

Advance Policy Questions for Anthony Kurta
Nominee for Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

Department of Defense Reforms and Oversight Concerns

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 included the most sweeping reforms since the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986.

Do you support these reforms?

Yes.

What other areas for defense reform do you believe might be appropriate for this Committee to address?

I believe we need to continue to assess Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) and Reserve Officer Personnel Management Act (ROPMA) policies to ensure that the Military Services have the right tools to recruit and retain the best and most capable personnel to meet our operational mission requirements. In order to increase our lethality, we must pursue some measure of greater personnel management flexibility to put, and keep, the right people in the right jobs.

I also believe that we must look for opportunities to reform the Department's civilian personnel management policies. When we are competing with the private sector to attract the highest performers in support of our warfighters, the Department must ensure we have the ability to offer the right incentives, beyond purely monetary, and hiring authorities to appeal to the best and the brightest.

There is also much more the Department can do to support our transitioning Service members, particularly in ensuring their hand-off to the VA is more efficient and customer focused. In those areas where legislation is needed, we intend to ask the Committee for authorities to cooperate more closely and fully with the VA.

Section 911 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 required that the Secretary of Defense establish cross-functional teams to address critical objectives of the Department.

What are your views on the potential focus areas and uses for future cross-functional teams?

As required in the FY2017 NDAA Section 911, cross-functional teams report directly to the Secretary of Defense and will deliver and implement critical recommendations on priority issues and opportunities facing the Department. Within the purview of the Office of the USD(P&R), I believe ample opportunities exist in the system for the targeted use

of Secretary of Defense-empowered cross-functional teams, including for reform of the complex Military Health System. If confirmed, I will make it a priority to support the USD(P&R) in his engagement with DoD partners to achieve the greatest potential for increased efficiencies through cross-functional teams that results in enhanced care for Service members and their families, as well as the more effective allocation of resources.

What is the role of the Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (PDUSD(P&R)) in overseeing the personnel-related defense agencies?

The Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (PDUSD(P&R)), under the direction of the USD(P&R), has authority and control over four defense agencies; namely, the Defense Health Agency (DHA), Defense Human Resources Activity (DHRA), Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA), and Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA). The role of the PDUSD(P&R), under the direction of the USD(P&R), is to ensure the policies and programs of these four agencies are designed and managed to improve the standards of performance, economy and efficiency, and to strengthen the agencies' responsiveness to the requirements of their organizational customers, both internal and external to DoD.

Are further authorities or resources required for effective oversight of these agencies?

Not at this time. If confirmed, I will consult with the USD(P&R) and work with Congress if additional authorities or resources are required.

Duties

Section 137a of title 10, United States Code, provides that the PDUSD(P&R) shall be the first assistant to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)), and shall assist in the performance of the duties of the USD(P&R), which are in the areas of military readiness, total force management, military and civilian personnel requirements, military and civilian personnel training, military and civilian family matters, exchange, commissary, and non-appropriated fund activities, personnel requirements for weapons support, National Guard and reserve components, and health affairs.

If confirmed, what duties do you expect to be assigned to you?

If confirmed, I intend to carry out my responsibilities, functions, relationships, and authorities in accordance with the law and consistent with DoD Directive 5124.08, "Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (PDUSD(P&R))." Under the direction of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)), I will support him or her in providing staff advice and assistance to the Secretary of Defense, including but not limited to the areas of force

readiness and training, Total Force management including Active duty, Reserve component and civilians, health affairs, military and civilian personnel requirements; family support programs and dependent education; retail operations, travel and lodging; diversity and equal opportunity; financial readiness and voluntary education; DoD-VA collaboration; and resiliency programs such as sexual assault prevention and response and suicide prevention efforts.

Qualifications

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

I was fortunate to be able to serve my country in uniform as a Navy Destroyerman for over 32 years. Much of that time was spent in the personnel business, but all of it was spent leading and serving alongside our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen and Civilians, and interacting with our military families and retirees. The opportunity to continue to serve each of these groups is an honor. I have also served as a Department of the Navy and DoD Senior Executive, with experience in Flag Officer management and Military Personnel Policy. Additionally, for the past nine months, I have performed the duties of the USD(P&R).

If confirmed, I intend to continue to draw on that background and experience in support of DoD senior leadership, to continue to serve our Service members, their families, and civilians.

Major Challenges and Priorities

In your view, what are the major challenges confronting the next PDUSD(P&R)?

Rebuilding the readiness of our forces, while reforming the business operations of the Department to support rebuilding readiness, is our primary challenge. The P&R portfolio is heavily involved in each. In the personnel sphere, a challenge is to align our work in support of the Secretary of Defense's charge to us: ensure our personnel policies enhance the readiness and lethality of the Force.

If confirmed, what broad priorities will you establish?

- 1) Rebuild Readiness
- 2) Reform the Military Health System
- 3) Enhance collaboration with the VA (common Electronic Health Record, single identity management system, shared contracting, joint facilities, common logistics)
- 4) Reserve Component Duty Status reform

Relations with Congress

What are your views on the state of the relationship between the Office of the USD(P&R) and the Senate Armed Services Committee in particular, and with Congress in general?

I believe the relationship is solid with respect to personnel and health policy. On readiness, I do not think the Office of the USD(P&R) has made sufficient effort to communicate effectively. If confirmed, I pledge to work with the USD(P&R) to improve in this area, and redouble our efforts across the board to be good communicators.

If confirmed, what actions would you take to sustain a productive and mutually beneficial relationship between Congress and the Office of the USD(P&R)?

If confirmed, I will follow the lead and direction of the USD(P&R) to maintain a productive and constructive relationship with Congress. I will ensure all senior leaders and directorates within P&R provide timely and informative responses to Congress. I will also ensure that we proactively communicate with the Armed Services Committees on any major issues affecting our Service members and their families.

Torture and Enhanced Interrogation Techniques

Do you support the standards for detainee treatment specified in the revised Army Field Manual on Interrogations, FM 2-22.3, issued in September 2006, and in DOD Directive 2310.01E, the Department of Defense Detainee Program, dated August 19, 2014, and required by section 1045 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 (Public Law 114-92)?

Yes.

National Security Budget Reductions/Sequestration

The original discretionary caps imposed by the Budget Control Act (BCA) will be in effect for Fiscal Years 2018 through 2021, unless there is agreement to change budget levels.

In your assessment, what would be the impacts of continued implementation of the BCA discretionary caps through 2021 on the Department of Defense and national security?

I wholeheartedly agree with Secretary Mattis' statement that "no enemies in the field have done more harm to our warfighting readiness than sequestration." The impact of continued implementation of the BCA caps would put our readiness recovery in serious

jeopardy and fundamentally puts our national security at risk. Furthermore, the Continuing Resolution in FY2018 delays the Department's effort to improve readiness, increase lethality and institute needed reforms in DoD.

Do you believe that any future budget agreements must maintain parity between non-defense and defense discretionary funding?

I believe that the question of parity between defense and non-defense discretionary funding is beyond the role of the PDUSD(P&R) and defer to Congress and the White House. The National Defense Strategy drives the Department's budget and I fully support the 10 percent growth requested in the President's FY2018 Defense budget to Congress.

If the budget caps continue to be imposed on non-defense security agencies, such as the Department of State, Department of Justice, Department of Homeland Security, and the non-defense elements of the intelligence community, in your view, what impact will this have on the Department of Defense and on the nation's ability to meet national defense requirements?

The National Defense Strategy drives the Department's budget and I fully support the 10 percent growth requested in the President's FY2018 Defense budget to Congress. However, if our national security partners in the State, Justice, Homeland Defense and Intelligence communities do not receive sufficient funding, there will be additional pressure on our military, hindering readiness recovery and potentially placing our national security at greater risk.

If confirmed, by what standards would you measure the adequacy of personnel and readiness funding?

If confirmed, I would measure the adequacy of personnel and readiness funding by our ability to execute the National Defense Strategy and sustain the All-Volunteer Force. Force readiness and the lethality of the All-Volunteer Force have been the bedrock of maintaining the greatest military in history. We must ensure we remain the best fighting force in the world.

Overall Readiness of the Armed Forces

How would you assess the current state of readiness of the armed forces?

I would assess our readiness as insufficient. We are seeing the combined impacts of sixteen years of war, and inconsistent, inadequate, and unstable funding. We are short over 1,500 pilots in the Air Force; General Milley states that only a few Army Brigade Combat Team (BCTs) are fully combat ready and some BCTs are at 80 percent strength; and Marine Corps combat units are down to a dwell time of 1:1.4 years. The All-

Volunteer Force performs miracles, but it is under tremendous strain and conditions are exacerbated by sequestration.

What steps would you take to restore readiness and what timeline would you create?

In order to restore readiness, if confirmed, I would fully endorse the Department's Readiness Recovery Framework (R2F) which identifies readiness shortfalls and establishes metrics and milestones to enable us to target resources to the Military Services' most pressing needs. The R2F is designed to regularly monitor the Military Services' progress in meeting these milestones and restoring readiness. The restoration timeline depends on stable, predictable, sufficient funding.

Additionally, what tools would you use to ensure timelines are adhered to and goals are met?

If confirmed, the first step to ensuring timelines are met is to continue the work started in our 60 Day Readiness Review, developing specific goals, milestones, and sub-metrics in readiness activities. Furthermore, we must hold Military Services accountable for reporting on their progress against those milestones and updating those metrics periodically as conditions change. I believe we are on the right track in the R2F process.

What is the appropriate role for the Office of the USD(P&R) to play in setting readiness standards within the Department of Defense?

The Office of the USD(P&R) is the Secretary's primary office for coordinating readiness assessments and monitoring progress in meeting recovery milestones across the Military Services and Components. By providing a Department-wide vision, the Office of the USD(P&R) ensures readiness standards are assessed and established with the enterprise mission in mind. If confirmed, I would support the USD(P&R) to institutionalize readiness recovery in policy and assist the Military Services in continuing to implement, and modify when required, their recovery plans.

Is the Office of the USD(P&R) the appropriate place to establish and set readiness requirements?

Yes, the Office of the USD (P&R) should remain the principal staff assistant and advisor to the Secretary of Defense and Deputy Secretary of Defense for Total Force management as it relates to readiness and ongoing recovery efforts. Fundamentally, "Force Readiness" is the ability of the Military Departments to meet the global requirements set out in national security and national defense strategy documents. "Readiness" policy and oversight functions cross multiple domains, including manning (personnel), training, and equipping. The Department, led by the USD(P&R), has worked diligently to answer the call for a more synchronized and rigorous response to

readiness concerns, and the USD(P&R) remains the Secretary's leading proponent of the Department's coordinated response.

Is the Office of the USD(P&R) the appropriate place for readiness requirements to be reviewed, and validated?

Yes. The individual that approves the budget and sets policy must be responsible for the readiness of the Total Force. If the Secretary's staff only oversees readiness from a budget perspective (e.g. CAPE/Comptroller), leaving readiness reporting, assessment and analysis to the Services and Joint Staff, this will significantly impede the Secretary's ability to responsibly oversee readiness management. The Office of the USD(P&R) currently assumes this role and has worked with Joint Staff to ensure a synchronized response in assessing and monitoring readiness.

What is the proper balance between the Office of the USD(P&R), the services, and the joint staff when it comes to generating and validating readiness requirements?

The Office of the USD(P&R) works closely with the Military Services and Joint Staff to help ensure balance between meeting current demand for forces without jeopardizing readiness for unforeseen crises or contingencies. P&R conducts oversight and review of the force generation requests created by Combatant Commanders, which are also validated by the Services and Joint Staff. P&R also measures the readiness impacts of the force generation requests against the necessary readiness recovery efforts to identify those that could negatively impact the Secretary's readiness recovery program, one of his foremost priorities.

Some Services have medically non-deployable numbers in their total force of up to 20%. How would you tackle the issue of medically non-deployable service members?

Approximately 11 percent of the force is non-deployable based on medical reasons; 10 percent are temporarily non-deployable, with every expectation that they will return to a deployable status and 1 percent are permanently non-deployable. A majority of these permanently non-deployable Service members are processing out of the Service via the Disability Evaluation System. A Departmental cross functional team, directed by the Secretary and led by P&R, is currently reviewing medical and personnel policies to identify changes to reduce the non-deployable population and improve readiness and lethality.

Financial Management and Audit Readiness

The Defense Department is the only federal agency that cannot present auditable financial statements showing where and how it spends its annual budget. The Comptroller General has said the Department is at high risk for waste, fraud, abuse, and

mismanagement. Despite much effort and billions spent to fix these problems, they have remained for decades.

If confirmed, what actions would you take or direct that will achieve a better outcome than past actions and initiatives for financial auditability in organizations under the authority of the USD(P&R)?

I fully support the Department's auditability goals and initiatives. If confirmed, I will be dedicated to supporting efforts to create a sustainable, auditable environment and further instilling a culture of financial transparency and accountability. I will also continue to work hand-in-hand with the Department to complete the DoD-wide annual audits beginning in FY2018 and focus efforts on remediation of audit findings.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

What is your assessment of the Department of Defense's sexual assault prevention and response program?

Sexual assault is a crime and there is no acceptable number other than zero. The Military Services are continually improving the capabilities of their sexual assault prevention and response programs. That said, there remains much more to do.

What is your view of the provision for restricted and unrestricted reporting of sexual assaults?

I strongly support giving Service members both options. The Department developed the restricted reporting option in 2005, based on recommendations from civilian and military experts that some victims will never report sexual assault if they must also engage the criminal justice process. The number of reports remaining restricted at the end of the year now accounts for about a quarter of total annual reporting. And this year, roughly 21 percent of the victims making restricted reports converted their report to unrestricted.

DoD's surveys indicate that having both options likely brings more Service members forward to report than having the single, unrestricted means of reporting. In fact, according to the most recent survey, of the active-duty women who indicated experiencing sexual assault and making a restricted report, more than half (58%) indicated they would not have reported at all had they not had the option of a restricted report.

What is your view of the adequacy of the training and resources the Department has in place to prevent and respond to sexual assaults?

The Department's training has changed significantly. The Department has comprehensive training that is tailored specifically to resonate within each Military

Service culture. The investigators, prosecutors, and other legal personnel that comprise Special Victim Investigation and Prosecution capability within each Military Department represent a critical competency for the Department in this mission space, all of whom receive specialized training that includes the effects of trauma on memory and recall. Further, the Department collaborates with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as other civilian experts to learn from the evolving field of violence prevention evidence, thus garnering the relevant best practices to inform our approach to prevention. We still have much more work to do.

What is your view of the adequacy of the Department's oversight of military service implementation of the Department and service policies for the prevention of and response to sexual assaults?

I believe the Department's oversight is comprehensive and continually improving.

What is your assessment of the potential impact, if any, of proposals to remove the disposition authority from military commanders over violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, including sexual assaults?

This issue was examined by an independent, Congressionally-mandated panel and they found no evidence this action would provide any benefits such as increased reporting by victims or improvement in holding offenders appropriately accountable.

Commanders' disposition decisions are informed by advice and recommendations from judge advocates and Congress further strengthened that commander/legal advisor partnership in the Military Justice Act of 2016. Recent legislative changes and initiatives have helped the Department better address allegations of sexual assault and ensure appropriate accountability actions are taken.

What is your assessment of the Department's protections against retaliation for reporting sexual assault?

All victims of crime, including those who experience sexual assault, must feel free to report without fear of social exclusion, reprisal or some other form of maltreatment. In April 2016, the Department released the Strategy to Prevent Retaliation Associated with Reporting Sexual Assault or Harassment. This strategy focused on addressing retaliation related to reports of sexual assault and sexual harassment. The strategy aligns our approach to retaliation allegations, data collection, and further empowers response personnel to assist with cases. The work has been initiated, and if confirmed, I will work with the Inspector General and the Military Services to ensure that these reforms are implemented, and that everyone who wishes to report a crime is able to do so without fear of reprisal or some other form of retaliatory behavior.

What is your view of the role of the chain of command in maintaining a command climate where sexual harassment and sexual assaults are not tolerated?

Commanders have absolute responsibility and accountability for maintaining a command climate where sexual harassment and sexual assaults are not tolerated.

In your view, do military and civilian leaders in the Department have the tools and resources needed to hold commanders accountable for these issues? If not, what additional authority do they need?

Yes

Abusive Online Conduct

Recently, this Committee considered testimony on reports that certain members of Marines United, an unofficial Marine Corps Facebook group, were found to be posting degrading comments and sharing nude photos of female service members. Members of the group included a number of active-duty service members, former military members, and military retirees.

Do you believe that the behaviors typified by these events, and the attitudes and beliefs they represent, are confined to the Marine Corps?

No.

What is the current Department of Defense policy for use of social media by civilian employees and service members?

For civilian employees, inappropriate use of social media during the work day and other related misconduct may be addressed through administrative actions consistent with federal law and regulations. For Service members, the prohibition of unacceptable electronic communications is addressed in the Department's Sexual Harassment and Response policy (issued in 2014), and in the Hazing and Bullying Prevention and Response policy (issued in 2015). In addition, the Department is finalizing a comprehensive harassment prevention and response policy (including sexual harassment, hazing, bullying, retaliation, and online/social media behaviors) for Service members in order to send a clear message that the Department will not tolerate any kind of harassment, either in person or online by any Service member.

In addition, each Military Service has issued guidance on the use of social media that addresses harassment and sharing of inappropriate images.

In your view, are these policies adequate to address abuses such as what occurred in the Marines United incident?

Just as we do for sexual assault, we must make the commanders responsible and accountable for their Service members. Through command surveys and performance

reports, leaders must take responsibility for the morale and climate of their command. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department continues to adapt policies to emerging social trends. The actions of this committee, by placing such incidents within the purview of the UCMJ, are an important step.

If confirmed, what action would you take to ensure that civilian employees and service members are not subjected to abusive online conduct?

If confirmed, I will ensure the Department continues to adapt policies to emerging social trends. In addition, I will support the USD (P&R) in ensuring senior leaders emphasize and address this issue, and are held accountable for the climate of their command.

In your view, do the Department and the services have sufficient legal authority to hold offenders accountable for such misconduct?

The new Article 117a included in the FY2018 NDAA Conference Report will provide additional legal authority to hold offenders appropriately accountable.

What legislative authorities, if any, do you believe are necessary to address this problem?

The FY2018 NDAA Conference Report issued last week included a new UCMJ punitive article concerning the nonconsensual distribution of intimate images. I welcome that additional tool in the fight against this unacceptable behavior. If confirmed, I will support the USD(P&R) in working with Congress if any additional legislation is necessary to address the problem.

Do you believe the Department needs to make policy or regulation changes in order to facilitate the investigation and accountability process?

It is key that leaders are held accountable in these cases. I am unaware of any changes needed at this time but if confirmed, I will ensure action is taken if changes are needed.

Sexual Harassment

Department of Defense annual sexual assault reports consistently document that sexual assaults are more common in units where sexual harassment is prevalent. Section 579 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 required the Secretary of Defense to develop a comprehensive policy to prevent and respond to sexual harassment in the armed forces and to submit a report to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and House of Representatives no later than one year after January 2, 2013, setting forth a comprehensive policy. This Committee has not yet received this report.

Do you agree with the premise that units with a command climate that tolerates sexual harassment is more likely to have increased incidents of sexual assault?

Absolutely. The Department issued a Policy Memorandum on the Prevention and Response to Sexual Harassment in September 2014. The Department is in formal coordination with the Military Services on a comprehensive harassment prevention and response policy, which includes sexual harassment and other problematic behaviors, along with inappropriate electronic communications and social media misconduct.

What is the reason the Department has not complied with the requirement to develop a comprehensive sexual harassment policy?

The Department issued a Policy Memorandum on the Prevention and Response to Sexual Harassment in September 2014, which addressed the Congressional mandates. However, more needs to be done. The Department is currently in formal coordination with the Military Services on a comprehensive harassment prevention and response policy, which includes sexual harassment and other problematic behaviors, along with inappropriate electronic communications and social media misconduct.

If confirmed, will you assure this Committee that the Department will promptly promulgate a comprehensive policy to prevent and respond to sexual harassment in the armed forces and to submit this policy to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and House of Representatives, as directed in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013?

Yes.

Criminal History Data Reporting

Does the Office of the USD(P&R) have any responsibility for overseeing the Department of Defense's compliance with the requirement to report offender criminal history data regarding military personnel to the FBI for inclusion in the National Crime Information Center database?

Since 1998, Defense Manpower Data Center under the Office of the USD(P&R) has provided to the FBI the dishonorable discharge information from the Military Services for inclusion into the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). P&R, in conjunction with DoD IG, which owns functional policy for National Crime Information Center (NCIC) reporting, has also worked with the Military Services' Criminal Justice Information (CJI) Systems Officers (CSOs) to disseminate guidance to support compliance with FBI reporting requirements.

If so, and if confirmed, will you commit to ensuring compliance with these requirements?

Yes.

Service Academies

A recent RAND study found that officers commissioned from service academies have the lowest O-3 retention rates among all commissioning sources by a significant margin.

How do you explain this, and given the high cost of a service academy education, do you have any ideas to boost service academy graduate retention?

Young Americans who attend the Service Academies are our nation's best and brightest and serve with great distinction. However, there is a war for talent and the Armed Forces are likely to find it increasingly harder to compete with the private sector, especially in terms of quality of life. The Department continues to review Quality of Life Programs in an attempt to retain not only Academy graduates, but also other high quality Service members.

Currently, service academy graduates must serve on active duty for a minimum of five years following graduation. Is that a sufficient amount of time to balance an education that costs over \$400,000?

The Military Service Academies produce exceptional leaders with a particularized set of skills essential to the security of the nation and the health of our future force. Applying a dollar-for-dollar "return-on-investment" to value their contributions—whether they serve for five years or a 30-year career—is difficult. Each of these officer's skills are valuable and their leadership contributes significantly to the continued success of today's military.

What do you consider to be the policies and procedural elements that should be in place at each of the service academies to prevent and respond appropriately to sexual assaults, sexual harassment, and to ensure essential oversight?

The Department is working right now to determine exactly that. In March 2017, the Secretary of Defense and I met with the Academy Superintendents, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other senior leadership to review RAND's "DoD Military Service Academy (MSA) Report - the Academic Program Year (APY) 2015-2016" report findings. Subsequent to that meeting and the Secretary's order, I directed the Superintendents to create plans to:

- Promote Responsible Alcohol Choices
- Reinvigorate Prevention
- Enhance a Culture of Respect
- Improve Sexual Assault and Harassment Reporting

We have just recently received those plans and are reviewing them now.

What is your assessment of measures taken at the service academies to ensure religious tolerance and respect?

In my view, current DoD policies appropriately accommodate the free exercise of religion, as well as the freedom to practice no religion at all. The Department does not endorse any one religion or religious organization, but it respects the rights of individuals to express their own religious beliefs. I believe the Service Academies appropriately implement and enforce DoD policy.

What is your assessment of measures taken at the service academies to prevent sexual assaults and sexual harassment?

Last year's annual report found that – despite significant investments of attention, time, and resources – the past-year prevalence rate of unwanted sexual contact increased at all three academies, as compared to the rate measured two years prior. In addition, rates of reporting sexual assault, perceived negative outcomes associated with reporting, and other measures showed only modest improvement in the climate pertaining to sexual assault and sexual harassment at the academies.

My assessment is that the academies are unique environments that require different approaches than what we have used with the active duty force. All three academies have response systems to care for cadets and midshipmen. However, we need tailored approaches to improve reporting and prevention policies, programs, and practices, and are currently reviewing each Academy's plan to address the issues identified in last year's report.

What is your assessment of the suicide prevention programs at each service academy?

Each Military Service Academy (MSA) has established their own suicide prevention program. In order to destigmatize mental health care, MSAs' leadership affirmed help-seeking behavior as "a sign of strength, while enhancing the readiness and lethality of every Service member." We need to continue to make these mental health services and support readily available at MSAs.

Selective Service Act

Some have suggested that the success of the All-Volunteer Force has reduced the need for the United States to have the continuing authority and capability to conduct a draft. Further, a future national emergency may require the military to have the ability to identify citizens with unique skills. The current selective service system does not address

the need for critical skills among the civilian workforce or specialized skills to fill critical combat support requirements.

Do you believe the Selective Service Act should be repealed?

No.

Do you believe Congress should amend the Selective Service Act to require the registration of women?

The National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service is reviewing this matter. I look forward to reviewing their report and would use the information they collect and the recommendations they render to help inform my judgment on the issue.

Do you believe the Selective Service system, with its focus on supplying large numbers of combat soldiers, can meet the needs of today's military and the type of personnel that would likely need to be drafted in a future conflict, including skilled personnel in the medical, linguistic, cyber, and other fields that require specialists?

In the current construct of the Selective Service System, the focus is on the identification of American youth who are qualified for military service, not those in the workforce with special or technical skills. However, that is not to say that the current structure could not support a shift to identifying individuals with high-value skills.

If not, what changes should Congress consider to the Selective Service system to meet the needs of today's national defense and security agencies, military and civilian?

I would want to review the research being conducted by the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service before suggesting changes to the current system.

Managing the Cost of Health Care

In the President's Fiscal Year 2018 budget request, the Department of Defense requested \$53.5 billion in operation and support funding for the military health system, about 9% of the total funding requested for the Department's base budget. CBO has calculated that those costs will reach \$64 billion by 2030 if their growth reflects anticipated national trends in health care costs.

In your view, what is the greatest threat to the long-term viability of the military health system?

Two issues pose the greatest threat. First, we must ensure we leverage the hard lessons learned over many years of combat and ensure that our health care professionals are

prepared to support combat operations. Second, we absolutely must transform the military health system into a much leaner, more responsive and efficient organization.

What is your assessment of the long-term impact of the Department's health care costs on military readiness and overall national security?

The Military Health System (MHS) enables a ready medical force and a medically ready force, both of which are essential elements of military readiness. Unconstrained growth in health care costs, however, constrains our ability to modernize and recapitalize the force as needed. This is why transforming the MHS into a much leaner, more responsive, and efficient organization is so important.

If confirmed, what actions would you take to mitigate the effect of the Department's medical costs on the Department's budget top-line while simultaneously implementing programs to improve health outcomes and to enhance the experience of care for all beneficiaries?

For years we have been operating four separate health care systems within the Department of Defense: Army, Navy, Air Force and National Capital Region. Transforming the current state into an integrated system will drive substantial efficiency and cost savings. If confirmed, I will also look at how we buy health care from the civilian sector and move away from a strict fee for service structure and start emphasizing outcomes. Another area is promoting healthy life styles among our beneficiaries to reduce the demand for health services. I understand that embedding key health care professionals in units is showing great promise, and I will support additional efforts in that area. I am mindful, however, that all actions must directly contribute to high quality and a consistently excellent experience for the beneficiary.

If confirmed, what would you do to create a value-based military health system – a system that creates value for beneficiaries and the Department by ensuring the delivery of quality health care and improving health outcomes for beneficiaries at reasonable costs to beneficiaries and lower costs to the Department?

There is tremendous opportunity to reform the Military Health System from four disparate systems into an integrated system. Our beneficiaries deserve a consistently quality experience, not a different experience every time they access the system. If confirmed, I will work to improve the experience of care and re-focus our attention on the customer. This means standardization in appointing, facility hours, and clinic operations. Two of my main priorities will be first call resolution, which means we satisfy the beneficiary before they hang up and access to appointments when it is convenient to our patients, not when it is convenient to us. Both will go a long way towards creating value for our patients. Additionally, I would capitalize on successes in the commercial health care industry that focus on health and successful outcomes.

If confirmed, what reforms in medical infrastructure, benefits, benefit management, contract acquisition, military provider productivity, military-civilian provider mix, and medical personnel strengths would you implement to help control the per capita costs of health care provided by the Department?

Many functions need to be standardized and integrated. If confirmed, I will accelerate efforts to consolidate management, overhead, and support services from our current four medical entities into one. I will ensure that we legitimately determine the Active duty force requirements to include numbers and specialty mix and what is needed to sustain their war time skills. I will also look for the most economic and effective options to deliver the balance of the health benefit through partnerships with high performing civilian practices and other Government partners like the VA. I will establish aggressive yet achievable production and efficiency targets and direct analyses to determine the most cost effective strategy to provide services.

Medical Provider Productivity

The military services have established a very low provider efficiency (productivity) standard for military physicians – 40% of the Medical Group Management Association median. This measure assesses provider currency and capacity, determining the readiness potential of providers. The most current data provided to this Committee shows that only 39% of the Department’s providers exceeded the goal in the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2017. In other words, most of the Department’s providers failed to achieve an already very low efficiency standard.

If confirmed, what would you do to ensure that the Department’s medical providers become more productive?

There is no question we must get the most out of our direct care system and fixed facilities as is possible. If confirmed, I will review the data to determine if this is the right measure for assuring a ready medical force and a force that is medically ready and work with Military Health System leadership to drive performance and efficiency. I believe establishing an expanded pool of required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs) standards is more productive over time than relying on the MGMA median and fully support the ongoing effort to expand this pool. Moreover, I will ensure that we are meeting our critical readiness mission along with providing for our robust health care benefit in the most effective and efficient manner possible.

If confirmed, who would you hold accountable for the low productivity of the Department’s medical providers?

I will make it my responsibility to drive performance consistent with quality and safety.

An independent study by the Institute for Defense Analyses showed that it costs the Department about 50% less to purchase health care services in the private sector than to provide the same care in military medical treatment facilities.

In your view, how does low provider productivity contribute to the higher relative costs to provide medical care in those facilities?

Our direct care system is largely comprised of fixed costs. To the extent that productivity is low, per unit costs are high. If confirmed, I commit to examining this issue and working with Military Health System leadership to get the most efficiency out of our fixed facilities. I will drive this efficiency through standardization across the system with respect to getting providers back into clinics, extending clinic hours, and increasing productivity goals consistent with also satisfying training requirements.

Military Health System Reorganization

Section 702 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 transferred direct oversight and management of military hospitals and clinics from the military services to the Defense Health Agency (DHA). In March and again in June, the Committee received the Department of Defense's interim reports on section 702, which described the Department's intent to develop a component model to administer and manage military treatment facilities. Under this component model, the Department would establish service intermediary medical commands, and those commands would be subject to two separate lines of authority – the DHA and the services.

Do you believe that a component model, with establishment of new intermediary medical commands under two separate lines of authority, would make the military health system flatter, more agile, and more efficient?

The component model has the potential to provide a structure that preserves our focus on readiness, our first priority, and to achieve greater efficiency if executed smartly. It keeps the Services responsible for training and fielding a ready medical force while taking away the burden of managing Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs). Given we are operating four separate headquarters functions dedicated to the administration and management of MTFs, the component model will centralize the Services' headquarters functions under DHA, which will be the single organization responsible for MTFs in the specific areas identified in the FY2017 NDAA. If confirmed, I will commit to making the Military Health System leaner, flatter and more responsive through the component model or, if necessary, through another model if it proves to not be viable.

If confirmed, would you reevaluate the Department's decision to proceed with a component model to implement section 702?

If confirmed, I commit, under the guidance of the USD(P&R), to reviewing the decision with the Deputy Secretary of Defense with respect to the efficacy of the component model.

If confirmed, would you urge the Secretary of Defense to reevaluate the Department's decision to proceed with a component model to implement section 702?

If confirmed, under the leadership of the USD(P&R), I am open to reevaluating the Department's approach if it appears the component model will not achieve the substantial results we are seeking in the transformation of the Military Health System.

If confirmed, would you ensure that military services reduce their medical headquarters staffs and infrastructure (including both regional command staffs and infrastructure) to reflect the more limited scope and size of their health care missions?

Yes.

In your view, would a component model streamline the administration and management of military treatment facilities?

It has the potential to yield a flatter and more streamlined system. However, it must be done intelligently, which means real consolidation and elimination of redundancy, not simply a shifting of resources to other locations. If confirmed, I will work with the USD(P&R) to drive substantial integration of the four systems into one under the Defense Health Agency and not tolerate a reshuffling of existing resources.

In your view, would a component model achieve the Committee's goal to eliminate multiple inefficient layers of management and bureaucracy in the Department's medical operations?

If we effectively and legitimately consolidate management and administration responsibilities for MTFs under one entity, the DHA, then I believe it is possible to eliminate layers of management and reduce bureaucracy and achieve better outcomes at lower cost.

In your view, would a component model eliminate the current stove-piped medical command structures of the services?

The component model forces integration at the DHA level and makes component commanders responsible to the DHA Director. If confirmed, I will work with the USD(P&R) to drive this integration which, if done properly, will eliminate the stovepipes we have today with our four separate command structures.

If confirmed, would you ensure a rapid and efficient transfer of the operations of military medical facilities to the DHA?

Yes.

Service of Transgender Individuals

If confirmed, what would be your role in the implementation of the Administration's policy on the service of transgender individuals in the armed forces?

If confirmed, I would support the USD(P&R) in his/her role as the Chair of the Transgender Panel of Experts.

In your view, what would be the impact on military readiness of continued service by transgender service members who receive hormone therapy?

I agree with Senator McCain's statement in July that no policy decisions are appropriate until the review ordered by the Secretary is complete and reviewed by him, the military leadership and the Congress.

Do you believe that the Department of Defense should develop an in-house capability for transgender medical treatment and surgery?

The Department is committed to provide the medically necessary care for all military members and our healthcare beneficiaries subject to applicable laws, regulations, and Departmental policies. Discussions about in-house capability for transgender medical treatment and surgery cannot be made until after the review ordered by the Secretary is complete.

Do you believe the Department of Defense should pay private medical providers or institutions for care for transgender individuals?

The Department is committed to provide the medically necessary care for all military members and our healthcare beneficiaries subject to applicable laws, regulations, and Departmental policies. Any necessary treatment that is not available in our military treatment facilities may require treatment from private medical providers or institutions. However, under current statutes, sex reassignment surgery could only be provided to Active duty Service members, and that would require a waiver to medical policy on a case-by-case basis.

Do you believe that dependents of service members should qualify for and receive transgender treatment under the military health system?

The dependents of military members are already qualified for non-surgical treatment of transgender medical care, specifically gender dysphoria, under TRICARE policy.

In your view, what would be the impact on military readiness of requiring the separation of all transgender service members currently serving in our armed forces?

The guiding principles for this and any other personnel decision should be military readiness and lethality, to include the member's physical and mental fitness for duty, and worldwide deployability.

What has been your role as acting USD(P&R) and formerly as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for military personnel policy in formulating policy pertaining to transgender individuals?

My role in Performing the Duties of the USD(P&R) has been to chair the Transgender Panel of Experts and provide status updates to the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and Deputy Secretary of Defense on a periodic basis. In my former role as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy, I supported the efforts of the USD(P&R) to review, develop, and implement military personnel policies.

Mental Health Care

In your view, are the Department of Defense's current mental health resources adequate to serve all active duty and eligible reserve component members and their families, as well as retirees and their dependents?

Secretary Mattis said, we have a moral obligation to sustain the mental health of the force as well as service members' families. If confirmed, it will be a priority to ensure that the Department is devoting appropriate resources to mental health, and working effectively with VA to identify issues and close any gaps in coverage. I will advise the Committee if more resources are required.

If confirmed, what actions would you take to ensure that sufficient mental health resources are available to service members in theater and to service members and families upon return to home station locations with insufficient community-based mental health resources?

Over the past decade, DoD has committed significant resources to increasing the number of mental health professionals, improving access to mental health care, and decreasing the stigma associated with seeking care. In addition, the Department is working to ensure clinical and non-clinical resources are available for Service members and their families before, during, and after deployment. If confirmed, I will, in consultation with the USD(P&R) and the ASD for Health Affairs, ensure DoD is devoting appropriate

resources to mental health and work closely with our VA counterparts to advise Congress if new approaches or authorities are needed.

Do you believe that a Defense Health Agency-centric model is the best approach for managing the defense health system?

Yes. In medical care, we "standardize to optimize." Standardizing care delivery, data surveillance and outcome measurement across the MHS will have salutary effects.

Suicide Prevention

If confirmed, how would you maintain a strong focus on preventing suicides in the active and reserve components and in their families?

The Department's suicide prevention efforts leverage a holistic public health approach. This approach involves continuous surveillance of known risk and protective factors in an effort to assist individuals and populations, most at risk, as well as a host of targeted interventions. Additionally, the Department evaluates the effectiveness of these interventions, and makes adjustments to the models as new research emerges.

Suicide prevention is a high priority for the Secretaries of both DoD and VA. The Secretaries have finalized an inter-agency Memorandum of Agreement to work more closely to bridge the gaps in suicide prevention services. If confirmed, I will bring the broad resources of the Department to bear on this problem, as well as external expertise, and will ensure focused and rigorous research initiatives to inform and evaluate our policies.

Voluntary Education Programs

The Department of Defense continues to seek ways to improve oversight of its tuition assistance programs, including standardizing eligibility criteria among the services.

Do you believe this benefit contributes directly to recruiting and retention, or is it a superfluous benefit to be provided when resources allow?

The Tuition Assistance Program plays an important role in recruiting and retaining the All-Volunteer Force. If confirmed, I will continue to work with the Military Services to meet the higher education needs of Service members by sustaining the appropriate level of resources for this program.

What is your view of tuition assistance as a transition benefit for service members to obtain civilian licenses and credentials?

Obtaining occupational credentials plays a crucial role in professionalizing the Force and in enhancing the Service member's ability to transition to the civilian workforce upon completion of military service. In addition to paying Tuition Assistance for college coursework leading toward a credential, DoD is working to implement the credentialing authorities of Section 2015 of Title 10 to fund required exams and non-college training as well as license and registration fees, etc.

What is your view of for-profit colleges and universities participating in tuition assistance programs?

Whether an educational institution is public, non-profit, or for-profit, DoD should and does require all schools that participate in voluntary education programs to sign the same requisite agreement, or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This agreement promotes compliance with behaviors, processes, and policies supporting quality educational experiences for our Service members.

If confirmed, what would be your plan for improving the Department's Voluntary Educational Programs?

If confirmed, I will continue to enhance Voluntary Education Programs by incorporating occupational credential and apprenticeship options as alternative pathways to the traditional college degree for interested Service members.

If confirmed, what action would you take to ensure that the Department implements administrative procedures adequate for the fair and expeditious adjudication of complaints about educational institutions that have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department for a Voluntary Education Partnership?

I will take complaints about educational institutions seriously. DoD is currently updating its policies and procedures to increase transparency and clearly articulate the circumstances by which an MOU with a school may be terminated or suspended to include basic notification and appeal processes.

The so-called 90/10 rule provides that for-profit educational institutions must derive at least 10% of their revenue from non-Federal sources, under the theory that students who pay a percentage of their educational costs out of pocket will act as a proxy for identifying meritorious and effective educational programs. Under current law, benefits under the VA GI Bill and Department of Defense tuition assistance programs are counted on the non-Federal side of this equation. Some, including Holly Petraeus when she led the Office of Servicemember Affairs within the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, have argued that this rule should be changed to either count these Federal benefits as Federal funding for purposes of the rule, or to exclude these sources of revenue from the rule altogether.

What is your view of the utility of this rule, and do you believe it should be modified?

I have no objection with a proposal to include Title 10 Tuition Assistance funds in the 90/10 calculation as these benefits are federal funds.

Religious Accommodation

On July 22, 2015, the Department of Defense Inspector General released a report on “Rights of Conscience Protections for Armed Forces Service Members and Their Chaplains.” The Inspector General found that the services are not processing special religious accommodation requests promptly and, once accommodation requests are approved, they do not last for the duration of soldiers’ military careers. In many cases, this has put individuals in the difficult position of being forced to violate their faith in order to join the military and they must resubmit accommodation requests every time they transfer. In some cases, these policies are unfairly burdening individuals specifically recruited by our armed forces for their unique language, culture, and technical skills.

If confirmed, what would be your role in addressing the recommendations in the Inspector General report?

If confirmed, I would support the USD(P&R) to ensure that the revision of Department of Defense Instruction 1300.17, “Accommodation of Religious Practices within the Military Services,” addresses these concerns.

Do you support a policy to allow service members’ religious accommodations to follow their service throughout their entire military careers – no matter where they are stationed?

Yes. I support a policy that provides for the accommodation of religious practices across a member’s career, provided that changes in the circumstances under which an individual is serving do not create a compelling need to reevaluate the accommodation in the interest of mission accomplishment (including such interests as the safety of the individual or unit, and the maintenance of good order and discipline).

Do you support a policy that would allow prospective recruits to request accommodation prior to enlisting or accepting a commission for service in the armed forces?

Yes.

What has been your role as acting USD(P&R) and formerly as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for military personnel policy in the decision to review the Brigham Young University ROTC agreement?

My role in Performing the Duties of the USD(P&R) has been to provide updates and advise the Secretary and Deputy Secretary in their review of this issue. In my former role as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy, I supported the efforts of the USD(P&R) to review, develop, and implement military personnel policies supportive of the establishment and maintenance of ROTC units.

Do you believe that the principle of religious accommodation, as expressed in statute and Department of Defense policy, applies to employers, such as religious institutions like Brigham Young University, which desire that military personnel working within their institution, such as ROTC instructors, agree to abide by religiously-inspired codes of personal conduct? If not, why not?

I support Secretary Mattis' position that the Department may not entertain a request for assignment practices based on religion, race, ethnicity, sex or some other improper basis. To do so could interfere with the Department's ability to make assignments or hiring decisions based solely on a Service member's or employee's qualifications, career progression, and merit principles. However, it has consistently been the Department's desire to preserve the educational opportunities afforded by ROTC programs for students attending religiously affiliated educational institutions and to respect the faith-based traditions at those schools.

In your view, do requirements for individuals being accessed into the military to first comply with military grooming and appearance standards that conflict with their sincerely-held religious beliefs before being considered for a waiver of those military standards constitute a constitutionally-valid restraint on religious expression?

Prospective Service members should be afforded the opportunity to have their requests for religious accommodation adjudicated prior to enlistment or commissioning.

In your view, how do the military services justify strict adherence to military grooming and uniform standards in the case of religious observance, while authorizing tens of thousands of shaving profiles, including allowing beards for deployed service members, and tens of thousands of waivers from tattoo policies that include religious-themed tattoos and tattoos of Bible verses?

The Department, through policy and practice, consistently seeks to strike the proper balance required in protecting its members' free exercise of religion and ensuring mission accomplishment.

Do you believe that allowing service members of certain faiths, such as Sikh, Orthodox Judaism, or Islam, to maintain beards or wear turbans or other religious headwear, while in uniform, would strengthen or weaken the U.S. military's

standing in areas of the world where such religions predominate? Would such allowance help or hurt our coordination and engagement with such foreign nations?

In my opinion, protecting the right to the free exercise of religion for U.S. Service members would strengthen the U.S. military's standing in the world and enhance our coordination and engagement with foreign nations.

U.S. military personnel routinely deploy to locations around the world where they must engage and work effectively with allies and host-country nationals whose faiths and beliefs may be different than their own. For many other cultures, religious faith is not a purely personal and private matter; it is the foundation of their culture and society. Learning to respect the different faiths and beliefs of others, and to understand how accommodating different views can contribute to a diverse force is, some would argue, an essential skill for operational effectiveness.

In your view, do policies concerning religious accommodation in the military appropriately accommodate the free exercise of religion and other beliefs, including individual expressions of belief, without impinging on those who have different beliefs, including no religious belief?

Yes.

In your view, does a military climate that welcomes and respects open and candid discussions about personal religious faith and beliefs in a garrison environment contribute in a positive way to preparing U.S. forces to be effective in overseas assignments?

Yes. A military climate that fosters open and candid discussions about personal religious faith and beliefs in a respectful manner enhances the effectiveness of U.S. forces serving in any environment, including overseas.

Would a policy that discourages open discussions about personal faith and beliefs be more or less effective at preparing service members to work and operate in a pluralistic environment?

In my opinion, any policy that drives discussions about personal faith and beliefs underground makes Service members less effective in a pluralistic environment. Unit cohesion depends upon trust and openness; policies that discourage Service members from openly and respectfully discussing their sincerely held beliefs erode unit cohesion.

Personnel System Reforms

The Committee conducted a series of hearings over the last several years on the topic of reforming the Department of Defense. A number of witnesses called for reforms to

the Pentagon's personnel management system to ensure we recruit and retain the best and the brightest to work for the nation's defense.

If confirmed, what would be your priorities with regards to military personnel management?

If confirmed, I will support the USD(P&R)'s priorities for military personnel management. I believe that our priorities should focus on improving readiness, lethality, and capability across the Total Force.

Do you believe that the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) and the Reserve Officer Personnel Management Act (ROPMA) need to be updated to better reflect the national security challenges that we face today and will face in the future?

Yes. DOPMA and ROPMA have served the Department well for many years, but there are elements that need to be reviewed. We need to continuously review the statutes and policies that govern our officer corps and make or recommend changes that support the operational readiness of our Military Services by providing the Services the flexibility they need to continue to attract and retain highly talented Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines to the service of our Nation.

One of the explicit goals of DOPMA was to create a perpetually "young and vigorous" officer corps, capable of leading large maneuver units. As warfare has grown increasingly technical, what goals should a modernized officer personnel management system seek to accomplish?

A modernized officer personnel management system needs to ensure we can recruit, retain, and manage a highly talented and capable officer corps to lead the men and women who serve our Nation. Warfare has grown increasingly technical, so we need officers who are skilled and capable of operating effectively in highly technical areas that are prevalent in all aspects of modern warfare. Likewise, we need officers who are fit enough and capable enough to lead our Service men and women under arduous conditions in hostile and austere environments.

In your judgement, do the services have adequate flexibility to manage their officer personnel in a manner that best achieves their respective missions?

I believe our officer personnel management policies must be continually assessed to ensure they provide the Military Services with the necessary tools and flexibility they need to meet the dynamic requirements they face. We routinely reassess whether the Services have enough flexibility to accomplish their missions. When we identify deficiencies or shortcomings, we change our personnel policies and, where necessary, ask Congress to amend laws to give the Services the authorities they need.

What do you believe is the biggest deterrent to young people considering a career in the military today?

A declining veteran population and a decrease in the number of connections youth have to the military have resulted in a youth population—and their influencers—that is more disconnected from its military than ever before. As a result, youth and influencer perceptions of military service stem from what they see in media reports or what is portrayed in movies and television, which often create a misperception of the realities of military service. These and several other factors collectively create conditions in which the intrinsically motivating elements and social worth of service have become less evident to the youth market, whereas the physical and psychological risks of service have remained top of mind.

Active/Reserve Permeability

The Commission on the National Guard and Reserves was chartered by Congress “to assess the reserve component of the U.S. military and to recommend changes to ensure that the National Guard and other reserve components are organized, trained, equipped, compensated, and supported to best meet the needs of U.S. national security.” One of their recommendations stated that the Department of Defense should merge DOPMA and ROPMA into “a single system, modified to base advancement on achievement of competencies.”

Do you believe consolidating DOPMA and ROPMA into an integrated officer personnel management system would be useful to the Department?

Yes, merging DOPMA and ROPMA could potentially be useful to the Department, but an integrated officer personnel system would also have to provide the necessary flexibilities the Services need to manage all of their officers, while accounting for the differences between officers who volunteer to serve full-time and those who want to serve in a reserve capacity.

Would a single officer personnel management system facilitate increased permeability between active and reserve components, thereby allowing officers to repeatedly transition between active and reserve service?

Yes.

What would be the desired outcome of an integrated active and reserve component officer military personnel system?

Optimally, an integrated officer personnel system would remove barriers to service in either component, as well as barriers to transitioning repeatedly and easily between components. The goal of any officer personnel system is to provide the authorities

necessary to effectively recruit, retain, and manage officers to meet the full spectrum of operational readiness requirements and individual Service member needs and preferences.

Are there other legislative or policy changes that would facilitate the transition of officers between active and reserve service?

The Department is always open to exploring legislative or policy changes that would facilitate transition between active and reserve service. When a Service identifies an area where change is needed, we adjust our personnel policies and, if legislative change is required, ask Congress to amend statutes to give the Services the authorities they need. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Services and seek Congress' advice if legislative changes are necessary.

In your view, what are the pros and cons of a single commission for active and reserve service?

A properly structured statutory framework enabling a single commission would create efficiencies, remove barriers to service, and maximize a Service member's ability to transition repeatedly and easily between components. However, such legislation would need to be carefully constructed to avoid reducing the proven success of the current system.

Military Pay and Allowances

The Department of Defense has traditionally compared Regular Military Compensation against comparable civilian salaries to devise a percentile as a way to assess the relative attractiveness of military pay versus civilian pay.

Do you agree that the primary purpose of a competitive military pay and benefit package is to recruit and retain a military of sufficient size and quality to meet national defense objectives?

Yes. I also believe that a competitive military pay and benefits package serves as a key enabler in meeting force management objectives in addition to recruiting and retention, such as encouraging assignments, motivating personnel to become more highly skilled, and, at the right time, incentivizing transition from military service back to civilian life.

Does the military pay package adequately compensate individuals for their specialized skills and provide an incentive to recruit science, engineering, and other critical professionals into the military?

The basic elements of the military pay package (basic pay, housing and subsistence allowances) are designed to apply broadly across the force. The Department supplements

these broadly applied elements with an array of special and incentive pays and bonuses to target specific recruiting and retention concerns, such as recruiting and retaining those with highly specialized skills (e.g., nuclear engineers, medical professionals, and scientists). These pays and bonuses are also used to incentivize the development of specific occupational skills, particularly in very technical career fields.

If confirmed, I will continue to evaluate the adequacy of these special pays and bonuses to ensure we are attracting and retaining the best talent we need for the military.

Do you believe the largely “one-size-fits-all” model for military pay is still the best model considering the specialized skills our military needs to defend, fight, and deter modern conflicts?

The current system has at its foundation regular military compensation (RMC), with which this committee is very familiar. RMC, coupled with an array of other monetary pays and allowances has sustained today’s All-Volunteer Force for more than 40 years and has generated the superb fighting force we have today. Although RMC could be viewed as largely one-size-fits-all, by building upon it with the other allowances and special and incentives pays/bonuses that Congress has authorized, the Department is able to flexibly differentiate and target pay to specific occupations and service conditions and, to address other recruiting and retention needs, as appropriate.

If confirmed, I am open to considering changes to the current system and am willing to work with the Committee to explore these. I also share the Committee’s goal to ensure that any changes are thoroughly analyzed so that we do not jeopardize readiness or our ability to recruit, retain, and sustain our nation’s All-Volunteer Force.

In your judgement, would awarding a cash bonus based on individual or team performance be a useful incentive to reward top performers?

Awarding a cash bonus based upon individual or team performance is worthy of consideration. Currently, the Services recognize individual performance primarily through promotions and non-monetary incentives, such as military decorations, choice of assignment, etc. Recently, I worked with the Navy to begin a pilot community program to use individual performance as one of the criteria for determining retention bonus eligibility and amounts. I look forward to reviewing the Navy’s assessment of this pilot.

What changes, if any, would you recommend for the revision of military pay and benefits?

At this time I do not have a specific recommendation. However, I do support considering changes to military pay and benefits but believe that any change of significance should receive the same careful analysis and vetting as the Blended Retirement System or past Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMC) recommendations so that we do

not jeopardize readiness or our ability to recruit, retain, and sustain our nation's All-Volunteer Force.

If confirmed, will you commit to working with the Committee on revisions to military pay and benefits with the goal of offering the best deal supported by the budget to attract, recruit, and retain military personnel?

I fully support the goal of this Committee, and I commit, if confirmed, to working with the Armed Services Committees to ensure future changes to military pay and benefits enhance our ability to attract, recruit, and retain today's and tomorrow's military personnel.

This Committee has taken great interest in the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) system over the last four years. The BAH system has devolved from its original purpose of providing adequate housing to service members and their families to a system that greatly benefits officers in special circumstances and provides less of a benefit to others who are primarily lower ranking enlisted personnel.

Do you agree with this assessment of BAH?

The BAH program has changed over time and is focused on enabling members to obtain adequate rental housing based on their pay grades and dependency status. I believe it is a relatively efficient allowance, and while I do not necessarily agree with this assessment of BAH, I acknowledge there may be reasons to consider changes and, if confirmed, will work with the Committee to explore future options.

If confirmed, will you commit to submitting a comprehensive report that addresses all elements required in section 604 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 with regard to establishing a single-salary system for members of the armed forces?

Yes. FY2017 NDAA Section 604 asked the Department to study a significant shift in military pay that could have far-reaching implications and consequences. To study this correctly and ensure Congress receives the high level of analysis and vetting, the Department requested, and in September the President tasked, the 13th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMC) commission to study this issue. I look forward to reviewing the report of the Commission and ensuring it is submitted to the Congress.

What is your view of establishing a single-salary system?

A proposal for establishing a single-salary system would be a momentous change, with potentially far-reaching implications for our men and women in uniform, military pay and personnel managers/administrators, and DoD's budgets. It would need to be flexible enough to apply to a workforce of immense size, across a broad spectrum of occupational

fields/economic sectors, to locations world-wide, wherever members serve, and under a wide variety of conditions. That is why I believe it is best examined and assessed in the context of the 13th QRMC. I am open to considering changes of this magnitude, but at the same time I am committed to exercising the due diligence required to ensure such a change would enhance, not harm, the readiness and lethality of the Force. I look forward to reviewing the outcome of the QRMC's work on a single-salary system and I am always willing to work with the Congress to support and sustain the All-Volunteer Force.

Blended Retirement System

The Blended Retirement System (BRS) will begin its implementation in Fiscal Year 2018. This new system will likely impact the traditional military force experience profile as personnel continually evaluate their career options in both the military and the private sector. At the same time, the military can use the BRS to strike a more efficient balance of personnel, retaining some service members well beyond 20 years of service, while parting with others who may no longer be required.

Do you believe the BRS offers the Department of Defense an opportunity to re-evaluate how it determines its desired military manpower profile?

Yes, I believe BRS offers the Department the opportunity to evaluate how we manage our military manpower and determine force profiles. In addition to benefiting service members through early vesting of Thrift Savings Plan automatic and matching government contributions and generating savings to the taxpayer, the BRS provides the Department with added force management flexibility—including positioning the Department to better compete for the young millennial generation talent it needs. Once implemented, BRS and the mid-career continuation pay bonus, along with other personnel tools, will help the Department achieve the military manpower profiles it desires even if those profiles change.

How can the Department take advantage of the BRS to ensure the most efficient and effective total force?

The early vesting of government contributions to the Thrift Savings Plan is attractive and makes the Department more competitive with the private sector in recruiting new members. These early vested, portable, retirement savings under BRS also provide the Department with greater flexibility to “laterally hire” individuals with significant private sector experience in certain career fields, such as cyber. Furthermore, the flexibility provided by Congress in allowing each of the Services to target continuation pay between the 8th and 12th year of service and to vary the amounts of continuation pay as appropriate will assist in shaping and tailoring the effective Total Force each Service needs.

What is your assessment of the progress of the Department's BRS implementation and education efforts to date?

BRS is on track for full implementation on January 1, 2018. I am confident the necessary systems changes are in place, the Services are prepared, and our members and their families are receiving robust training and education on this important change. For example: approximately 800,000 Uniformed Service members have completed our comprehensive BRS Opt-in Training course; our BRS social media campaign, launched in July and comprised of a series of 24 videos, has received more than 5.6 million views; and, in January we'll introduce a new training course specifically designed for members who enter the military under the BRS. I can assure the Committee, we will be ready for BRS come January 1, 2018.

How can the Department improve on financial literacy education?

Personal financial readiness is a key component of personnel and total force readiness; therefore improvements to the financial literacy of the force contribute to the Department's overall readiness efforts.

I believe the Department can continue to improve the financial literacy and preparedness of the force by building on the expanded financial literacy topics and touchpoints Congress enacted in the FY2016 NDAA; strengthening its relationships with other Federal departments and agencies, and nonprofit organizations to leverage their subject matter resources; and having leaders at all levels understand and appreciate the role of financial readiness in enabling total force readiness. Additionally, we must continue to strive to deliver financial literacy education in a manner that resonates with our youngest Service members, who very much need this type of education.

End Strength

In 2017, the Department of Defense began to grow total force end strength following seven consecutive years of end strength reductions. The Army and Air Force in particular have identified a need to increase the overall size of their forces to better meet combatant commander needs.

Do you believe military end strength must continue to grow?

Yes, I believe that the Military Services require additional, well-reasoned, and thoughtful end-strength increases to close capability and capacity gaps, regenerate readiness, and meet mission requirements. At the same time, while it is essential that we have the uniformed strength we need, we cannot afford to have more than required. Except in extraordinary circumstances, military personnel should not be used to perform functions or work that not military essential and, as such, would be more appropriately and cost-effectively performed by Federal civilian employees or contracted support. Accordingly, I believe that the Department can help meet the Services' need for additional military end-strength by civilianizing non-military essential functions, realigning Service members to

military essential operational or readiness requirements, and reducing the number of non-deployable Service members.

How fast can each service responsibly grow without relaxing recruiting standards?

The amount of growth each Service can achieve varies greatly over time. However, each of the Services is reasonably positioned to meet projected growth requirements. Each has the tools needed to help guide its efforts to grow the force responsibly while maintaining a high quality force.

How can the Department of Defense ensure that quality standards do not slip as we grow the force? What safeguards can be put in place?

The Services and the Department closely monitor recruiting and retention efforts to help ensure that quality standards do not slip. Because of this constant, vigilant monitoring, the Services can adjust the allocation of recruiting resources to help improve or maintain high quality recruiting and retention results.

Given recruiting scandals of the past, particularly in the National Guard Recruiting Assistance Program, how can the Department of Defense ensure that recruiting programs and bonuses are kept under constant oversight as end strength grows at a faster pace?

Active oversight efforts instituted by the Department will help to reduce, if not eliminate, these recruiting related issues.

If sequestration continues through 2021, what will be the impact on the active duty and reserve end strengths of all the services, and how would the mix between the active and reserve forces be affected?

The continuation of sequestration will have a significant, negative impact on the Department's ability to perform its missions, and could necessitate adjustments to end-strength levels for both our active and reserve components. Furthermore, sequestration would impact all aspects of the Department's Total Force, to include the civilian workforce and contracted services that are critical enablers of readiness and warfighting capability. Continued sequestration impacts across all elements of our Total Force (military, government civilians, and contracted support) will directly and negatively affect readiness regeneration and force structure, degrading the mission capabilities brought to bear by our active and reserve components.

What is your understanding of the need for additional force shaping tools requiring legislation beyond what Congress has provided?

Currently, I am unaware of the need for any additional force shaping tools requiring legislation. If confirmed, in support of the USD(P&R), I will work with Congress if additional legislative authority for force shaping is needed as we go forward.

Military Accessions Vital to National Interest (MAVNI) Program

If confirmed, would you recommend the continuation of the MAVNI program and the acceptance of new applicants? If so, what reforms, if any, would you recommend to ensure that the benefits of the program – recruiting those with critical skills and language/cultural backgrounds – outweigh the costs associated with conducting proper security screening of participants?

If confirmed, I would apply lessons learned from the MAVNI pilot in the development of any future program, to include consideration of the unique critical skills present in the immigrant community and the value of those skills to the Department. However, DoD places the highest emphasis on security and suitability screening of all prospective and current Service members and it is imperative that we fully vet individuals for military service. The Department is committed to completing the necessary background and security screening of our current MAVNI population prior to starting a future program.

If confirmed, what actions, if any, would you take to address the issue of MAVNI participants' legal status expiring while they await entry into active duty?

All applicants are reminded that they must maintain their legal status while awaiting training. The Department works very closely with our colleagues at the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to ensure that individuals who may fall out of status while awaiting training are provided assistance or consideration for deferred action from deportation.

Do you agree that the MAVNI program should only be used for its purposes intended by Congress – critical skills – and not for filling other billets to meet end strength recruiting goals?

Yes. Title 10 Section 504 clearly states that the authority to enlist individuals who are deemed "vital to the national interest" is contingent upon a case-by-case determination by the Secretary of the Military Department concerned. We are working with the Services to ensure that accessions are matched to critical manpower gaps and operational requirements.

Recruiting and Retention

The Department of Defense has indicated that approximately 29% of today's youth population is qualified for military service. This number is alarmingly low.

In your opinion, why are so few individuals in the 17-24 age range eligible for service?

The majority of these disqualifications result from obesity and other medical conditions that are prevalent among today's youth.

What is your assessment of the adequacy of military recruiters' access to high schools, and do you have any recommendations to further improve such access?

We routinely work with the Military Services to assess the adequacy of military recruiters' access to high schools. While current laws help to ensure recruiters have access to students to share with them the many benefits of service, there is a need to help improve the quality of those visits to the schools. We will continue to work with the Military Services, Congress, and state and local officials to identify initiatives that we believe could help enhance recruiter access.

What impact do current medical and other qualifications for enlistment in the armed forces have on the number of individuals eligible for military service?

Our data show that only about 29 percent of today's 17 to 24 year old population are eligible for military service without a waiver. While these standards serve to ensure we maintain a quality force prepared to meet the heightened readiness and lethality requirements expected of the United States military, they also make our recruiting efforts more challenging.

If confirmed, what changes to such qualifications, if any, would you recommend to increase the number of individuals eligible for military service without degrading the quality of recruits?

Today's enlistment standards are appropriate, allowing the Services to accomplish their missions by recruiting a diverse force drawn from the best of today's youth. That said, the Department and the Military Services continually assess and, when appropriate, modify these standards.

In your view, should the existing medical and other qualifications for enlistment be changed to accommodate certain new specialties, such as cyber or remotely piloted aircraft pilots?

Modifying existing medical and other overall qualification standards for individuals with select skill sets should be thoroughly researched before being considered for implementation. I believe there may be other more suitable means to fill these skills beyond the traditional recruitment process. One such program would be a lateral entry program for individuals uniquely qualified in these high-value specialties.

What is your view of recruiting individuals who are older than the typical core recruiting demographic?

We expect the recruiting environment to continue to become more challenging. It is important for the Department and the Services to continually identify ways to expand the pool of eligible individuals. Expanding that pool to older recruits is an option, particularly in the context of an expanded lateral entry program.

What other ideas do you have for increasing the pool of individuals eligible and qualified for military service?

While it is important to increase the pool of eligible individuals, it is equally, if not more important, for us to improve the propensity of individuals in the market who are less inclined to serve. The best way to improve propensity is to improve the perception of what it means to serve. Having the necessary flexibility to execute marketing, advertising, and outreach programs in a manner that allows each Service to bridge knowledge gaps, correct misperceptions, and reinforce a consistent, positive message is essential. I also believe we should further leverage social media to improve our outreach.

Some services have recently relaxed grooming and appearance standards. In your view, how will this impact recruiting and retention?

I am unaware of any particular grooming standards that have been recently relaxed. However, several of the Military Services have recently seen fit to modify their individual tattoo policies. Those Services that have adopted a revised standard have carefully considered their decisions and adopted standards that they believe best foster their interests in maintaining or enhancing the morale, welfare, and esprit de corps of their force.

Do you believe that grooming standards should be further relaxed for purposes of recruiting? If so, to what extent?

I believe the Services are in the best position to make this determination. Historically, the Office of the Secretary of Defense does not interfere with the Military Services' uniform or grooming standards and regulations.

What policies or tools are needed by the Department to increase the propensity of today's youth to serve?

To improve propensity we must change misperceptions of what it means to serve. The declining veteran population and shrinking military footprint has contributed to a public that is disconnected from today's military. A lack of familiarity with the military leads to people relying on stereotypes of what they think life in the military to be. We must continue to engage potential applicants and their influencers through active multimedia

campaigns and engagements that bridge knowledge gaps, correct misperceptions, and reinforce a consistent, positive message about service.

Pilot Retention

A number of Air Force officials have testified before Congress about the increasingly acute shortage of pilots the Air Force is experiencing. Secretary Wilson and General Goldfein recently testified that the Air Force projects a deficit of approximately 1,500 pilots, including approximately 1,300 fighter pilots. The Navy and Army have their own pilot retention issues. General Goldfein has described the problem as a national crisis that will require a national response.

What do you see as the role of the PDUSD(P&R) in crafting a Defense Department-wide plan to mitigate and ultimately resolve the pilot shortage?

The PDUSD(P&R), acting in support of the USD(P&R), can examine each Service's efforts to address the situation and determine common challenges facing all of the Department's military aviators. With this information, the Department can create or modify recruiting, retention, and compensation policies, as appropriate, leverage best practices, and better employ untapped resources.

In your judgement, do retention bonuses induce pilots who are learning towards leaving the military to change their mind?

Yes, I believe retention bonuses influence the stay/go decision; however, monetary incentives are not the only factor in such a decision. We must address the issue holistically, by looking at monetary and non-monetary incentives, such as improved work-life balance, reduction of non-essential tasks, and improvements to aviation maintenance, training, and production, all of which will support increased operational readiness.

Do you believe it is wise to apply business case analyses when determining who should receive a retention bonus and at what level?

Yes.

What non-monetary ideas do you have for incentivizing pilots to stay and fly for the armed forces?

Non-monetary incentives, such as improved work-life balance, reduction of non-essential tasks, and improvements to aviation maintenance, training, and production, could be useful complements to monetary incentives. Both traditional non-monetary incentives such as choice of assignment, as well as non-traditional incentives, such as the development of a specialized "fly only" career track that allows pilots to remain in the

cockpit throughout their career, rather than being developed for increased leadership and staff responsibilities, could help to induce pilots to stay and fly for the armed forces.

At what point would the pilot shortage become such a crisis that stop-loss or some other involuntary retention measure would be required to meet mission needs?

The Services have various monetary and non-monetary incentives to attract and retain pilots. I would rely on the Services to determine if they have reached a point at which they have no other options to incentivize retention before I would recommend using involuntary retention measures to meet mission requirements.

What is your assessment of a “flying only” track for pilots uninterested or ill-suited for command and high-level staff assignments?

I support creating a highly flexible and agile statutory and policy framework for officer development and utilization, which could include a specialized “fly only” career track that allows pilots to remain in the cockpit throughout their career, rather than being developed for increased leadership and staff responsibilities. However, I would need to evaluate the specific policies being proposed and model their likely effects before rendering definitive judgement.

What is your view of the appropriate balance and levels of communication needed between the Department of Defense and the airlines in the pilot retention crisis we are currently facing?

Based on a number of socio-economic factors, the pilot shortage is shared equally among the military and the private sector. Thus, it is imperative that the Department and the Services regularly engage with the airlines, to continually discuss supply and demand forecasting, and to find common solutions. To that end, over the past year, the Department has been engaging with industry to keep abreast of, and endeavor to address, our mutual challenges.

Human Resource Technology and Data Analytics

Each service is currently attempting to create an integrated pay and personnel management IT system. These new systems, once complete, should allow the military to more efficiently and effectively manage their people.

Why does each service require its own custom integrated pay and personnel system?

Military personnel processes must be highly responsive to how the respective Services organize, train, equip and deploy their forces, so standardization of these processes across the Services is a challenge. In addition to operational differences, the Services also have very different technical environments with which the personnel system must be

integrated. Because of these differences, implementing a joint personnel and payroll system carries significant risk.

Each of the integrated personnel and pay programs do have a common goal: to streamline the complex, manpower-intensive processes that are used to compute pay entitlements for Service members. While moving to a single pay and personnel system may carry too much risk in the near term, there are still department-level efficiencies, in areas such as payroll disbursement, which can be pursued. The Department's management reform approach provides an effective structure to achieve these benefits while avoiding pitfalls associated with implementing a single end-to-end system.

What new capabilities will an integrated pay and personnel system enable in terms of talent management and personnel policy?

There is a technology modernization component at the core of each of the Services' programs. These modernized software platforms the Services are using combined with web access will provide Human Resource managers at all levels a more seamless data environment and ready entree to more accurate and timely personnel data across active and reserve components which better supports all talent management activity. These integrated pay and personnel systems will also provide opportunities to take advantage of innovative approaches as the commercial software providers incorporate best practices from industry into their products. These platforms are also becoming ever more adaptable, and will improve our ability to support our policy environment, which continuously evolves as we reform the way we are maintaining our military force.

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine recently released a report with recommendations to strengthen data science methods for the Office of the USD(P&R). One of their major findings is that “analyses developed to support the Secretary of Defense are often disjointed, one-off activities undertaken to respond to immediate questions and may lack a plan for future use of data or analytic methods.”

If confirmed, how will you work to develop a data and analytics framework, and a strategy to implement that framework that would address the military's short-term and long-term human resource needs?

In collaboration with the Defense Manpower Data Center, the Military Services, and Federally Funded Research and Development Centers, the Office of People Analytics (OPA) will establish an Enterprise Data to Decisions Information Environment (EDDIE). This environment will allow the Department to capitalize on the largest repository of DoD's human resource information. If confirmed, I will continue this effort and execute the use of data-driven analytics in support of the readiness of the All-Volunteer Force.

The Department of Defense Office of People Analytics (OPA) was created in 2016 to utilize big data analytics to better understand key components of military and civilian career paths.

If confirmed, how do you envision OPA contributing to the military’s ability to recruit, retain, and utilize needed military and civilian talent?

If confirmed, I envision OPA to apply subject matter expertise in data capture, management, and analytics to assess complex human resource issues. The goal should be to provide Services’ and DoD leadership with policy and program recommendations that contribute to the military’s recruitment, retention, and utilization efforts.

What duplication is occurring between OPA and DDMC?

There is no duplication. OPA and DMDC leadership are working closely with one another to ensure there are no redundancies. Further, the research group under DMDC has been transitioned to OPA.

Mobilization and Demobilization of National Guard and Reserves

Over the past 15 years, the National Guard and Reserves have experienced their largest and most sustained employment since World War II. Reserve force management policies and systems have been characterized in the past as “inefficient and rigid” and readiness levels have been adversely affected by equipment stay-behind, cross-leveling, and reset policies.

What is your assessment of advances made in improving reserve component mobilization and demobilization procedures, and in what areas do problems still exist?

We have made vast improvements in our mobilization and demobilization procedures over the last 16 years. More than 957,000 members of the Guard and Reserve have been mobilized since 9/11. The Reserve component is operationally integrated with Active duty counterparts across the globe. During this period, the Reserve component has shifted from a strategic role to a part of the operational force. In addition to supporting combat operations, new authorities such as 12304a and 12304b enabled the Department to utilize the Reserve component to a greater extent for national emergencies and rotational Combatant Command requirements. The increased use of the Reserve component has increased its readiness, provided an operational pause for the Active component to support its reset, increased Active and Reserve component integration and increased the utilization of the Total Force.

How do you plan to address the challenges of medically non-deployability in the National Guard and Reserves?

Medical non-deployability is a Total Force issue and many of the same access and administrative issues affect both the active and reserve components. Unlike the Active component, members of the Guard and Reserve commonly reside in remote locations, and do not have access to Military Treatment Facilities. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that appropriate medical resources are available, and to enhance partnerships with the VA and the private sector to increase access for the Guard and Reserve. The TRICARE Reserve Select program has improved the medical readiness of our Reserve component because it provides Service members in a drilling status access to high quality, affordable health care.

What do you consider to be the most significant challenges to the administration of the reserve components and ensuring their readiness for future mobilization requirements?

Today, almost 34,000 Service members, from all seven of the Reserve components, are activated. The Reserve component has been on the front line in Iraq, Afghanistan, Haiti, Houston, and Puerto Rico. With this level of dependence on and utilization of the Reserve component, the Guard and Reserve will require time and predictable funding to recover full spectrum readiness. Time and stable funding will enable equipment reset and modernization, time to train at home station, as well as the availability of integrated training and exercises with the Active component, all of which support our overall goal of Total Force readiness.

What is your assessment of the Department of Defense programs to assist members of the National Guard and Reserves as they transition from a mobilized status?

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP); Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR); Transition Assistance Program (TAP); other Military Service-level programs; and our partnerships with the Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Labor, and local communities, have greatly improved our Service members' transition from mobilized status. However, I am convinced that we can always improve. Our commitment to improvement is exemplified by an ongoing RAND study to improve reserve component transition (expected completion in Fiscal Year 2019) and our ongoing Reserve Component Duty Status Reform initiative. Naturally, success in transition yields greater readiness. If confirmed, I will continue to work with the Services to ensure our transition programs for Reserve component members are designed and operated so as to increase our Total Force readiness.

Military Quality of Life

The Committee remains concerned about the sustainment of key quality of life programs for military families, such as family support, child care, education, employment support, health care, and morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) services, especially as the Department of Defense's budget declines. The services have, for several years, failed to

meet the minimum appropriated funding standard, as required by Department policy, for certain MWR programs.

If confirmed, what military quality of life programs would you consider a priority, and how would you work with the services, combatant commanders, family advocacy groups, and Congress to sustain them while eliminating some programs that may be ineffective?

If confirmed, I would work with the USD(P&R) to continue to prioritize quality of life programs that best promote the well-being and resilience of Service members and their families. Providing the greatest possible access to programs such as family life counseling; spouse education and employment support; fitness opportunities; morale, welfare, and recreation; and high quality child care, supports and enhances military family readiness, and ultimately mission readiness. I am also committed to nurturing safe and strong military families through the prevention of, and coordinated community response to, domestic violence and child abuse and neglect. I will work with stakeholders across the Department to review the efficacy of these programs, and sustain those programs that have the greatest impact on readiness, retention, and resiliency, while ensuring good stewardship of public funds and appropriate return on investment.

What would you do to ensure that the services meet the Department's minimum appropriated funding requirements for MWR programs?

There is a continued need to sustain vital quality of life MWR programs for all eligible patrons to help address and minimize stress on the force. When appropriated fund (APF) funding requirements for MWR programs are not fully supported, the burden is often shifted to nonappropriated funds (NAF) intended for other important purposes. This often results in price increases, reduced operating hours and services, and limitations on the availability of programs that impact Service members and their families.

The Department has initiated a full review of MWR programs and funding policies to assess the priority of the MWR programs, the method of delivering these programs, the right funding sources and the standards needed to ensure that programs are properly delivered and resourced. If confirmed, I will work with the USD(P&R) to closely monitor this review and thoroughly consider all recommendations to ensure minimum appropriated funding requirements are met.

What is your opinion on the Department of Defense funding MWR programs from the base budget (APF) rather than through dividends?

MWR programs are currently resourced from either APF, NAF, or a combination of both. NAFs are generated primarily from fees charged to Service members for certain programs such as golf, bowling, auto crafts, child care, and dividends from the Military Services' exchanges. Those dividends make up only a small portion of MWR funding, approximately 10 percent of total NAF revenues; however, they allow a level of

consistent support to all the MWR categories, including those that are not authorized APF support.

I support the long-standing symbiotic relationship between the exchanges and MWR programs. The knowledge that the exchange dividend payments support MWR programs is a longstanding part of military culture.

Family Readiness and Support

What do you consider to be the most important family readiness issues for service members and their families?

Families consistently tell us that they are concerned about military spouse employment, health care, child care, relocation, deployment, and operational tempo. These issues that worry the Service members and their families are the most important family readiness concerns.

If confirmed, how would you ensure that family readiness needs are addressed and adequately resourced?

If confirmed, I commit to providing our families with access to the information, tools, and resources that they need to meet the challenges associated with military life with readiness and resiliency. It is imperative that we work with both military and civilian stakeholders to address these challenges and continue to invest in providing resources for military families when and where they need them. This includes through installation-based programs; face-to-face support, in combination with the virtual delivery of programs through avenues such as Military OneSource; and collaboration with service providers in other federal, state, and local agencies, and non-profit and private sector offerings in our civilian communities.

If confirmed, how would you ensure support is provided to reserve component families related to mobilization, deployment, and family readiness, as well as to active duty families who do not reside near a military installation?

If confirmed, I will endeavor to provide Reserve component families with broad access to a spectrum of resources, while recognizing their unique needs. A coordinated, community-based network of care, encompassing support and services provided by the DoD and VA, as well as through other federal, state, local, non-profit and private sector providers, can be extremely effective in serving Service members and their families who do not reside on or near a military installation.

Department of Defense Schools in the Continental United States

Some have questioned the continuing need for Defense Department-operated schools for military dependent children within the Continental United States (CONUS).

In light of the Administration’s request for additional Base Realignment and Closure authorities and the Department’s current fiscal constraints, should the Department update its criteria for the continued operation of Department schools within CONUS?

The Department of Defense is mindful of the importance of education and the role it plays in the success, stability, readiness, and retention of our Service members and their families. It is crucial that the Department of Defense continue to look for high quality education options available to all military children, while balancing cost and exploring all options and alternatives, including our DoDEA Schools, Impact Aid, and DoDEA’s grant authority. If confirmed, I will continue to work to ensure that quality educational opportunities exist for all military children, while balancing cost, and exploring options and alternatives.

If confirmed, how would you approach the task of eliminating some Department-operated schools in CONUS?

Military families bear an extraordinary burden for our freedom and the availability of quality education options is a critical quality of life factor. If confirmed, I will consider the findings of the RAND study, “CONUS Education Options Assessment,” in addition to seeking input from stakeholders across DoD, including the Military Services and the military family community; the Department of Education; advocacy and professional groups; and state and local governments and educational agencies, in determining with the USD(P&R) the best options for providing education support to military families. I will further consult with members of Congress and the Defense Committees.

Community Support for Military Families with Special Needs

If confirmed, how would you ensure that service members with special needs family members relocate only to new duty stations where special needs services are available?

The Department’s current policies require the Military Services to screen military family members to identify their medical and educational needs and to ensure that those needs are considered during the Service member’s assignment process. If confirmed, I will ensure that the identification and enrollment of special needs family members, assignment coordination of Service members whose families include a member with special needs, and critical family support functions work together in a synchronized, streamlined, and consistent fashion, to ensure that our families with special needs receive the best possible service and support before, during, and after a move.

If confirmed, how would you ensure outreach to those military families with special needs dependents so they are able to obtain the support they need?

If confirmed, I will continue to explore all available options to enhance the Department's efforts to communicate with military families whose members have special needs. Successful outreach requires that both families and engaged professionals understand where information and referrals can be obtained and how services can be accessed. In addition, I believe it critical to train our leaders at all levels to identify and resolve issues affecting their Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines whose family members have special needs, through timely referrals to caring experts who are well equipped to assist in addressing concerns.

Commissary and Military Exchange Systems

What is your view of proposals to consolidate, eliminate, or privatize commissaries and exchanges in certain areas where there are duplicative services readily available at reasonable cost in the community?

In my view, the commissary and exchange programs are essential elements of the Service members' compensation package and contribute to both the quality of life and sense of community for military personnel and their families. That said, the fiscal challenges the Department is facing demand that we evaluate all options to optimize these benefits. This evaluation must include all opportunities for the commissary and exchange systems to achieve operating efficiencies and reduce duplication through enhanced collaboration and the development of common business systems and practices.

I would not recommend the elimination of the commissary and exchange systems unless the Department can identify a more cost-effective means of providing these valued benefits.

If confirmed, would you approve a pilot program to test privatization of the defense commissary system?

If confirmed, I am open to assessing whether the value provided by the commissary or exchange systems could be more effectively provided by a private party.

What is your view on privatizing the commissary system?

I am open to assessing whether the value provided by the commissary or exchange systems could be more effectively provided by a private party. However, any transformation initiative regarding the commissary or exchange system should not erode the current level of commissary and exchange patron savings or diminish the funding support to Service MWR programs that the exchange system currently provides.

Department of Defense Civilian Personnel Workforce

As the Department of Defense draws down its management headquarters functions, managers will have to make tough choices on the consolidation of functions and employees.

What is your view of a civilian employee retention system that incentivizes performance above all other factors when considering which employees to retain in a limited headquarters environment?

I fully support performance being the primary retention factor.

If confirmed, what would be your role in the consolidation and elimination of duplicative and unnecessary positions within the Office of the USD (P&R)?

The Office of the USD(P&R) has already made great strides to consolidate or eliminate duplicative and unnecessary positions by reorganizing and delayering. If confirmed, I will support the USD(P&R)'s lead in the continued effort to improve the efficiency of the P&R enterprise.

What additional ideas do you have to more efficiently manage the Department's civilian employees?

A single-instance civilian talent management system/database will enable true management of our civilian employees across the entire Department, vice solely within each current silo. We can then determine whether we possess sufficient technical skills in our civilian workforce to effectively manage a highly technical military force. Once we determine our true requirements, we must drive the system to reasonable time-to-hire metrics and expand direct hiring authorities to compete with the civilian market.

Do you feel the new performance management system will properly address the issue of employee performance reviews and ratings?

The Department's new performance management system, the Defense Performance Management and Appraisal Program, focuses on improving overall performance management through on-going and continuous supervisor and employee involvement. The program links organizational mission and goals to individual performance plans and ensures regular feedback during the appraisal cycle between employees and supervisors, resulting in increased employee engagement, morale, and effectiveness, and affording supervisors the ability to make meaningful distinctions in their evaluations of employee performance. The system is new and will require mid-course corrections to ensure optimal performance.

What, if anything, would you improve about the performance management system?

We must critically analyze whether the new rating options (1, 3, or 5) offer sufficient distinction in performance or lead to grade inflation.

Do managers have adequate tools to incentivize employee performance?

Performance incentives and recognition are important elements in the Department's efforts to retain talent and ensure an engaged workforce, and I believe that supervisors have sufficient tools to incentivize and recognize employee performance.

If confirmed, I will strive to ensure that supervisors across the Department will continue to use all available tools at their disposal to effectively incentivize and recognize employee performance. In addition, I will work with all stakeholders, the Administration, and Congress to identify and implement new authorities as needed.

What is your opinion on a renewable term appointment system for new employees rather than the current tenure system?

I am open to alternative civilian personnel systems and, if confirmed and in support of the USD(P&R), I will work with the Congress to support efforts that will improve the civilian workforce.

Management Headquarters Reductions

The Department of Defense is currently under a statutory mandate to reduce headquarters staff by 25%.

What progress has the Office of the Secretary of Defense made thus far on the 25% reductions?

At the end of FY2017, the Department of Defense achieved a 20.7 percent reduction in Major Headquarters Activities (MHA) and is on track to an overall 25.9 percent reduction by FY2020. The budget request for FY2018 is consistent with the plan submitted in FY2017. As the Department implements reform activities, we will continue to seek additional cost reduction opportunities in headquarters.

Do you agree that the Department of Defense should strive to eliminate duplicative functions?

Yes.

Do you believe that the process for deciding which functions are to be eliminated should be streamlined through each service or customized to fit each service's needs?

The Department, under the leadership of the Office of the Deputy Chief Management Officer, has initiated reform efforts to improve the quality and productivity of business operations of the Department. The Department is moving towards greater use of enterprise services to conduct business operations. At the Deputy Secretary's direction, reform leaders will operate a cross-functional team that includes military service representatives to modify processes to move toward enterprise service delivery. I believe there is value to increasing efficiency and effectiveness by standardizing and streamlining certain business operations function. However, these reform efforts must ensure that they meet the operational needs of the Services.

When the Office of the USD(P&R) went through its reorganization, it resulted in an organizational chart with the same number of people.

In the number of years you have been working in this office, which positions do you believe are duplicative or no longer needed and can be eliminated?

The Office of the USD P&R reorganization as shown in the recently published organization charts depicts the current year in which the reorganization was completed and does not reflect the 25 percent reduction in positions supporting Major Headquarters Activities (MHA) across the FYDP.

P&R has identified positions to be eliminated across the FYDP to achieve the required 25 percent reduction in MHA. Those positions were identified based on mission requirement considerations as well as the ability of the organization to achieve the reductions through attrition. This strategy has allowed P&R to achieve all required reductions.

Acquisition Workforce

The Department of Defense acquisition workforce has been the subject of a large quantity of reports and legislation.

What is your view on giving more acquisition authority to the service chiefs?

I believe that it better aligns acquisition decision authority and accountability with those who are directly affected by acquisition process outcomes

In what ways can we better train military personnel to be acquisition professionals?

If confirmed, I will work closely with the functional experts across the acquisition community and encourage the Services to make maximum use of the training and instruction offered through the Defense Acquisition University.

How can acquisition workforce management policies be modified to make leaders accountable for cost overruns on procurement contracts?

If confirmed, I will work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, as the functional community manager for the acquisition workforce of the Department, to support her efforts to lead the Department in using management authorities and practices that improve acquisition workforce readiness, capability, accountability, and performance, with a view to improving acquisition results and minimizing the risk of cost overruns.

In your judgement, how should program offices decide which tasks are best accomplished by government employees, military personnel, or support contractors?

The Office of the USD(P&R) maintains DoD guidance and policies with respect to workforce mix and the alignment of work between military personnel, government civilians, and contract support. These policies are aligned to statutory definitions on inherently governmental work, as well as work that is closely associated with inherently governmental work, and agency critical functions. Program offices should comply with these policies. However, throughout the Department, optimal workforce mixes are as diverse as our challenges: the "right" Total Force mix is something that has to be achieved at the individual manager/command level.

GI Bill Benefits

Congress passed the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act in 2008 (“Post-9/11 GI Bill”) that provides generous educational benefits for service members who have served at least 90 days on active duty since 9/11.

What is your assessment of the impact of the Post-9/11 GI Bill on recruiting and retention, including the provision of transferability for continued service?

The impact of the Post-9/11 GI Bill on recruitment and retention is now reaching the stage where it can be measured with some reliability. Our analysis indicates that the current benefit levels provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill appear adequate to achieve the purposes of motivating individuals to favorably consider military service as a career choice. As to retention, many first-term enlistees opt to become career service members—incurring an additional service commitment in exchange for the opportunity to transfer the benefit to family members, thereby enhancing retention.

Would you recommend that the Department of Defense use transferability more sparingly as a retention incentive?

Yes. In response to concerns from Congress, the Department of Defense intends to issue a policy change to the “Post-9/11 GI Bill” regarding the transferability of benefits to eligible family members. This change reflects an emphasis on retention, consistent with the original Congressional intent. Effective one year from this change, the ability to transfer benefits will be limited to Service members with less than 16 years of total service. This change allows career Service members who earned the benefit to share it with their family members while they continue to serve, and it’s an important step to preserve the distinction of transferability as a retention incentive.

Personnel Policy Implementation

What is your understanding of your responsibility, if confirmed, to inform and consult with this Committee and other appropriate committees of Congress on the implementation of policies directed by law?

If confirmed, I will comply with the law to inform and consult with the appropriate Congressional Committees of jurisdiction on the implementation of personnel, manpower and readiness policies.

What is your understanding of the Department’s obligation and authority to implement personnel policies to improve efficiency within the Department?

It is my understanding that the Department, under the direction of the Secretary, has both the authority and obligation to evaluate and implement the most effective personnel policies, while improving efficiency within the Department. These policies must not compromise operational readiness, lethality, or the well-being of our Service members, their families, or civilian personnel.

What is your understanding of the timeframe in which personnel policies directed by law must be implemented by the Department?

The implementation of personnel policies directed by law must be as timely as possible, within the given resources, and while ensuring the most effective and efficient outcome for the Department of Defense.

Readiness Matters

How do you see the PDUSD(P&R) role in the Quarterly Readiness Report to Congress? Specifically, do you see it as a way to disseminate information or as a way to proactively impact shortfalls and gaps in our military’s force structure?

I see the PDUSD(P&R)’s role in the Quarterly Readiness Report to Congress (QRRC) as a way to disseminate information **AND** proactively address readiness shortfalls and gaps

within our military's force structure. The QRRC is USD(P&R)'s most effective means of reporting the Military Services' current state of readiness and identifying the most pressing concerns of our Combatant Commanders. If confirmed, as the PDUSD(P&R), I would support the USD(P&R) in this role.

What is your assessment of the current metrics used to measure readiness? Do you believe the Department of Defense has any true metrics to accurately measure readiness from both a service and joint perspective?

Recent improvements in readiness data collection and analysis have increased the Department's ability to accurately measure readiness. To illustrate, the Department's recent Readiness Recovery Framework (R2F) effort successfully began the work of establishing a transparent, measurable, and repeatable process to identify readiness shortfalls, establish near- and long-term milestones, and measure incremental progress. Looking forward, a combination of analytics, metrics, data, and modeling will be used to further portray a more accurate readiness picture. If confirmed, I will continue to explore and advance the Department's newly implemented process to measure readiness and ensure an unbiased, fact-based approach that provides Congress with value-added readiness information.

What is your opinion of a commander's ability to subjectively override a unit's readiness rating?

I believe a Commander's ability to subjectively override a readiness rating under extenuating circumstances is a critical part of readiness reporting and one that should not be removed. In fact, as a former Commander, I took advantage of this ability on several occasions to give my seniors the most realistic assessment of my ship's readiness possible. As in all authorities we give Commanders, their responsibility and accountability for judicious use and accuracy is absolute.

What is your assessment of how the PDUSD(P&R) works with the Joint Staff to improve upon readiness challenges identified by the services?

To be effective, the PDUSD(P&R) must maintain a strong working relationship with the Joint Staff. For Example, earlier this year the P&R and the Joint Staff worked closely on the 60-Day Readiness Review, which led to the development of the Readiness Recovery Framework. In addition, both the Joint Staff and P&R participate in their respective Readiness forums to ensure collaboration. If confirmed, I will continue to strengthen the relationship between the Office of the USD(P&R) and the Joint Staff to achieve their common goals, which is to create the most lethal, decisive fighting force our Nation has ever had.

How would you reorganize the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness within the P&R organization so that the readiness assessment could be the primary focus of that Office?

We have already consolidated all the components that do not directly deal with operational and force readiness into a separate directorate within the ASD(Readiness), to reduce the number of direct reports to the individual performing the duties of the ASD(Readiness). However, I believe the final decision on how to best, and permanently, structure the ASD(Readiness) office should reside with a Senate confirmed USD(P&R).

The Department relies on the organic industrial base to ensure that aging and damaged weapon systems and support equipment are available to warfighters when needed. In recent years, however, backlogs have plagued our armed forces' ability to train and fight.

In your relationship with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Logistics and Materiel Readiness, what is your understanding of the current industrial base's ability to not only share best practices but to implement those practices on underperforming services?

Readiness touches all aspects of our Joint Force, including how the industrial base supports the Department of Defense. If confirmed, I will work directly with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Logistics and Materiel Readiness to address how the industrial base impacts readiness. In addition, I will ensure USD(P&R) does not operate in a silo and the logistics and materiel community understands where our readiness pressure points are so that we can create mitigation plans.

Laboratory, Science and Technology, and Test Range STEM Personnel

Congress has authorized Department of Defense laboratories, test ranges, and some research agencies (such as DARPA) to execute personnel systems that provide them with greater flexibility in hiring, setting rates of pay, promotions, and other matters. These have been used successfully to help the Department of Defense compete with the private sector for a very limited supply of clearable STEM talent. The Committee has expressed concern over the years that the Office of the Secretary of Defense and other service personnel management offices have not been supportive in efforts to make maximum use of these flexibilities, or to permit their execution by local lab, test range, or agency directors.

If confirmed, will you commit to support the maximum use of personnel flexibilities that are provided by Congress to improve the quality of the STEM workforce?

Yes.

If confirmed, will you commit to support efforts to authorize the use of these flexibilities at the local level, so they are exercised with the speed necessary to compete with private sector hiring practices and without bureaucratic delay and additional cost?

Yes.

Military Child Development Program (MCDP) – STEM education

The Committee is interested in improving the quality of early childhood STEM education provided to children participating in the MCDP.

If confirmed, will you work to improve the quality of early childhood STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education provided to these children?

Yes.

What specific ideas do you have to accomplish this goal?

In addition to our robust Service youth development programs, the Department has developed partnerships with other youth-serving organizations to open STEM Centers in military installation youth programs. These state of the art centers provide hands-on opportunities for military children and youth to explore 3-D printing and other STEM related activities, such as flight simulators. If confirmed, I will support efforts to expand these Centers and to provide staff training to support STEM education.

Congressional Oversight

In order to exercise its legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this Committee and other appropriate committees of Congress are able to receive testimony, briefings, and other communications of information.

Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear before this Committee and other appropriate committees of Congress?

Yes.

Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear before this Committee, or designated members of this Committee, and provide information, subject to appropriate and necessary security protection, with respect to your responsibilities as the PDUSD(P&R)?

Yes.

Do you agree to ensure that testimony, briefings, and other communications of information are provided to this Committee and its staff and other appropriate committees in a timely manner?

Yes

Do you agree to provide documents, including copies of electronic forms of communication, in a timely manner when requested by a duly constituted committee, or to consult with this Committee regarding the basis for any good faith delay or denial in providing such documents?

Yes.

Do you agree to answer letters and requests for information from individual Senators who are members of this Committee?

Yes.

If confirmed, do you agree to provide to this Committee relevant information within the jurisdictional oversight of the Committee when requested by the Committee, even in the absence of the formality of a letter from the Chairman?

Yes.