

Senate Armed Services Committee
Advance Policy Questions for Lieutenant General Michael Langley, USMC
Nominee for Appointment to the Position of Commander, U. S. Africa Command

Duties

1. What is your understanding of the duties and functions of the Commander of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM)?

My understanding of the duties and functions of the Commander of AFRICOM are informed by both law and policy. Title 10, U.S. Code §164 specifically covers the assignment, powers, and duties of the Commander of a Combatant Command, and applies to all Combatant Commands. Such commanders are responsible to the President and to the Secretary of Defense for the performance of missions assigned to that command by the President or by the Secretary with the approval of the President. If confirmed, by law my primary duties will be to produce plans for the employment of the armed forces to execute national defense strategies and respond to significant military contingencies. I would be required to take actions, as necessary, to deter conflict and to command United States armed forces as directed by the Secretary and approved by the President.

If confirmed, the command functions required to perform my job would include giving authoritative direction to subordinate commands and forces necessary to carry out missions assigned to the command, including authoritative direction over all aspects of military operations, joint training and logistics. I would be responsible for organizing commands and forces within the command and prescribing the chain of command to those subordinate entities. If confirmed as Commander, AFRICOM I must employ forces necessary to carry out assigned missions and coordinate and approve those aspects of administration and support (including control of resources and equipment, internal organization, and training) and discipline necessary to carry out the missions.

These duties and functions are how Commander of AFRICOM achieves what is specified in the President's Interim National Security Strategic Guidance (INSSG) and forthcoming National Security Strategy (NSS), the Secretary of Defense's National Defense Strategy (NDS) and Defense Planning Guidance (DPG), and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's (CJCS) National Military Strategy (NMS). Classified executive documents, such as the President's Unified Command Plan (UCP) and Contingency Planning Guidance (CPG) provide more specific direction and duties from the Commander in Chief as to what the Commander of AFRICOM is required to do.

2. What qualifications, qualities, and characteristics would you bring to the position of Commander, AFRICOM, if confirmed?

As required by Title 10, U.S. Code § 661 and § 664(d), I possess the appropriate joint qualifications and have completed a full tour of duty in a joint duty assignment as a General Officer. I have served as the Deputy Director of Operations, J-33 on the Joint Staff and Director of Strategy, Plans, and Policy, J-5, U.S. Central Command.

For thirty-seven years, it has been my honor to serve this Nation, our talented service members, and their inspirational families. During this time, I have been fortunate to lead organizations at every level of the Marine Corps, from an artillery guns platoon as a Second Lieutenant to my current position. This includes nine deployments around the globe, including deployments to combat zones.

As a General Officer, command positions include the following service: Deputy Commanding General, II Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF); Commanding General, 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade; Commanding General, Marine Forces Europe and Africa; Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic; and Commander, Marine Forces Command and Marine Forces Northern Command. Beyond my command billets, I have gained considerable experience from senior, joint positions. The foundation for my Joint service began with advanced education at the Senior Service College level. Through my extensive involvement in the Joint environment, to include Joint Staff service as Director for Strategy, Plans, and Policy (J-5), U.S. Central Command; a Policy Action Officer in the Strategic Plans and Policy Directorate (J-5) and the Iraq Desk Officer in the Joint Staff Response Cell, Operations Directorate (J-3), and Deputy Executive Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I bolstered my appreciation for the national security process and the interactions between Combatant Commanders, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. If confirmed, I will always place the mission first and draw on my many years of experience to ensure the tasks assigned to United States Africa Command are accomplished efficiently, effectively, and professionally.

3. Do you believe there are actions you need to take to enhance your ability to perform the duties of Commander, AFRICOM?

If confirmed, I will become more familiar with strategy and plans from the Department of State and USAID, while examining AFRICOM's plans to ensure they are aligned with the other U.S. government stakeholders. I will conduct a 90-day assessment to ensure AFRICOM's approach remains consistent with U.S. laws, policy, and strategic guidance. Furthermore, I will accomplish this by consulting with other agencies of the Executive Branch, Combatant Commanders, the Service Component Commanders assigned to AFRICOM, interagency colleagues, and multinational partners. I will use this assessment as an opportunity to ensure operational commanders have the people, resources, and authorities necessary to execute assigned tasks and missions.

Chain of Command

Section 162(b) of title 10, United States Code, provides that the chain of command runs from the President to the Secretary of Defense and from the Secretary of Defense to the combatant commands. Section 163(a) of title 10 further provides that the President may direct communications to combatant commanders through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

4. Do you believe that these provisions facilitate a clear and effective chain of command?

Yes.

5. In your view, do these provisions enhance or degrade civilian control of the military?

These provisions enhance civilian control of the military by ensuring that orders and communications from the President to Combatant Commanders must go through an individual who has been nominated by the President and confirmed by the legislature. The confirmation process for the Secretary of Defense and Combatant Commanders safeguards the civilian control of the military and ensures that the elected representatives of the people have a central and final say on issues involving the defense of our nation and our security policy.

Civilian control of the military has been enshrined in American government since our Nation's founding. It is clearly articulated in the Constitution, the National Security Act of 1947 (as amended in 1952), and Title 10 U.S. Code. American citizens symbolically endorse this ideal every time they raise their right hand and swear an oath to the Constitution upon joining the military, reenlisting in the military, or being appointed to a new office. It is the utmost duty of any member of our armed forces to defend our foundational ideas and documents.

6. Are there circumstances in which you believe it is appropriate for U.S. military forces to be under the operational command or control of an authority other than the chain of command established under title 10, United States Code?

The President retains national command authority over U.S. forces. This includes the authority and responsibility for organizing, directing, coordinating, controlling, planning employment, and protecting military forces. The President also has the authority to terminate U.S. participation in multinational operations.

Generally speaking, U.S. military forces should remain under the operational command and control of the chain of command established under Title 10 of the United States Code, to the best extent practicable. There are recent historical cases that provide some precedence for operating in Alliances. The Unified Task Force (UNITAF) that operated in Somalia in 1992/1993 was a U.S. led, U.N. sanctioned multinational force and national command was retained through political negotiations prior to commencing operations. A more recent example of how this challenge was approached would be Operation Odyssey Dawn/Unified Protector in Libya (2011). Although multinational operations in Libya were initially commanded by the U.S., command eventually transitioned to NATO. The Title 10 chain of command was retained following the transition because U.S. leadership in the Mediterranean also serve in NATO roles as well.

Nations participating in an alliance or coalition should strive to achieve unity of effort for the operation to the maximum extent possible, with missions, tasks, responsibilities, and authorities clearly defined and understood by all.

Relationships

The law and traditional practice establish important relationships between the Commander, AFRICOM, and other senior officials of the DOD and the U.S. Government.

7. Please describe your understanding of the relationship of the Commander, AFRICOM, to each of the following officials:

7(a). The Secretary of Defense

My understanding of the relationship with the Secretary of Defense is informed by Title 10, U.S. Code §113, 162(b), and 164(b). Unless otherwise directed by the President, the chain of command runs from the President to the Secretary of Defense, and from the Secretary of Defense to the Commander of AFRICOM. If confirmed, I would be directly responsible to the Secretary for the preparedness of the command to carry out missions assigned to the command. I would be responsible for interpreting guidance from the NDS, DPG, and CPG and implementing in within the bounds of AFRICOM's area of responsibility in a globally integrated fashion.

7(b). The Under Secretaries of Defense

My understanding of the relationship with the Under Secretaries of Defense is informed by Title 10, U.S. Code §133-137. These appointees are principal staff assistants and advisors to the Secretary on all matters that pertain to their specific portfolios. They are a valuable counsel to the Combatant Commanders, and an integral part of the overall decision-making process within the department.

7(c). The Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs

My understanding of the relationship with the Assistant Secretaries of Defense is based on their roles and responsibilities as specified by Title 10, U.S. Code §138. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs is the principal advisor to the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)) and the Secretary of Defense on international security strategy and policy on issues of Departmental interest that relate to the nations and international organizations of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, their governments and defense establishments; and for oversight of security cooperation programs and foreign military sales programs within these regions. If confirmed, I would ensure that the staff of AFRICOM continues to maintain positive and proactive relationships with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, given the unique requirements to work by, with, and through our African partners.

7(d). The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict

Per Title 10, U.S. Code §138(b)(2), the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations (SO) and Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) is the principal civilian advisor to the Secretary of Defense on special operations and low-intensity conflict matters and (after the Secretary and Deputy Secretary) is the principal special operations and low intensity conflict official within the senior management of the Department of Defense (DoD). The ASD (SO/LIC) oversees and advocates for Special Operations and Irregular Warfare throughout the Department to ensure these capabilities are properly employed in accordance with the NDS. If confirmed, I will make sure both myself and the AFRICOM staff maintain coordination with this office on

policy issues related to special operations capabilities and resourcing, given the propensity for special operations forces to operate on the African continent to work by, with, and through foreign military forces to compete below the level of armed conflict and combat violent extremist organizations.

7(e). The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

The Chairman's roles are delineated by Title 10, U.S. Code §151-3 and §163. The Chairman is the principal military adviser to the President, the National Security Council (NSC), the Homeland Security Council (HSC), and the Secretary of Defense. In carrying out his functions, duties, and responsibilities the Chairman shall consult with and seek the advice of the Commanders of the Unified and Specified Combatant Commands and the Service Chiefs, as necessary. The Chairman transmits communications between the National Command Authority (NCA) and the Commander of AFRICOM and oversees the activities of the same, as directed by the Secretary of Defense. The Chairman is a key conduit between a Combatant Commander, interagency organizations, and the Service Chiefs.

The Vice Chairman's roles are specified by Title 10, U.S. Code §151 and §154. As a full voting member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Vice Chairman is a military adviser to the President, NSC, HSC, and Secretary of Defense who may provide advice after first informing the Secretary and the Chairman. When there is a vacancy in the office of the Chairman or in the absence or disability of the Chairman, the Vice Chairman acts as Chairman and performs the duties of the Chairman until a successor is appointed or the absence or disability ceases. The Vice Chairman serves on several councils and boards whose decisions affect AFRICOM, including the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC), the Defense Acquisition Board, the Defense Advisory Working Group, and the Senior Readiness Oversight Council. Regular communication between Combatant Commanders and the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is key to ensure these boards and councils make informed choices on matters affecting the command. If confirmed, I will keep the Chairman informed on significant issues regarding the command's area of operations and communicate directly with the Chairman and Vice Chairman on a regular basis.

7(f). The Secretaries of the Military Departments and Service Chiefs

The roles of the Service Secretaries are clearly delineated in Title 10, U.S. Code §7013, 8013, and 9013. Generally, they are responsible for, and have the authority necessary to conduct all affairs for their respective Departments. These affairs include the functions of organizing, supplying, equipping, training, administering, and maintaining their forces. They exercise administrative control through the Service Component Commands assigned to AFRICOM.

Duties of the Service Chiefs are covered in Title 10, U.S. Code §7033 (Chief of Staff of the Army), 8033 (Chief of Naval Operations), 8043 (Commandant of the Marine Corps), 9033 (Chief of Staff of the Air Force), 9082 (Chief of Space Operations), and 10502 (Chief of the National Guard Bureau). Additionally, as members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, their roles and responsibilities are further defined in Title 10, U.S. Code §151. The Service Chiefs are responsible for ensuring the readiness of their Service branch. The Service Chiefs are also members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and serve as advisers to the President, NSC, HSC and the

Secretary of Defense. If confirmed, I would rely on the Service Chiefs to provide properly trained and equipped forces to accomplish command's mission.

7(g). Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command

The responsibilities of the Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) are defined in Title 10, U.S. Code §167. The Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command is responsible for the administration and support of special operations forces assigned or attached to AFRICOM. Unless directed by the President or Secretary of Defense, however, a special operations activity or mission shall be conducted under the command of the Combatant Commander in whose geographic area the activity or mission is to be conducted. If confirmed, I would maintain an exceptionally close relationship with the Commander, USSOCOM on issues of mutual interest. Special Operations Command Africa (SOCAF) serves as a Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC) and is a sub-unified command of USSOCOM under the operational control of AFRICOM.

7(h). The other combatant commanders

Duties of the other Combatant Commanders are defined in Title 10, U.S. Code §164, the UCP, the CPG, and other Departmental guidance and directives. While each Combatant Commander may be assigned a specific geographic area or functional responsibility, it is imperative that they all work together. Today's strategic operating environment is characterized by global threats that cannot be addressed solely in one theater. Additionally, each Combatant Commander is vying for the same resources from the Military Departments. Collaboration and consultation between commanders is critical to assisting the Chairman in ensuring all operations are integrated globally to execute the National Military Strategy (NMS).

AFRICOM has close relationships with several other Combatant Commanders, namely the Commanders of U.S. European Command (USEUCOM), U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), and USSOCOM. Shared boundaries between AFRICOM, USEUCOM, and USCENTCOM require close coordination as military operations in one area of responsibility have systemic impacts on the other areas. The Commander, AFRICOM has an especially close relationship with the Commander of USEUCOM as they share three component commands (USAREUR/AF, NAVEUR/AF, MARFOREUR/AF), as well as forces and assets. Additionally, as the Combatant Commander for special operations forces operating in Africa under the control of AFRICOM, close collaboration is necessary with USSOCOM. If confirmed, I pledge to continue to maintain the great relationships that have been formed before me.

7(i). The U.S. Chiefs of Mission in the AFRICOM area of responsibility (AOR)

My understanding of the roles and responsibilities of U.S. Chiefs of Mission is informed by Title 22, U.S. Code §3927. Upon presenting their credentials to the host government, Chiefs of Mission are recognized as the principal diplomatic representative of the U.S. Government. They have the task of carrying out overarching U.S. foreign policy goals and strategic objectives. The Chiefs of Mission have full responsibility for the direction, coordination, and supervision of all government executive branch employees in a given country, except those employees under the command of a U.S. area military commander. If confirmed, recognizing their scope of

authority, HQ AFRICOM will ensure its partner engagement complements the Ambassadors' priorities and diplomatic mission.

7(j). The U.S. Senior Defense Officials/Defense Attachés (SDO/DATT) in the AFRICOM AOR

The roles and responsibilities of the SDO/DATT are defined in Department of Defense Directive (DoDD) 5205.75, "DoD Operations at U.S. Embassies." Unified DoD representation in U.S. embassies is critical to the accomplishment of national security objectives. The SDO/DATT is the Chief of Mission's principal advisor on defense issues and the senior diplomatically accredited DoD military officer assigned to a U.S. diplomatic mission. All DoD elements under Chief of Mission authority are under the coordination authority of the SDO/DATT, except for the Marine security guard detachment and naval support units. While they do not work directly for AFRICOM, they represent the Command's perspective on a Country Team. There is a supervisory relationship between the Commander, AFRICOM and the SDO/DATT. This relationship ensures they maintain close coordination on all matters as the Command's senior representative. If confirmed, I will ensure that the staff at AFRICOM continues to maintain positive relationships with the SDOs/DATTs within the area of responsibility.

Major Challenges and Opportunities

8. What do you consider to be the most significant challenges you will face if confirmed as Commander, AFRICOM?

If confirmed, the most significant challenge I will face as Commander, AFRICOM, is ensuring that our Nation is able to maintain strategic access and influence across the continent. These are being hampered by our strategic competitors, the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Russian Federation. I will also be faced with backsliding democracies and weak regimes that create favorable conditions for the growth of terrorists and violent extremist organizations (VEOs) in ungoverned or poorly governed spaces. These groups pose a growing threat to the U.S., our interests, and our allies.

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

If confirmed, I would begin by assessing the current AFRICOM Campaign Plan. The current campaign plan is focused on achieving four campaign objectives: 1) Gain and Maintain Strategic Access and Influence, 2) Disrupt VEO Threats to U.S. Interests, 3) Respond to Crises to Protect U.S. Interests, and 4) Coordinate Action with Allies and Partners to Achieve Shared Security Objectives. I believe it provides a sound construct to address AFRICOM's significant challenges. This campaign plan pursues the objectives through a whole-of-government approach, paired with interagency stakeholders, international allies and partners, and multi-lateral organizations, to assist African nations in building effective governance and defense institutions with credible and professional security forces. As such, the AFRICOM Campaign Plan is the defense contribution to the initiatives described in the Global Fragility Act (GFA). AFRICOM prioritizes gaining and maintaining access in key geostrategic locations to disrupt competitor efforts that threaten U.S. freedom of action and to check malign activities which exploit our

African partners. This is accomplished through multinational exercises; limited operations; senior leader engagements; security cooperation initiatives, support of multi-lateral organizations (the United Nations) and posture and presence agreements.

10. Recognizing that challenges, anticipated and unforeseen, will drive your priorities to a substantial degree, if confirmed, what other priorities, beyond those associated with the major challenges you identified above, would you set for your tenure as Commander, AFRICOM?

If confirmed, I will ensure that AFRICOM's ability to effectively respond to requests for assistance in safeguarding American lives, property, and interests at diplomatic facilities will remain a high priority for AFRICOM.

Lack of access to basic requirements such as reliable sources of food and water affect much of the African continent. This reality hampers the ability of African governments to be effective for their citizens, exacerbates migration issues, and creates humanitarian challenges. To a great extent, the ongoing crisis in Ukraine and climate change are driving this instability. While AFRICOM and its forces are not the right tool to solve these problems alone, working with the whole-of-government and international institutions to address these will be a priority.

Lastly, building upon current efforts to implement the U.S. Women, Peace, and Security Act on the African continent will be a priority if I am confirmed. The Command has been implementing WPS through peacekeeping capacity building activities and exercises since 2014, and the population growth rates in Africa demand that governments ensure all members of society feel empowered to provide for their common defense.

11. If confirmed, what actions would you take to focus your Command's efforts on each of these priorities?

If confirmed, I will prioritize my efforts to understand the situation on the continent as quickly as possible. This involves visiting the AOR and meeting with key U.S. diplomatic and development partners in the Department of State and USAID to understand their contributions to U.S. policy outlined in the Global Fragility Act. I will also obtain assessments from subordinate Service component commanders, and discuss regional issues with African Ministers of Defense and Chiefs of Defense. These efforts will inform AFRICOM's priorities and the command's support to a whole-of-government approach to assisting our African partners. Being a resource constrained command, this requires a careful review of priorities for the command to ensure the scarce resources are applied to the greatest affect.

National Defense Strategy

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

12. What is your understanding of the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) and its

implications for the AFRICOM AOR?

The National Defense Strategy is focused on addressing the erosion of U.S. deterrence across domains, theaters and the spectrum of conflict. The strategy is centered on Integrated Deterrence to reduce a competitor's perception of the net benefits of aggression, campaigning to advance our well-defined, strategy-aligned priorities over time, and Building Enduring Advantages. Consistent with the National Defense Strategy and other strategic guidance, AFRICOM provides affordable insurance and investment for U.S. global advantage by campaigning to mitigate risks in Africa in order to 1) protect U.S. interests, 2) contribute to Integrated Deterrence, and 3) prevent strategic distraction of national command authorities and other combatant commands.

13. What is your understanding of U.S. strategic objectives in Africa and what role do you believe AFRICOM should play in supporting these objectives?

My understanding of U.S. strategic objectives in Africa is informed by the President's 2021 *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance*, the 2019 *Global Fragility Act*, the 2020 *Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability*, and the 2019 *Prosper Africa* Presidential Initiative.

The U.S. strategic objectives in Africa are to defend America forward by preventing violent extremist organizations from coordinating attacks on the homeland from the continent; to promote a favorable distribution of power to deter and prevent adversaries from directly threatening the U.S. and our allies, inhibit our access to the global commons, or dominate key regions; and to lead and sustain an open international system, underwritten by strong democratic alliances, partnerships, multilateral institutions, and rules.

AFRICOM supports these objectives by working by, with, and through our African partners, other allies, and the interagency to foster a positive security environment. In turn, this enables development efforts by the Department of State, USAID, the international community, as well as the private sector. Security efforts from AFRICOM also facilitate continued access and influence across the continent, which helps identify threats to the homeland emanating from violent extremist organizations and allows stakeholders to take action to address threats. Our access and influence also allow our forces to provide a credible and enduring alternative to PRC and Russian military forces attempting to bring Africa within their spheres of influence.

14. In your view, what does “great power competition” look like in the AFRICOM AOR?

The PRC is practicing “debt colonialism” by enticing impoverished nations with financing for development programs, while structuring the deals so that the nations forfeit rights to natural resources, or are beholden to PRC goals and objectives. The PRC can use these actions to further subvert the existing international order by coercing African nations to support PRC UN voting ideals. Russia attempts to maintain plausible deniability while its for-profit Private Military Corporations partner with authoritarian regimes to repress marginalized populations, keep pro-Russian governments in power, and disrupt UN mission mandate operations.

Neither of these two competitors possess the same morals or ideals as the United States

and our partners, which makes their efforts and objectives exceptionally one-sided when evaluating long-term benefits. The challenge for AFRICOM and the United States is how to compete with the PRC and Russia, knowing it is unlikely we will ever outspend them in the AOR, nor will we support every authoritarian regime. This will require integrated objectives, strategies, and approaches with our interagency and international partners.

As a competitive enabler, AFRICOM is a change agent that contributes U.S. competitive efforts in the AOR by supporting the interagency, NGOs, and IGOs. While DoD plays a critical role, it is not the primary means of competing with the PRC and Russia. If confirmed, I will prioritize support to interagency and international efforts to defend and strengthen the structures of the open international system, while securing U.S.'s access, influence, and freedom of action within the AFRICOM's area of responsibility.

15. Are U.S. policies and programs, as applicable to Africa, appropriate to ensure the United States can succeed in great power competition in the AFRICOM AOR? Are there additional measures we should be considering? What do you perceive as the areas of highest risk?

While the military does not have the lead for competition with the PRC and Russia on the African continent, AFRICOM plays a strong supporting role. The broader effort by the United States Government, recently enhanced through the Global Fragility Act, focuses on addressing systemic challenges on the continent. DoD's primary contribution to implementation of policy is through the security sector. The competitive idea is that by helping states address security challenges, AFRICOM also closes off an avenue for competitors to exploit for their own gain. As competitor behavior evolves on the continent, AFRICOM maintains its focus on the risks posed to the continued advancement of U.S. interests.

The Department of State, in coordination with the DoD, has a wide range of tools it brings to bear to support both the establishment of security and also the professional development of international military personnel. These include the International Military Education and Training program (IMET), which sends foreign military personnel to the United States for training and education, and which tends to favorably dispose them to U.S. culture and institutions. The Department of State also processes foreign military financing, foreign military sales, and funds peacekeeping operations. AFRICOM conducts military exercises and other combined training with our African partners to address specific partner requirements. However, lengthy approval processes and restrictive end-use agreements often encourage African partners to turn to our competitors for security assistance, thus decreasing U.S. access and influence on the continent.

The area of greatest risk to succeeding in great power competition in Africa is the erosion of U.S. strategic access and influence. Authoritarian regimes are naturally attracted to our competitors, because their value systems align. Nations that turn towards the PRC and Russia reduce our ability to maintain access and promote a rules based international order, and free access to economic markets.

If confirmed, I will evaluate the tools, policies, programs, and authorities to enhance the effectiveness of U.S. competitive efforts on the continent. Additionally, my staff will cultivate new partnerships to better enable African states to resist undue foreign influence.

16. Do you believe the Command's resources and authorities are aligned in a manner consistent with NDS priorities and U.S. strategic objectives?

If confirmed, I intend to review the Command's current resources and authorities and their alignment to the NDS priorities and U.S. strategic objectives. Based on what I know now, such an alignment exists. AFRICOM activities include exercises, engagements, security force assistance, and counter-terrorism operations, all of which are aligned to gaining or maintain a position of advantage to contribute to Integrated Deterrence and prevent strategic distraction of national command authorities and combatant commanders.

17. If confirmed, what would you do to enhance or expedite the implementation of the NDS and U.S. strategic objectives in AFRICOM?

Over the last year, AFRICOM developed a new Theater Strategy and modified its AFRICOM Campaign Plan and AFRICOM Campaign Order to align with and operationalize the NDS and other strategic guidance. If confirmed, I intend to engage with African, European, and interagency partners to assess our implementation progress and adjust AFRICOM priorities as needed.

18. If confirmed, how would you seek to balance the requirements for increased emphasis on great power competition with China and Russia with countering violent extremism in the AFRICOM AOR?

While certainly not one in the same, these two challenges are interrelated, and potential approaches to address them may be mutually supportive. If confirmed, I will ensure AFRICOM has a balanced approach between countering violent extremist organizations (VEO) and competing with the PRC and Russia. Further, a burden-sharing approach in which AFRICOM works together with partners will help deter the growing presence of external actors, namely Russia and the PRC, and the continued VEO threat. A stable and prosperous African continent is increasingly important to the United States –politically, economically, and militarily –and will become even more so in the future. Stable countries can provide for citizens, are less prone to corruption, less subject to predatory lending, and more amenable to full participation in a rules-based international order and free market economic system.

Emerging and growing challenges are the attempts by competitor nations, such as the PRC and to a lesser extent Russia, to limit or curtail the U.S.'s access, influence, and freedom of action within AFRICOM's area of responsibility. In support of diplomatic and development efforts, AFRICOM strengthens partner networks, including bilateral and multilateral partnerships, and enhances partner capabilities to both reduce VEOs to a level manageable by internal African security forces and limit malign influence of non-African powers over the long-term to assure the access and influence of the U.S. and its allies.

China

19. What is your assessment of China's strategic objectives in the AFRICOM AOR?

The PRC is the pacing challenge, operating in many theaters across the globe with

hegemonic ambitions, which are characterized by coercion and dependency. The PRC seeks to control access to markets in Africa, and develop a network of clients and customers beholden to their whims. The “Belt and Road Initiative” is the PRC’s primary foreign policy tool and relies heavily on the import of raw materials and extractives from the African continent. In order to cement the necessary agreements, the PRC may take actions to improve its global image. This was recently seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, as the PRC delivered more than 1 billion vaccine doses to Africa. The PRC also seeks to gain African support for their initiatives and encourage African governments to prevent the recognition of Taiwan. These expanding economic and diplomatic objectives are likely to lead to increased People’s Liberation Army (PLA) engagements across the continent, as the PRC seeks to protect its investments.

20. In what ways, if any, do their strategic objectives conflict with U.S. strategic objectives? In what ways, if any, do they align with those of the U.S.?

The strategic objectives of the PRC are hegemonic and seek to alter the global balance of power to create favorable market conditions for further PRC expansion. To achieve these ends, they seek market domination by engaging in predatory economic practices with fledgling African nations and exploit their natural resources and labor for their own benefit. In pursuing these objectives, the PRC looks for opportunities and resources, not values and ideals. Their activities disregard partner nations' human rights records and long-term economic viability. Their offers of security assistance to African nations are merely to ensure the protection of their own interests and do little to benefit the international community.

In comparison, the strategic objectives of the U.S. and our Western allies include promoting a favorable distribution of power to ensure equal access to the global commons. We believe that "a rising tide lifts all boats." We seek to achieve these ends through the maintenance of a stable and open international system, underwritten by strong democratic alliances, partnerships, multilateral institutions, and rules. While the PRC searches for clients and customers, the U.S. seeks partners and allies. This reality puts our two nations' long term strategic objectives at direct odds.

There may, however, be occasions where the ways and means employed by both the PRC and the United States are complimentary and achieve some common short term security and stability goals common. Where the PRC’s security assistance is used by responsible governments to address threats in a manner consistent with the rule of law, our near term interests align. Where the PRC’s economic investments are done with transparency and are consistent with free market principles, the U.S. government should welcome competition with the PRC.

21. In your opinion, what effect has China’s engagement with African militaries had on those militaries and on U.S. security interests?

From what I have been briefed, the PRC’s engagement has marginally improved some African militaries through military equipment sales and limited training, although endemic quality concerns probably make any improvements short-lived. Investments in roads and infrastructure, despite poor quality, enhance mobility. The PRC’s materiel assists African militaries’ contributions to peacekeeping operations. For example, the PRC has provided Nigeria with armed unmanned aerial systems to improve its counterterrorism capabilities, but the poor

quality of these platforms has contributed to their infrequent use. Low cost and short delivery timelines entice African partners to purchase PRC equipment, but these purchases frequently do not address the underlying military need, complicating U.S. security force assistance. The PRC contributes up to 2,000 personnel to United Nations peacekeeping operations but Beijing's deployments are tailored towards its security interests, including gaining overseas operational experience for its military personnel.

22. Are U.S. policies and the associated authorities—as applicable to Africa—sufficient to counter China's influence, where needed, or are additional measures required? What role should AFRICOM play in this regard?

From what I know given my previous experience at MARFORAF, the current authorities extended to AFRICOM are sufficient. Given the PRC's status as a pacing challenge, if confirmed, I will conduct a comprehensive review to determine if those policies and authorities remain sufficient. The role of AFRICOM is to continue to work through the interagency to counter the PRC's influence. AFRICOM must also integrate with the coordinating authority for Global Campaign Plan – China (GCP-C).

23. Do you foresee China's growing energy and resource demands affecting security developments in Africa?

Yes. The PRC's expanded energy and resource demands in Africa will likely be coupled with expanded Sino-African security engagement. This could pose a challenge to U.S. access and influence in the region.

Russia

24. What is your assessment of Russia's strategic objectives in the AFRICOM AOR?

Russia is identified in our National Defense Strategy as an acute threat, and this is evident through their continued illegal actions in Ukraine. Their actions in the USEUCOM area of responsibility are systematically affecting many theaters. Russia seeks to counter Western interests and bolster influence through military/intelligence cooperation, arms sales, and energy partnerships. They see Africa as a vehicle through which it can weaken the West's dominance of global governance, find partners for its vision of a multipolar world, extract natural resources, and find economic opportunities for Russian companies, particularly those closed off to Western markets because of sanctions.

25. In what ways, if any, do their strategic objectives conflict with U.S. strategic objectives? In what ways, if any, do they align with those of the United States?

Russia intends to undermine Western influence and access wherever possible. AFRICOM's objective is to assist African partners in maintaining freedom and prosperity. AFRICOM assists allies in combatting violent extremists to protect U.S. and Western interests, while improving internal security. In contrast, Russia's assistance is focused on gaining influence

to serve Moscow's needs and its business interests. Russia's strategic objectives do not align with those of the United States.

Russia's engagement in North Africa seeks to hold NATO's southern flank at risk, but Moscow's presence or influence there has not risen to a level that threatens the alliance and likely will not in the near future with Moscow's current focus being on the war in Ukraine. Russia presents its limited efforts in humanitarian and economic aid, infrastructure development, and security assistance including counterterrorism as broadly consistent with objectives shared by the U.S. and Western partners; however, Moscow views these activities primarily as tools to compete with Western influence. In pursuit of these goals, Kremlin-linked groups such as the private military company Wagner Group have been implicated in practices – including human rights abuses and illicit mining – that are counter to U.S. and Western values.

26. In your opinion, what effect has Russia's engagement with African militaries had on those militaries and on U.S. security interests?

Russia provides extensive arms sales and limited training to African militaries, specifically with former Soviet partners. They are the largest exporter of weapons systems to Africa, although it remains to be seen how the Ukraine crisis will affect this. Russia is a leading supplier of military equipment to include small arms and heavier weapons such as armor and artillery, as well as large packages such as anti-air defense systems and naval vessels. These systems increase host nation lethality, but are difficult to sustain and decrease their interoperability with Western military norms and systems. Russia's lack of robust end-user agreements and support for authoritarian regimes undermines U.S. objectives in Africa.

27. Do you view Russia's activities on the continent of Africa as a threat or challenge to U.S. national security interests? Please explain your answer.

Yes. Russia's current activities challenge U.S. national security interests in the AFRICOM AOR. Russian military and security advisers currently do not pose a direct military threat to U.S. personnel, though Russia's military and security presence across Africa poses a foreign intelligence threat. Russia's pursuit of a persistent military presence and use of mercenaries in Libya, Central African Republic, Mozambique, and Mali have undermined democratic norms and have the potential to destabilize already vulnerable security environments, disrupt UN mission mandate operations, and threaten U.S. and Western progress in these regions. Over time, Russian investments could complicate U.S. military and economic access.

28. Are United States policies, associated authorities, and resources—as applicable to Africa—sufficient to counter Russia's influence, where needed, or are additional measures required? What role should AFRICOM play in this regard?

From what I know given my previous experience at MARFORAF, the current authorities extended to AFRICOM are sufficient. Given Russia's status as an acute threat, if confirmed, I will conduct a comprehensive review to determine if those policies and authorities remain sufficient. The role of AFRICOM is to continue to work through the interagency to counter Russia's influence. AFRICOM must integrate with the coordinating authority for Global

Campaign Plan – Russia (GCP-R) and work with partners and allies to expose Russia’s activities on the continent, ensuring Russia is held accountable.

29. In the hybrid competition with Russia—below the level of military conflict—do you support a whole-of-government approach to countering Russian influence? In your view, is the interagency effectively unified in implementing a strategy to compete with Russia in the AFRICOM AOR?

Yes. I support a whole-of-government approach, and from my time at MARFORAF I believe the interagency is unified in implementing a strategy to compete with Russia. Given recent legislation, including the Global Fragility Act, an opportunity exists to iteratively ensure all executive departments have complimentary approaches based in national strategy. Additionally, from my past experience in Central Command, a whole-of-government approach is the most effective way to compete with Russia and Russian backed private military contractors. Foremost, U.S. military activity in Africa enables diplomacy and development, and serves a supporting role to the whole-of-government approach. With increased diplomatic and development pressure, the military’s role is to (1) accentuate diplomatic and economic impacts through robust messaging, key leader engagements, and other means; (2) provide a credible deterrent, including through applications of our irregular warfare toolkit and highlighting malign activity when detected; and (3) continue to work with partner militaries to build their capabilities as the partner of choice while ensuring access and influence for the U.S. and our partners.

Availability of Forces

AFRICOM has minimal assigned forces and, as a result, is required to compete for forces in the global force management process.

30. What is your assessment of the availability and predictability of forces and associated capabilities to support the AFRICOM Theater Campaign Plan and other requirements in the AOR?

From my previous experience at MARFORAF, AFRICOM has very few assigned forces and competes for forces through the Global Force Management Allocation Process (GFMAP) each fiscal year. Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) and global power strategic competitors are active across Africa. If confirmed, I will pay close attention to the availability and predictability of the forces allocated to continue building capacity with our African partners, countering VEOs, limiting and deterring strategic competitors, and protecting U.S. persons, the homeland and interests.

31. What is your understanding of the challenges and risks to U.S. security interests, if any, resulting from the lack of assigned forces to AFRICOM?

From my current job, I have a cursory knowledge of risks in the AFRICOM area of responsibility. My understanding of the challenges and risks to U.S. security interests from a lack of assigned forces is that VEOs and strategic competitors may gain greater access and influence. Having the right forces in AFRICOM is key to overcoming challenges and risk to U.S. security

interests. AFRICOM has few assigned and allocated forces and limited CONUS-based regionally aligned forces to execute missions in support. If confirmed, I will continuously monitor and communicate risk to U.S. security interests and advocate for forces through the Global Force Management (GFM) process.

32. What is your assessment of the utility of the assignment of the Army's Security Force Assistance Brigade to AFRICOM?

In my current role, I have not had the opportunity to critically assess the utility of the assignment of the Security Force Assistance Brigade to AFRICOM. Anecdotally, however, I believe the 2nd Security Force Assistance Brigade is a valuable capability. Through professional reading, I know the SFAB has conducted training throughout the African continent, advanced partner capacity, and developed relationships demonstrating the U.S. as the partner of choice. I believe 2nd SFAB has provided AFRICOM operational successes throughout the AOR and in turn helped to reduce strategic risk. If confirmed, I will incorporate this into my initial assessment.

Theater Special Operations Command

Special Operations Command-Africa (SOCAF) is under the operational control of AFRICOM and employs U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) to conduct operations, exercises, and theater security cooperation activities.

33. What is your understanding of the roles and responsibilities of SOCAF in supporting AFRICOM's theater campaign plan and associated requirements?

In my current role, I do not have much exposure to SOCAF. From my time as the Commander of MARFORAF, I understand that SOCAF, as the Theater Special Operations Command, plays an important role in executing AFRICOM's Campaign plan as operationalized through the AFRICOM Campaign Order. SOCAF provides SOF expertise dedicated to the security challenges and operational environment unique to the AFRICOM area of responsibility. SOCAF supports AFRICOM across the competition continuum, oversees the integration of SOF capabilities and advises the CCDR, Service component commanders, and others on the proper employment of SOF.

34. Based on your professional military experience, how would you characterize the benefits of a dedicated special operations component for a geographic combatant command in supporting the combatant command's theater campaign plan and associated requirements?

Based on my professional military experience, a dedicated special operations component allows for singularity of focus, development of long-term relationships, and theater-specific operational approaches. AFRICOM requires dedicated SOF support to effectively counter malign competitors, disrupt VEO threats, and support key allies and partners. This also facilitates greater integration of planning efforts amongst all components and the AFRICOM staff.

35. What special operations capabilities are in highest demand by AFRICOM?

In my current capacity, I am unaware of what capabilities are in the highest demand. From previous experience, I would surmise that capabilities to train and build partner capability and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) to assist partner forces in counterterrorism operations are in highest demand. Additionally, personnel recovery, search and rescue and casualty evacuation assets are in likely in high demand and short supply.

36. Which countries in the AFRICOM AOR do you believe have the greatest need for engagement with SOF?

If confirmed, I will examine closely all the requirements to include SOF from our partners and allies. I am confident in the plan set forward by Special Operations Command Africa and if adjustments are needed I will adjust as necessary. I will encourage engagement that is driven by analysis, yet flexible enough to be adapted to the dynamic environment in the AFRICOM area of responsibility.

Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) in Africa

37. What is your understanding of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy as it relates to the AFRICOM AOR?

From my experience at MARFORAF, I know the National Strategy for Counterterrorism stresses the use of all aspects of National power, with a focus on non-military capabilities. The AFRICOM Campaign Plan takes a partnered approach across allied governments in the public and private sectors (e.g., technology, financial institutions) to encourage counterterrorism burden-sharing, information sharing, countering threat finance, reintegration of returning foreign fighters, and development and promulgation of counter-narratives. AFRICOM maintains pressure on VEO networks to create time and space for our partners to develop enduring governmental and security institutions.

38. How would you assess the effectiveness of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy and associated activities in addressing the threat posed by violent extremist organizations?

From my experience at MARFORAF, sustained U.S., African, and allied counterterrorism pressure has significantly weakened VEOs in North Africa, but they are now moving southward to Sub-Saharan areas. For example, Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslmin, or JNIM, a terrorist network with origins in northern Mali now threatens not just Mali but also Burkina Faso, Niger, and littoral West Africa. Additionally, ISIS-affiliated groups are collaborating and expanding into Mozambique, Tanzania, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In Somalia, al-Shabaab is re-establishing supporting ties with Al Qaeda and re-gaining ground it lost due to our persistent presence and combined efforts with Somali security forces.

39. What changes, if any, would you recommend to the strategy or associated measures of effectiveness? Should efforts to prevent the underlying causes of

extremism be a component of our counterterrorism strategy?

As noted by the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, the Honorable Molly Phee during testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on July 12th, there is a “security problem that requires a governance solution.” The roots of extremism and threats it poses to stability and U.S. security interests is a complicated issue, which if confirmed, I will reassess during my review of AFRICOM’s strategy and/or associate measures of effectiveness.

40. Within the AFRICOM AOR, what do you consider the highest counterterrorism priorities?

Recently, I have been briefed that al-Shabaab is the largest and most kinetically active al-Qaeda network in the world. They primarily operate in East Africa. Additionally, ISIS - West Africa and JNIM operate in the Sahel and West Africa.

41. What is your assessment of the threat posed by Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, and other violent extremist organizations operating in Africa, to nations in the AFRICOM AOR, the U.S. homeland, and broader western interests?

Africa-based Al-Qaeda and ISIS affiliates may aspire to attack the U.S. Homeland by virtue of their allegiance to global jihadist movements; however, al-Shabaab is the only group in Africa that has probably planned possible attacks inside the United States.

While Al-Qaeda and ISIS have suffered setbacks outside Africa, their affiliates on the continent have expanded to pose serious threats to African countries and U.S. and Western interests in Africa, making Africa the new focal point for both groups. Al-Qaeda and ISIS’s affiliates exploit under-governed regions and porous borders to undermine stability and force our African partners to focus on short-term operational security requirements to the detriment of long-term development and security initiatives. Diffuse extremist networks have also enabled and inspired attacks against Western interests in Africa and Europe.

Al-Shabaab is at the forefront of terrorist organizations in Africa that threaten U.S. persons and facilities. Al-Shabaab is Al-Qaeda’s largest, wealthiest, and most lethal global affiliate and has publicly advocated for attacks against U.S. targets, including lone-actor attacks against the United States and Westerners globally. The group killed three U.S. personnel in an early 2020 complex attack on Manda Bay Airfield in Kenya and has since increased its cross-border attacks into the country. Al-Qaeda also has a capable affiliate in the Sahel: JNIM. During the last 3 years the group has expanded in West Africa and improved its ability to conduct attacks in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso.

ISIS’s branches in Africa have expanded their presence and accelerated attacks while the organization suffered territorial and leadership losses in Iraq and Syria. With elements in at least seven locations in AFRICOM’s area of responsibility, ISIS has been able to directly threaten U.S. allies and interests and buttress the organization’s reputation. These groups have been able to engender support from ISIS core and have in turn taken on the hyper-violent characteristics of their parent organization. Of these groups, the most capable have been ISIS–West Africa, ISIS-Mozambique, and ISIS in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

42. Which VEOs do you find most concerning, and why?

The most concerning VEOs in Africa are al-Shabaab, JNIM, AQIM, and ISIS–West Africa. Somalia’s al-Shabaab is the deadliest and largest VEO in Africa and remains a substantial concern. The group is firmly committed to Al-Qaeda and is intent on attacking U.S. persons and facilities as seen in the early 2020 attack on Manda Bay Airfield in Kenya. In December 2020, prosecutors in Manhattan charged an accused al-Shabaab aviation operative with plotting a September 11-style attack on an American city.

Al-Shabaab has increased its freedom of movement, grown its attack capabilities and expanded its operational reach throughout central and southern Somalia since the 2021 repositioning of U.S. forces from Somalia, undermining the country’s federal government. This has also enabled al-Shabaab to improve its posture along the Kenya-Somalia border, increasingly threatening the neighboring country. Al-Shabaab’s activity is underpinned by an annual revenue of approximately \$120 million, which affords it a large surplus to fund operations, grow its attack capabilities, provide effective governance, and expand its overall influence.

In the Sahel, JNIM, AQIM’s arm in the Sahel, has strengthened and expanded over the past three years, spreading instability that resulted in coups in Mali and Burkina Faso and opened the door to Russian private military contractors. The group strikes hardened military and government targets in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso and is a long-term regional threat. Over the past year, JNIM conducted attacks in several littoral countries, including Cote d’Ivoire, Benin, and Togo, spreading the group’s influence further south. The group’s kidnap-for-ransom activities threatens local and U.S. persons in the region. Further successes against regional governments could see JNIM achieve Al-Qaeda’s long-term goal of an Islamic emirate in the Sahel. JNIM relies on guidance and support from AQIM, using AQIM’s strategy of intermarrying into local tribes to gain influence throughout communities in the Sahel.

ISIS-West Africa, who split from Boko Haram in 2016, is the largest and most capable ISIS affiliate outside of Iraq and Syria, threatens the stability in one of Africa’s most influential countries, Nigeria.

Somalia

43. What is your understanding and assessment of U.S. national security interests in Somalia?

The critical U.S. interest in Somalia is preventing terrorists from using Somalia as a safe haven to threaten the U.S. homeland and U.S. persons and facilities in East Africa. U.S. National Security interests in Somalia remain focused on our commitment to our allies and partners in coordinating and addressing the shared security threat presented by al-Shabaab. Our return to Somalia on a persistent basis reinforces our leadership and partnership not only with the people and Government of Somalia, but also with our European and Gulf state allies, and African partners in the new African Union mission who are also working toward a stable and peaceful Somalia. Al-Shabaab will not yield easily, but if confirmed, I will prioritize securing U.S. national interests in Somalia.

44. What is your understanding and assessment of the U.S. strategy for Somalia?

In my current capacity, I have not conducted a detailed assessment of U.S. strategy in Somalia. I do know that AFRICOM is implementing a "Concentrate and Enable" approach to achieving U.S. objectives in Somalia. They are concentrating U.S. forces and efforts against al-Shabaab, coordinating an international approach to disrupting and degrading the enemy, and enabling our partners to take an increasing share of the fight against al-Shabaab. AFRICOM continues to review and evaluate not only contributions, but those of allies and partners as AFRICOM looks to enable Somali partners to deepen their ownership of the whole-of-government solutions required to return Somalia to the peaceful and prosperous nation it once was. If confirmed, an assessment of U.S. strategy for Somalia, the resources and posture required for execution, and the attendant risks will be a top priority.

45. What role should AFRICOM play in supporting that strategy?

I believe that AFRICOM should continue to focus on building Somalia Security Forces, especially the Danab, as part of U.S. commitments to the 2017 London Somalia Security Conference. Building those security forces requires working with the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and current Somalia Security Forces to push back al-Shabaab, allowing the Government of Somalia to build its own ability to provide for the security of its people.

46. How would you evaluate the effectiveness of U.S. efforts to counter Al Shabab to date?

From what I understand, AFRICOM's efforts over the last 18 months have been limited as we have been conducting only periodic engagements with our Somali partners. This approach has blunted the incremental progress we had made and has allowed al-Shabaab to gain momentum. The bottom-line is that al-Shabaab now controls substantial territory, has increased their attacks in Mogadishu and has been able to increase their capability. However, the recent decision to re-establish a persistent presence in Somalia is a positive step in our efforts to counter al-Shabaab. If confirmed, I will assess our persistent presence that the President has approved to ensure it provides an adequate force to work with our interagency partners and international allies and partners to degrade al-Shabaab and disrupt their organization.

47. How would you evaluate the effectiveness of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) efforts?

The African Union has recently altered its approach in Somalia as AMISOM has ended and regional troop contributing countries now are participants in "ATMIS" - The African Union Transition Mission in Somalia. ATMIS seeks to conduct operations in conjunction with Somalia Security Forces (SSF) in order to deny al-Shabaab safe havens. These operations are intended to buy time and space for the SSF to generate trained and ready units which will allow them to simultaneously continue to take the fight to al-Shabaab and enable ATMIS forces to drawdown within Somalia. While AMISOM achieved some limited, incremental gains in driving terrorist organizations out of strategically important population centers in the past, there is more that needs to be done to achieve lasting effects. ATMIS will be challenged by al-Shabaab's geographical gains and capabilities; however, U.S. assistance in training, equipping, and advising

can help ATMIS achieve its goals and prevent al-Shabaab from holding ground and having freedom of maneuver.

48. What is your assessment of the prospect for long-term stability in Somalia?

I believe that long-term stability in Somalia will require the establishment of inclusive, representative, and accountable governance at all levels. Having taken part in Operation Restore Hope, I know what a challenge long-term stability in Somalia is. In terms of the prospect for long-term stability, Somalia's political leadership has considerable work to do to meet its own timetable and goals for revising and ratifying a permanent constitution, advancing federalism and reconciliation efforts between the Federal Government and its member states.

49. What is your assessment of the effectiveness of U.S. efforts to build the capacity of the Somali National Army to date and what should the objectives of such efforts be in the near-, mid-, and long-term?

In my current role, I have not had the opportunity to assess the efforts to build the capacity of the Somali National Army nor have I assessed their objectives. I do know that per the 2017 London Security Conference on Somalia, international support to Somalia's national security architecture was agreed to and implemented via the "Comprehensive Approach to Security" (CAS). For the U.S. DoD, this resulted in two specific tasks. First, per the CAS, the U.S. will improve the capacity of the Somali National Army, specifically by building out the Danab Brigade - the "Lightning" Brigade - whose responsibilities include offensive counterterrorism actions in the Federal Member States. Secondly we agreed to provide the required coordination of U.S. and international efforts to man, train and equip Somali National Army Forces.

I believe AFRICOM is executing both of these tasks. Concerning the SNA and the Danab Brigade, AFRICOM uses Title 10 funds and coordinates with Department of State for Title 22 funds to create combat-ready formations that conduct offensive operations to take territory back from al-Shabaab. For the Danab, these efforts are comprehensive and include recruiting, training, feeding, equipping, and accompanying these critical forces. Further, AFRICOM have served as a key enabler via our advise and assist efforts to the Somali National Army (SNA), which have resulted in the removal of al-Shabaab leaders and attack planners. Since the U.S. repositioning in early 2021, al-Shabaab's advances - including expansion in Mogadishu, central Somalia, and along the Kenya-Somalia border - have underscored the importance of sustained U.S. advise and assist efforts in constraining the group's operations. The bottom-line is that our permanent presence in Somalia and involvement with the SNA improves our relationship with our partner forces and increases the pace and efficiency of operations to contain al-Shabaab.

Concerning the international coordination agreed to in the CAS, AFRICOM's role is to facilitate international coordination of the greater SNA build. This is done through comprehensive coordination conducted via senior leader engagements with key members of the AU, the FGS, the EU, and critical regional partners. Further, the Military Assistance Group to Somalia in Mogadishu works with international partners (including the UN, EU, AU, and ATMIS) to facilitate development of SNA forces and the coordination of operations to counter al-Shabaab.

Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel

50. What is your understanding and assessment of U.S. national security interests in the Lake Chad Basin? The Sahel?

In West Africa, countering violent extremist organizations (VEOs) is important to stabilizing the region, opening more avenues for cooperation, and degrading our competitors' ability to exploit relationship gaps. VEOs remain the number one security concern for many West African countries. U.S. counter-VEO efforts not only demonstrate our reliability and commitment to our partners, but also provide an effective way in which the U.S. wins influence over strategic competitors. JNIM is now the largest VEO in the world and the fastest growing group globally, recording a threefold increase in the number of attacks and fourfold increase in civilian casualties since 2017.

51. What is your understanding and assessment of the U.S. strategy to address threats in the Lake Chad Basin and across the Sahel?

In my current capacity, I have not had the opportunity to do a thorough assessment of U.S. strategy for the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel. If confirmed, I will conduct an assessment in the first 90 days. I do know that in the Lake Chad Region, the U.S. strengthens security sector capacities of Chad, Niger and Nigeria in order to enable these nations to degrade ISIS-West Africa and Boko Haram, while assistance to Cameroon has been impacted due to human rights violations in dealing with the Anglophone separatist crisis. These activities are designed to provide time and space for humanitarian assistance as well as longer term security sector and governance reforms. The U.S. strategy in the LCR has contributed to containing Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa to northeastern Nigeria, though momentum against ISIS and Boko Haram has recently stagnated. Countering VEO's remains a top shared goal of the U.S. and regional partners and remains an area for increased cooperation.

The U.S. strategy for the Sahel is evolving in response to the repositioning of French counter terrorism forces from Mali to other areas in the Sahel. Additionally, inability to provide assistance to the coup led governments of Mali and Burkina Faso creates security challenges. The U.S. continues to offer support to French military operations, though it is still to be determined what French operations will look like in the near term with its military withdrawal from Mali. The U.S. continues providing operational and bilateral security force assistance to two other member states of the G5 Sahel, largely Niger, in an effort to contain the threat to Mali and Burkina Faso.

52. What is your understanding of AFRICOM's role in supporting that strategy?

I believe that AFRICOM supports partner efforts to counter threats emanating from Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa and does so bilaterally through U.S. security force assistance to our partners in Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria as well as multi-laterally. If confirmed, I will ensure AFRICOM embraces a whole-of-government approach and coordinates closely with the interagency to meet our partners' humanitarian and institutional capacity building needs to meet that strategy.

I believe that in the Sahel, AFRICOM leverages its key enabling ISR capabilities and intelligence sharing in the fight against terrorism with our French partners and the remaining G5 Sahel Joint Forces members. Recognizing African partners' need and desire to ultimately assume full responsibility for their sovereign defense and legitimacy, AFRICOM focuses security cooperation operations, activities, and investments to build military operational and defense institution capabilities in full coordination with our diplomatic and development agencies and our African partners. This approach aligns with the broader international community's counterterrorism efforts to increase security and stability in the region.

53. Do you view the problem sets in the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel to be the same? If not, how do they differ and how should we account for that in our strategies?

At first glance, no I do not. A more detailed assessment will be necessary for my full understanding of the relationships of these problems. The Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel problem sets differ in the nuances of grievances between VEOs and the State and long histories of ethnic tensions between groups. They are separated by geographical region and ideological origin. Boko-Haram and ISIS-West Africa operate in Northern Nigeria and around Lake Chad and both have grievances against the Nigerian Government. This contrasts with the Sahel, where JNIM has taken advantage of historical ethnic tensions and exacerbated them, taking large areas of ungoverned space as operational areas to expand VEO ideology and violence. I believe the AFRICOM Campaign Plan and Strategy for West Africa addresses the distinct nature of these problem sets.

54. What is your assessment of the efforts of governments in the region to combat VEOs, as well as other regional security and governance challenges?

My assessment on this particular topic is informed by my time as the Commander of MARFORAF. Security and political challenges continue to undermine stability in the Sahel. Mali remains the epicenter of instability and a haven for many terrorist groups to stage and launch attacks across the region. Governments are willing to combat VEOs and want to improve regional security. They do this unilaterally, bilaterally (frequently with French assistance), and multilaterally through the G5 Sahel Joint Force and the UN Mission in Mali. Yet these countries are among the world's poorest, face severe resource constraints, and have relatively limited military capability, making it more difficult for them to counter VEOs. Vast and non-permissive terrain, enduring ethnic conflict, inter-communal violence, and tense civil-military relations also hinder efforts to extend governance outside of major population centers.

Similarly, in the Lake Chad Region, Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria are largely willing to confront VEOs operating out of Nigeria and do so through unilateral operations and the five-nation Multinational Joint Task Force. Nigeria has faced multiple setbacks in the last year, as ISIS-West Africa continues to confront security forces, seize materiel - including armored vehicles, weapons, and ammunition - and expand its operational reach. This has strained the Nigerian military's readiness and capabilities. Multiple competing national security priorities in each of the Lake Chad Region nations have prevented them from focusing adequate resources to counterterrorism operations, which has allowed VEOs freedom to operate.

55. What do you view as the most pressing impediments to regional efforts to address security and governance challenges?

Regional efforts to improve security and governance are often interrupted by urgent internal crisis, whether they be caused by VEOs, natural and man-made disasters, or displaced populations. These events redirect the state's attention and limited resources and distract from capacity and institution-building endeavors. Weak and hollow state institutions struggle to reorganize and grow while confronting constant challenges and limited resources. One of the most pressing impediments to regional efforts, however, is corruption. Corruption hinders development, wastes resources, and reduces public confidence in the state.

56. In your view, what measures should the United States incorporate into current and future military-to-military engagements to help avoid violence by regional police and the militaries of other nations against civilians during operations?

I believe that the United States should continue to press for partner compliance with long established international norms and not hesitate to restrict security forces from receiving assistance when there is credible evidence of gross violation of human rights by security forces. Consistent application of these standards as a basis for access to the benefits accrued from military-to-military engagements with the U.S. will further legitimize these norms, reinforce the concept of the rule of law, and act as a deterrent to violators.

Libya

57. What is your understanding and assessment of U.S. national security interests in Libya?

The U.S. interests are directly tied to malign foreign actors creating instability in the central portion of North Africa. Libya remains number one in oil reserves in Africa; however, they are currently not working at capacity. This further strains the international energy market. Additionally, Libya remains the access point for Russian actions and expansion throughout the continent. The desired objectives are a unified state, with a civilian led security and justice apparatus, capable of providing increased local security, who is a stable trading partner, and that is free of foreign interference, according to the Integrated Country Strategy (ICS).

58. What is your understanding and assessment of the U.S. strategy for Libya?

In my current capacity, I have not conducted a detailed assessment of U.S. strategy for Libya, but if confirmed I will include it in my 90 day review. What I do know is that the U.S. continues to pursue a diplomatic and political reunification process, relying on both major parties, and their foreign sponsors, to maintain the October 21 ceasefire in order to provide room for more engagement. The U.S. pursues a political reunification through steady diplomatic engagements. The U.S. works with the international community to foster conditions that will allow for a smooth transition from interim government to a more permanent and stable solution.

59. What is your understanding of AFRICOM's role in supporting the U.S.

strategy?

I believe that AFRICOM primarily provides layered security and at times mobility support to the Libyan External Office to facilitate diplomatic engagements. In addition, AFRICOM meets with elements of the Joint Military Commission to help foster relationships that will promote reunification. AFRICOM is working to engage with Libyan counterparts more regularly to create a greater understanding of U.S. values, capabilities, and interests to offset the negative effects of internal politics and external influence. At times, AFRICOM has conducted unilateral Counterterrorism strikes such as the 2019 missile strikes that reduced VEO capability in Southern Libya.

60. What role, if any, do you believe the United States should play in helping Libya build capable security institutions?

Libya's armed forces have been severely degraded over the course of the past 11 years. AFRICOM, working with the Interagency, is helping shape a strategy that includes engagement with the Libyan Armed Forces. The Libyan Armed Forces have continued to conduct counterterrorism operations that have mitigated VEO operations in the region. AFRICOM is focused more engagements at the GO/FO level to help set conditions to reintegrate the East and West military factions into a singular institution. This is AFRICOM's primary focus in support of the ICS and national objectives.

61. What is your assessment of the risks associated with the paramilitary forces that continue to control large swaths of Libya?

While I have not conducted a detailed assessment of these risks, if confirmed, I will include it in my 90 day review. I do know that Libyan paramilitary groups rely on both regular government funding in exchange for providing security and irregular black-market transactions and exploitation tactics to maintain control of their respective areas of responsibility. Libyan leaders rely on paramilitary forces in the absence of a unified military to ensure access to government institutions and international legitimacy, as witnessed during the 2019 Libyan civil conflict. The prolonged reliance on Libyan paramilitary groups augmented by various external paramilitary forces, including Russian private military company Wagner Group, very likely will result in persistent low-level clashes between rival groups to increase their areas of control, influence, and funding, further inhibiting efforts to reform the security sector.

62. What do you view as the most significant challenges to the efforts of the Government of National Accord (GNA) to build capable and sustainable security institutions?

Currently there are three competing governments, or pseudo governments, the Government of National Accord, headed by Prime Minister Debaibah and based in Tripoli; the Government of National Stability lead by Prime Minister Bashaga, located in Sirte; and the Libyan National Army. Bashaga plans on reentering Tripoli by force in the coming weeks to reform a singular government in the West.

The challenges to the Western faction are numerous. They lack every aspect of a force generating capability, and do not have solid institutions to support the fielded force. Significant institutional changes would be required, alongside trust building efforts with the people to encourage support to the institution rather than the local regiments.

63. In what ways can the United States be most effective in assisting the GNA to build capable and sustainable security institutions?

The U.S. should continue a whole-of-government approach to engage and capitalize on opportunities as they present themselves. The U.S. should reaffirm its defense investments aimed at addressing Russian activities in Libya to ensure uncontested control of NATO's Southern Flank, promote unity and integration among Libyan Forces, and ensure Russia is unable to use Libya as a hub for illegitimate and destabilizing security operations across Africa, which include Russia circumventing international sanctions.

Building Partner Capacity and Security Assistance

64. In your view, what should be our strategic objectives in building the capacities of partner nations in the AFRICOM AOR through defense security cooperation activities or other means?

I believe that AFRICOM's building partner capacity objectives should aim to develop partner security forces that are able to train, conduct and sustain operations against shared security challenges while serving as champions for the protection of human rights, and civilian control of the military. If confirmed, my aim will be make sure we are a valued security partner throughout the continent by supporting partners' efforts to field sustainable, accountable security forces that possess the capability and capacity to address their own security needs. We must do this through a whole-of-government approach, using legislation like the Global Fragility Act as guide, to leverage partners in the Department of State, USAID, and the Treasury Department along with a range of allies and African partners who have become regional security exporters.

65. In your view, what is the appropriate balance between efforts to build partnership capacity at the tactical and operational levels and at the institutional and ministerial levels?

Efforts to build partner capacity must be balanced to ensure a partner nation's ability to maintain a comprehensive approach to matters of defense and U.S. strategic interests. The appropriate balance between these efforts must be tailored to the specific partner nation based on their respective capabilities, demonstrated capacities, and their unique threat situation. Although each situation is unique, they all benefit from engagements from the tactical to ministerial levels. One without the other is incomplete and more likely to fail.

66. Do you believe the ability of a partner nation to sustain U.S.-provided equipment and capabilities should be a key factor in determining the level and type of assistance to be provided?

Yes.

67. How would you characterize the importance of adherence to human rights as an objective of AFRICOM security cooperation programs and activities?

Partner adherence to and our promotion of respect for human rights should be core to all security cooperation programs and activities, whether in AFRICOM or elsewhere. In this regard, we model this behavior, and we make a deliberate effort to ensure it is an integral part of everything we do, from training to joint exercises. If confirmed, I will ensure every engagement with a partner nation, regardless of topic or objective, is an opportunity to emphasize the core values of a professional military, notably including civilian command and control and respect for human rights and international humanitarian law.

68. When credible allegations of violence against civilians by partner nation security forces arise, what should the U.S. response be?

If confirmed, I will support a full and transparent investigation into credible allegations of any form of violations of human rights, the rule of law, or law of armed conflict by partner nation security forces. If a credible investigation substantiates the allegations, we will call on our partners to hold perpetrators accountable via legitimate judicial processes, in addition to any appropriate internal disciplinary actions.

Multilateral Exercises

69. What is your understanding of AFRICOM's multilateral exercises and their importance to supporting AFRICOM's theater campaign plan and the National Defense Strategy?

If confirmed, I will review AFRICOM's multilateral exercises program. From my time as Commander, MARFORAF, I know that AFRICOM's Joint Exercise Program (JEP) is a vital tool in achieving campaign objectives outlined in the AFRICOM Campaign Plan (ACP) as well as tasks derived from the National Defense Strategy (NDS). The JEP leverages the U.S. joint forces from CONUS and Europe to conduct multinational exercises in a combined environment with our allies and partners in the AFRICOM AOR. These exercises serve to build force readiness, increase interoperability, and reinforce the U.S. as the preferred partner of choice. Additionally, these exercises are critical to maintaining Access, Basing, and Overflight (ABO) privileges with key partners on the continent.

70. Based on your professional military experience, what benefits might be realized by expanding the participants and locations of such exercises?

In my experience, the benefits of expanding the participants and locations is important, however we must continue to be judicious as expansion may reach a point of diminishing returns. In the past, AFRICOM has deployed a hub and spoke strategy with many of its exercises. This approach comes at a cost. Not only with the number of U.S. forces available to deploy to work with our African Partners, but also with the funding required to plan, coordinate,

and sustain those forces, as well as those African partners who require funding to participate in our exercises. We have seen great results with exercise AFRICAN LION centered out of Morocco, with spokes in Tunisia, Senegal, and Ghana. Exercise JUSTIFIED ACCORD centers out of Kenya with a spoke in Rwanda, with more spokes to come in coming years. Our EXPRESS Series naval exercises hub out of a single country with spokes across the region in the form of Maritime Operations Centers (MOCs). AFRICOM continues to also bring African partners to participate in exercises at the hub and/or spoke locations.

Support to United Nations Peacekeeping Missions in Africa

71. In your view, should the U.S. contribute military personnel in the form of staff positions and military observers to UN peacekeeping missions and other international peace operations in the AFRICOM AOR?

My view on this matter is heavily shaped by my experience during Operation RESTORE HOPE. In 1992-1993, as a young officer, I was part of the peacekeeping force in Somalia, and I have direct experience as a staff officer in this type of challenging assignment. While anecdotally I believe that participation in UN missions increase U.S. ability to influence allies and partners while demonstrating international leadership, I am aware of the risks and challenges. If confirmed, I will seek to understand both the UN missions, the associated command relationships with U.S. personnel, as well as the risks and benefits of providing personnel to support the mission.

72. In your view, what are the advantages and disadvantages of contributing military personnel to UN operations in the form of staff positions and military observers' positions?

If confirmed, I would have to assess current UN operations from a global perspective to identify the advantages and disadvantages of contributing military personnel to UN operations in the form of staff positions and military observers' positions.

Crisis Response Capabilities

73. What is your understanding of the crisis response capabilities available to AFRICOM?

I am well familiar with this topic through my previous assignments. Dedicated AFRICOM response forces, with the right capabilities, are critical to responding to crisis and protecting U.S. personnel, property, and interests. AFRICOM has multiple allocated crisis response forces available. These forces are deployable throughout the continent. They are capable of operating in both permissive and uncertain environments to provide embassy security reinforcement and/or military-assisted departure of DOS-designated personnel. Additionally, AFRICOM can leverage USEUCOM's assigned forces via Request for Support (RFS) to provide rapid response anti-terrorism and security capabilities suitable for deliberate contingency responses. Finally, assuming the Secretary of Defense directs, crisis response capabilities based in the United States, Europe, and the Middle East are also available to AFRICOM.

74. Do you believe that the availability of crisis response capabilities and the mechanism for obtaining and deploying those capabilities are both appropriate and adequate to meet crisis response requirements in the AFRICOM AOR?

If confirmed, I will assess the availability of crisis response capabilities. The fundamental challenge to responding to crises in Africa appears to be two-fold: many locations have an unstable and delicate security environment and the continent is very large. On any given day, an event could occur that requires AFRICOM to commit military forces to either respond to a crisis. Africa's vast size and overall lack of an integrated logistics infrastructure make the movement, employment, and sustainment of military forces exceedingly difficult. If confirmed, I will conduct an assessment to determine if additional mechanisms are necessary.

75. In your opinion, what additional steps, if any, should be taken to reduce the risk of attacks on U.S. embassies, consulates, and personnel by terrorist organizations and other threats throughout AFRICOM?

If confirmed, I will review the current authorities and available resources to reduce the risk of attacks on U.S. embassies, consulates, and personnel by terrorist organizations and other threats throughout AFRICOM. Reduction of risk at our embassies requires a whole-of-government effort, recognizing that the Department of State and the Diplomatic Security Service are the lead agencies with Marine Security Guard Detachments, and Marine Security Augmentation Units in support. Key capabilities to reduce risk across the AFRICOM AOR include airborne ISR, intelligence sharing and frequent engagements with allies and partners.

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) Capabilities

Demand for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities of every kind has grown exponentially in recent years, largely due to the enhanced situational awareness and targeting capabilities they bring to our commanders. Almost all of the geographic combatant commands have validated ISR requirements that are not being met.

76. What is your understanding of the support AFRICOM is currently receiving to respond to its ISR requirements?

There has never been a commander that would not desire more ISR. It is a critical enabler to both sense and make sense of the environment, and its presence serves as an active deterrent to our adversaries. I know through recent posture statements, as well as my previous positions that AFRICOM assesses ISR support is insufficient to meet current requirements and has been trending worse over the past several years. AFRICOM is seeking to increase ISR coverage and resources to address National Defense Strategy aligned priorities and activities on the continent, to counter Violent Extremist Organization threats to the homeland and to enhance understanding and U.S. access and influence in order to respond to threats to U.S. personnel, allies and partners, and facilities throughout the continent.

77. Do you believe the threats emanating from the AFRICOM AOR warrant

additional resources from within DOD? If so, how do you intend to advocate for additional ISR and other enabling assets, if confirmed?

I do believe that the threats warrant additional ISR resources. As mentioned, ISR underpins all operations. It is a key enabler for U.S. forces, our allies, and our partners. I believe that ISR platforms must be persistent, survivable, and connected. This is what gives our forces a decisive advantage in decision making. While I understand the need to modernize ISR for great power competitors, legacy platforms may be sufficient in the AFRICOM area of responsibility in the short term. If confirmed and understanding that the Secretary of Defense has the authority for the global allocation of ISR, I will advocate through the global force management process, and leverage dynamic sharing of assets with fellow combatant commanders when feasible.

Maritime Security

Maritime security has proven to be a significant issue on the coasts of West and East Africa.

78. What is your assessment of AFRICOM's ongoing maritime security initiatives?

During my time as Commander MARFORAF, I was heavily engaged working by, with and through a number of coastal West African nations on maritime security initiatives. AFRICOM has been expanding the maritime capabilities of partners through a mix of security cooperation efforts and exercises. AFRICOM appears to be prioritizing its maritime security efforts appropriately given current security challenges, which I intend to reassess, if confirmed, given the evolving circumstances of our security interests in North, West, and East Africa. If confirmed, I will completely assess AFRICOM's ongoing maritime security initiatives.

79. Very few African countries have the capacity to project naval forces beyond their coastal waters. As a result, the economic exclusion zones of many coastal African countries are exploited by a variety of international actors.

I agree with this statement.

80. What opportunities, if any, do you see for expanded U.S. engagement on maritime security in the AFRICOM AOR?

If confirmed, I will assess what opportunities exist for expanded U.S. military, interagency, partner, and allied engagement on maritime security in the AFRICOM AOR.

From my current knowledge, Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) is a glaring shortfall in Africa. Most countries have little means to actively monitor their territorial seas and exclusive economic zones (EEZ), or to identify and target suspect vessels for interdiction. Additional U.S. support to develop adequate MDA would assist African partner efforts against illicit maritime activity.

Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated (IUU) fishing is an epidemic in African waters, depriving Africans of an important source of protein, detracting from regional economies and exacerbating instability. IUU fishing is a priority for this Administration, and if confirmed, I will

assess the need for increased surface assets and Coast Guard law enforcement detachment deployments to assist African partners in this area.

The Yaounde and Djibouti Codes of Conduct outline the African approach to addressing maritime security in East and West Africa respectively. Yaounde, in particular, is not fully implemented and represents an opportunity for AFRICOM engagement to advance interregional cooperation and coordination.

There may also be opportunities for expanded maritime cooperation with our Allies and partners operating in the Gulf of Guinea and Indian Ocean. In 2021, the European Union (EU) established a Coordinated Maritime Presence (CMP) in the Gulf of Guinea and is establishing a similar CMP in the Indian Ocean this year. By aligning and coordinating our efforts with the EU CMP, we can achieve complementary efforts in maritime security.

AFRICOM Health Related Issues

Health issues are a significant concern in many African nations and in their militaries. The U.S. Government’s engagement strategy in Africa includes an emphasis on health-related issues.

81. To what extent should AFRICOM be involved in broader U.S. Government “health diplomacy” and capacity building efforts in Africa?

From my experience, I have seen that health diplomacy is one of the U.S. Government’s biggest assurance actions in becoming the partner of choice. The DoD plays an important role in working with partners, allies, and the whole-of-government in health diplomacy. African militaries provide support to their nations’ public health and healthcare systems in varying degrees. Further, militaries in African partner nations are often essential to their nations’ outbreak and crisis response capabilities. When we strengthen individual military medical capability, we improve health systems and enhance individual, regional, and overall capacities, with increasingly positive mil-civ collaboration in the outbreak response area. AFRICOM should be involved in health diplomacy and capacity building efforts in Africa to support and further the broader U.S. Government’s goals and missions.

82. If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you recommend to AFRICOM’s efforts in this regard?

If confirmed, I plan to assess AFRICOM’s ongoing efforts regarding health diplomacy and capacity building and work with the whole-of-government in order to support the broader mission in the AOR.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

The Department of Defense has developed comprehensive policies and procedures to improve the prevention of and response to incidents of sexual assaults, including providing appropriate resources and care for victims of sexual assault.

83. What is your view of the steps taken to prevent and respond to sexual assaults in

AFRICOM, including assaults by and against U.S. civilian and contractor personnel?

In my role as the Commander of MARFORCOM, the second largest Marine Corps command, I have established a command climate that reinforces that sexual assault is a crime, is unacceptable, and will not be tolerated. Sexual assaults are criminal acts against individuals and they undermine unit cohesiveness and effectiveness. I have reviewed the results of On-Site Installation Evaluations from other commands and analyzed the revelations of those reports. I found that the findings of these reports affirmed the actions I have taken throughout my career and recently as the commander of MARFORCOM, prioritizing quality of life, directly addressing some of the underlying contributing factors that lead to sexual assault, and implementing best practices to protect Marines and Sailors. If confirmed, I will continue to implement the policies, practices, programs, and procedures that prevent and respond to sexual assaults. Leaders must model the highest standards of behavior and educate and train all personnel on DoD policies. Leaders must reinforce a zero tolerance policy of sexual misconduct at all levels of command as a critical step towards eradicating this issue. They must also create and manage a culture and command climate that prevents sexual harassment and sexual assault without question.

84. What is your view of the adequacy of AFRICOM policies and procedures to protect victims of sexual assault from retaliation for reporting the assault?

If confirmed, I will assess the adequacy of AFRICOM's policies and procedures to protect victims of sexual assault from retaliation for reporting the assault. In my current capacity, I know that the DoD and the Services are following the policies set forth in the FY22 NDAA. This policy mandates that allegations of retaliation by victims be investigated, tracked, and recorded by the DoD. This policy increases the accountability placed on military leaders and requires them to actively take action to prevent and address retaliation against victims of sexual assault. The creation of Special Trial Counsels that are independent from the chain of command also lowers the risk of retaliation against victims of sexual assault. The DoD continues to develop procedures that appropriately implement the retaliation-related notification, training, and reporting requirements. If confirmed, I will review AFRICOM's policies and procedures to ensure they are consistent with recent NDAA amendments, protect victims of sexual assault from retaliation, and ensure the required training, culture, and command climate are established to prevent retaliation against the reporting of sexual assault.

85. What is your view of the adequacy of the training and resources in place in AFRICOM to investigate and respond to allegations of sexual assault?

While currently unfamiliar with the training and resources in place at AFRICOM to investigate and respond to allegations of sexual assault, overall force trends within the DoD is something I routinely track and am briefed on. I am familiar with the recently published results of the 2021 On Site Installation Evaluation Report. Broadly speaking, that report found troubling information regarding resourcing and training. Most concerning was the pervasive misunderstanding of what prevention actually is, how to do it and how to do it well. This can negatively impact the accuracy of self-assessments conducted by commands, as they "don't

know what they don't know." The report also found inadequacies in prevention efforts, and noted that just because units are in compliance with policy it does not equate to being effective at preventing and responding.

Recognizing the pernicious impact of sexual assault on the force and the challenges facing effective program implementation, if confirmed, I will ensure that AFRICOM applies every necessary resource and supplies sufficient training of the appropriate personnel to respond to allegations of sexual assault in accordance with established policy and regulations.

86. What is your view of the willingness and ability of military leaders to hold service members accountable for sexual misconduct?

My view is that most military leaders are willing and effortful in taking action to hold service members appropriately accountable for sexual misconduct. The reforms set forth in FY22 NDAA mandate requirements regarding the investigation, tracking, and reporting of sexual assault, retaliation against victims, and sexual harassment. The FY22 NDAA also establishes military justice reforms, including the requirement for services to create Special Trial Councils, independent from the chain of command, to lead in the prosecution and legal proceedings of these kinds of crimes. We need the most qualified and well trained personnel handling the legal proceedings for these kinds of crimes. These changes will serve to empower military leaders to focus their efforts on education, training, command climate, and culture that is geared towards preventing sexual assaults and caring for survivors. If confirmed, I will continue to fully implement established policies and regulations as well as get broad input from other commands on best practices and procedures in order to increase accountability, promote core values, and establish a positive command climate that underpins the prevention of sexual assault.

87. What is your understanding of the adequacy of the resources and programs in AFRICOM to provide victims of sexual assault the medical, psychological, and legal help they need?

If confirmed, I will review the adequacy of resources and programs available in AFRICOM to provide victims of sexual assault the medical, physiological and legal help they need. While reviewing the results on the 2021 On Site Installation Evaluation Report, I was concerned with the inadequacy of several units to effectively respond to sexual assault in deployed environments. Given the logistical challenges in Africa, and the propensity to employ special operations forces and small teams to build partner capacity, I believe some of the same trends could manifest at AFRICOM. My review would include the availability of resources and programs available to remotely deployed units in Africa, even in the most austere locations.

When time and distance factors make it challenging to provide the same level of service as units in Europe receive, returning the victim to Germany will allow greater access to these critical resources and programs. I will conduct an assessment within the first 90 days to determine which areas need additional focus and support.

88. What is your view about the role of the chain of command in providing necessary support to the victims of sexual assault?

In my current command, I have implemented a robust program to support victims of sexual assault. If confirmed, I will conduct an assessment on the adequacy of victim support for survivors. I will stress the requirement to have stringent provisions necessary to support victims of sexual assault. Additionally, I will advocate for a similar policy to the Department of the Navy's Safe-to-Report policy which protects victims of sexual assault from being disciplined for minor collateral misconduct when reporting on sexual assault. The chain of command must provide and coordinate the provision of necessary support to victims of sexual assault. This support needs to be timely, robust, and adequately resourced in order to realize the priority of the health and readiness of the victim in these cases. No exceptions.

89. What is your view about the role of the chain of command in changing the military culture in which these sexual assaults have occurred?

If confirmed, preventing any instance of sexual assault and harassment will be a top priority. Commanders are responsible for the morale, welfare, and discipline within their commands and must establish a positive climate and lead on the issue of sexual harassment and sexual assault to eliminate it from our military. Military leaders and commanders are trusted professionals who uphold DoD policies and values. Yet, it is an insufficient standard for leaders to simply comply with service regulations. Leaders must invest in and work hard to build positive climates based on trust, where everyone, regardless of rank or position and without fear of reprisal, is empowered to take appropriate action to interrupt the "continuum of harm," which can lead to sexual assault.

90. Do you consider the current sexual assault policies and procedures, particularly those on restricted reporting, to be effective?

Restricted reporting allows victims of sexual assault to receive legal advice as well as medical and advocacy services without the requirement for an investigation and without revealing their identity or offender's identity to their command. This preserves the victim's right to privacy and decision making while allowing them to receive the support they require. A restricted report also allows victims to anonymously disclose suspect information to the Catch a Serial Offender Program to identify repeat offenders. In this program, if other reports about the same suspect are identified, victims can decide to change their report from restricted to unrestricted to participate in a criminal investigation of the suspect.

The effectiveness of this kind of reporting is dependent upon what metrics are being measured as effective or ineffective. I believe there should be continuous study into how effective restricted reporting policies and procedures are on the basis of safeguarding privacy, providing necessary medical and legal care to victims, and their contribution towards reducing sexual assaults in the military. We should continuously strive to update policies and procedures in ways that increase their effectiveness, especially when the effectiveness is measured in terms of eliminating sexual assaults while increasing the quality of care provided to victims.

91. What methods for monitoring overall trends and gauging the sufficiency of component commanders' efforts in preventing and responding to incidents of sexual assault do you consider appropriate and intend to implement if confirmed as AFRICOM Commander?

If confirmed, I will monitor trends and gauge the sufficiency of the efforts of component commanders by evaluating and assessing their procedures, both through personal action and through the employment of subject matter experts and professionals in the field of sexual assault prevention and response. I will implement and make use of On-Site Installation Evaluations, which provide early detection of risk and protective factors regarding sexual assault so that leaders can take corrective actions and enhance prevention. Sexual Assault Prevention and Response professionals are employed full time and tasked with monitoring trends and gauging the effectiveness of prevention and response programs through various methods including statistical analysis and inspections of programs and procedures that scrutinize and determine the degree to which the procedures adhere to regulations and the degree to which they reduce sexual assaults and provide the appropriate support to victims of sexual assault.

Quality-of-Life Challenges in AFRICOM

92. What unique quality-of-life challenges affect service members, civilians, and their families assigned to the AFRICOM AOR?

From my experience as the Commander of MARFORAF, The AFRICOM area of responsibility presents unique challenges to service members, civilians and their families assigned on the African continent. Challenges include access to medical care, environmental challenges, isolation from serving in remote locations, high operational tempo, local crime, and potential armed conflict exposure. If confirmed, I will assess to what extent those serving forward have the support that would be available to them stateside or at other installations abroad.

93. If confirmed, how would you address these theater-wide challenges to help improve the quality-of-life and retention of these personnel and their families?

If confirmed, I will complete a thorough assessment of the current initiatives AFRICOM employs to address quality of life and retention. In addition, I will assess the command climate through surveys and site visit engagements focused on the feedback from the service members and families within the AOR. Given my experience as the Commander of MARFORAF, AFRICOM promotes quality of life initiatives for personnel on the continent based on eligibility, threat environment and mission requirements. These include: rest and recuperation leave, funded environmental morale leave, MWR programs, cultural programs, feedback solicitation, and the “Families First” program for deploying families. The “Families First” program helps to manage family expectations prior to deployment. Additionally AFRICOM leaders routinely visit the deployed location, work closely with the Ambassadors and Embassy staffs in each country, to assess the environment, quality of life, retention rates and obtain feedback on the climate. If confirmed, I will assess the programs and initiatives that contribute to quality of life, and look for new and continued impactful ways to contribute to the health and readiness of our force and families in the AOR.

Mental and Behavioral Health Care

94. In your view, are there sufficient and properly located mental health assets in AFRICOM to address the mental and behavioral health needs of the service members, civilians and their families assigned to the AOR?

If confirmed, I will assess the sufficiency and location of mental health assets in AFRICOM and I will take action to ensure the physical and mental health and readiness of the force and their families. First, it is my understanding that active duty personnel and family members are pre-screened prior to assignment to ensure the potential new assignment has the healthcare resources to address existing healthcare needs. It is also my understanding that service members, civilians, and their families access varying levels of mental and behavioral health care while in Africa depending on where they are assigned. Across the continent, they may access embassy health units, avail themselves of local providers sourced through TRICARE services such as International SOS, and online counseling through Military OneSource. Finally, the Defense Health Agency (DHA) plans to award a tele-behavioral health (TBH) contract in late Fiscal Year 2022. The DHA TBH contract will provide a source of care for active duty servicemembers and potentially family members who may have new mental health needs, which did not exist prior to assignment.

95. If confirmed, what additional actions will you take to address the mental and behavioral health needs of service members, civilians and their families in AFRICOM?

If confirmed, I will assess the current initiatives in place to address the mental and behavioral health needs of service members, civilians and their families in AFRICOM and coordinate with the Services to ensure personnel and their families are pre-screened before assignment to ensure gaining locations can address their existing healthcare needs. I will continue to encourage a healthy respect for a holistic view of health and wellness, which includes mental health. Engaged leadership, education, and accessibility of services will remain key components. Engagement from qualified personnel and medical professionals is paramount to achieving this goal.

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

96. Do you have any views on how to reduce the stigma, real or perceived, for seeking mental health care?

The best method for overcoming stigma is to continue and encourage active, involved leadership. If confirmed, I will ensure subordinate leaders and I support those seeking help. I will support resources and training to foster a positive mental health culture and ensure people seek care early. I will encourage and mandate open discussions about mental health across every level of the organization, ensure that leaders do not impose negative consequences against those who

seek mental health care, and I will create a culture of safety where seeking mental health care is, as identified by the Secretary of Defense, the same as seeking physical health care and is accepted as such.

97. In regards to the provision of mental and behavioral health care, how does DOD bridge the gap between a service member’s desire for confidentiality and the chain of command’s legitimate need to know about matters that may affect the readiness of individual service members and the unit?

The DoD complies with the Privacy Act, and has issued DoDI 6490.08 “Command Notification Requirements to Dispel Stigma” and DoDI 6490.04 “Mental Health Evaluations for Members of the Military Services.” The Department prioritizes patient confidentiality rights while also ensuring readiness of the force. Disclosure to the commander is only required if certain extenuating conditions exist, such as serious risks of harm to self, others, or the mission. If disclosure is made, then only the minimum amount of information necessary should be provided to ensure privacy of individuals in accordance with legal mandates.

Congressional Oversight

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

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

Yes, I will

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

Yes, I will

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

Yes, I will

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

Yes, I will

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

Yes, I will

103. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to respond timely to letters to, and/or inquiries and other requests of you or your organization from individual Senators who are members of this committee? Please answer yes or no.

Yes, I will

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

Yes, I will