software and hardware come together to achieve our mission requirements. Leaders must be able to leverage the promise of technology and understand how advances in technology can support warfighting success.

### **The Navy Civilian Personnel Workforce**

**DOD is the federal government's largest employer of civilian personnel. The vast majority of DOD and Navy civilian personnel policies comport with requirements set forth in title 5 of the U.S. Code, and corresponding regulations under the purview of the Office of Personnel Management. Over the years, the annual defense bill has included numerous**



**extraordinary hiring and management authorities applicable to specific segments of the DOD and Navy civilian workforces.**

**238. In your judgment, what is the biggest challenge facing the Department of the Navy in effectively and efficiently managing its civilian workforce?**

The hiring authorities afforded to the Department of Defense (DOD) in previous defense bills have been extremely impactful in terms of filling mission critical positions faster. The direct hire authorities (DHAs) have shaved weeks, sometimes months off our hiring timelines. But while these DHAs have been exceedingly helpful, the weight of excessive regulation presents challenges in our competition to attract and hire world class talent.

First, while the DHA allows us to quickly appoint a great candidate, the classification and qualification standards limit the position and pay we can offer those with a propensity to serve as members of our civilian workforce. Consequently, declinations are far too common. Additionally, our complex application process, which often includes a multi-hour USA Hire assessment, demotivates candidates who can turn to the private sector to extend job offers based solely on an applicant's resume and interview.

While the flexibilities granted by Congress in the defense bills are appreciated, they are small wins in a very large battle to address the root cause of an outdated classification and qualification system.

**239. In your view, do supervisors across the Navy have the necessary authorities to address and remediate civilian employee misconduct and poor duty performance, and ultimately to divest of a civilian employee who fails to meet established standards of conduct and performance? If so, are Navy civilian and military supervisors adequately trained to exercise such authorities? If not, what additional authorities or training do Navy supervisors require?**

Department of the Navy (DON) supervisors have adequate authorities to divest of a civilian employee whose performance of duty fails to meet standards or who engages in misconduct. The authorities fairly balance the Navy's needs with the civilian employee's rights. Between our instructions on disciplinary actions issued by the Secretary of the Navy and existing civil service statutes, we have adequate authorities, training and resources to allow supervisors to take appropriate action for misconduct and/or adverse actions based on an employee's performance.

### **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.**

**240. 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 yes or no.**

Yes.

**241. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and when asked before this committee, its subcommittees, or other appropriate committees of Congress to give your personal views, even if those views differ from the position of the Administration? Please answer yes or no.**

Yes.

**242. 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? Please answer yes or no.**

Yes.

**243. 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 yes or no.**

Yes.

**244. 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 yes or no.**

Yes.

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

Yes.

**246. 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 yes or no.**

Yes.

**247. 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 yes or no.**

Yes.