

**Advance Policy Questions for Admiral Samuel J. Paparo, USN**  
**Nominee for Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command**

**Duties and Qualifications**

- 1. What is your understanding of the duties and functions of the Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM)?**

The Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, has a duty to deter attacks against the United States, to protect Americans and American interests and, if deterrence fails, win our nation's wars. These duties are underpinned by dynamic combat capability and include expanding security cooperation with our allies and partners across the Indo-Pacific region and at all times being prepared to defend allies according to mutual defense treaties and agreements.

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

As Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, I lead the maritime component of the joint force in the Indo-Pacific. I also integrate the day-to-day operations and activities of the joint force as the designated Supported Commander for all deterrence west of the International Date Line (IDL). My 37 years of service in a broad range assignments and locations – including multiple tours with the joint force – prepared me for this duty. My key operational tours include serving as Commander, Naval Forces Central Command/U.S. Fifth Fleet, U.S. CENTCOM Director of Operations and Battle Director at the Combined Air and Space Operations Center in Qatar. I also served with the U.S. Air Force flying the F-15C and served with the U.S. Army commanding a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Nuristan, Afghanistan. I have had operational command in Japan deploying, sailing and flying throughout the Pacific and Indian Ocean regions.

**Major Challenges and Priorities**

- 3. In your view, what are the major challenges that will confront the next INDOPACOM Commander?**

The People's Republic of China (PRC) remains the pacing challenge in the United States' priority theater. The PRC is the only country in the world with the will, and increasingly the capability, to erode the rules-based international order by undermining fundamental principles of sovereignty, freedom, and transparency. I expect the PRC's coercive behavior will continue to be a major challenge in the region as it threatens, destabilizes, and sows disorder. Russia's illegal and unprovoked war on Ukraine and the Democratic Republic of Korea's (DPRK) malign activity are additional sources of concern. Additionally, the Indo-Pacific region

experiences frequent natural and manmade disasters, the negative impacts of climate change, rapid population growth, drug and human trafficking, and risks from disease and pandemics.

**4. If confirmed, what plans do you have for addressing these challenges?**

If confirmed, I will ensure that forces in USINDOPACOM are both credible and lethal, and are synchronized with diplomatic, development, and economic means in furtherance of the National Security Strategy and NDS. USINDOPACOM's Independent Assessment to Congress is a foundational document that provides the Indo-Pacific "To Be" strategy to advance the NDS priorities. If confirmed, I will assess capabilities and capacity in lethality, force design and posture, logistics, exercises and experimentation, and focus on strengthening our alliances and partnerships for an effective, integrated joint force throughout the Indo-Pacific.

**5. If confirmed, what broad priorities would you establish in terms of issues that must be addressed?**

If confirmed, my priority will be to execute credible military deterrence coupled with an overmatching combat capability against our competitors to maintain stability, peace, and prosperity in the region. I will also prioritize increasing US leadership decision space and increase doubt in any competitor's ability to meet their objectives through military means.

**Chain of Command**

**In accordance with title 10, United States Code, the President and Secretary of Defense exercise authority, direction, and control of the Armed Forces through two distinct branches of the chain of command. One branch runs from the President, through the Secretary of Defense, to the combatant commanders for the execution of missions with forces assigned to their commands. For purposes of organizing, training, and equipping forces, the chain of command runs from the President, to the Secretary of Defense, to the Secretaries of the Military Departments.**

**6. Do you believe this dual structure provides for clear and effective chain of command?**

Yes. I have worked in this dual structure at both military service and joint commands. It is effective, practical, and clearly understood throughout the Department.

**7. If confirmed as a Combatant Commander, on what types of issues and decisions would you coordinate with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and civilian officials within the Department of Defense?**

If confirmed, I will perform my duties under the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense.

If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of Defense, OSD, as well as the Chairman and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to ensure I have the guidance and alignment to carry out the mission of USINDOPACOM. I will maintain a close relationship with the other functional and geographic combatant commanders to ensure applicable national and defense strategic guidance execution is characterized by mutual support, frequent contact, and productive information exchanges on critical issues.

The successful execution of USINDOPACOM's mission responsibilities also requires coordination with the Service Chiefs. The Service Chiefs are valuable sources of judgment and advice for the combatant commanders. If confirmed, I will provide frank and transparent explanations of my most pressing warfighting requirements through direct consultation with each Chief as their staff prepare and develop their budget profiles.

### **2022 National Defense Strategy**

**The 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) identified China as the “most consequential strategic competitor and the pacing challenge for the Department.” The NDS also identifies “[m]utually-beneficial Alliances and partnerships” as “an enduring strength for the United States.”**

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

Yes. The National Defense Strategy (NDS) assessment of the strategic environment and the prioritization of challenges and threats remains valid. Despite economic headwinds, the PRC has maintained its military investments and remains our pacing threat. The PRC continues to modernize; grow its forces, both nuclear and conventional; and execute military operations, diplomatic initiatives, and economic and legal coercion that challenges and seeks to undermine a free and open Indo-Pacific.

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

The four priority missions remain relevant: defend the homeland; deter strategic attack; deter aggression; and build a resilient force – all framed by the PRC as the pacing challenge. With regard to deterring aggression, the NDS identifies forward posture and campaigning as the primary approaches to maintaining deterrence. We have remained focused on the PRC as the pacing challenge in the Indo-Pacific and remain acutely attuned to advances in PLA modernization and coercive behavior.

Posture, campaigning, and the delivery of advanced capabilities, like the Guam Defense System and the Joint Fires Network, are crucial to bolstering deterrence in the Indo-Pacific.

**10. In your view, what capabilities do you believe the Joint Force in the INDOPACOM area of responsibility (AOR) need to prevail in competition with China, as described by the NDS?**

The USINDOPACOM AOR requires capabilities that support a more forward, more persistent, and more lethal joint force that can rapidly respond to crisis and conflict alongside more capable allies and partners. These capabilities are required to protect the joint force; operate in contested space; improve all domain battlespace awareness; employ integrated fires; support forward forces with sustainable theater-based logistics; facilitate high-end, joint training in theater; establish a more forward, more distributed posture; advance ally and partner interoperability; and strengthen the resilience of the USINDOPACOM Headquarters. A more detailed list requires classified discussion.

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

If confirmed, USINDOPACOM will address gaps and shortfalls as informed by the capabilities and activities of our adversaries, the strategic and operational environment, and our own strengths and weaknesses. We will identify the resources required to implement the National Defense Strategy, focused on integrated deterrence against the PRC as the pacing challenge. We will work closely with the Department and Congress to ensure the resources are committed to continue modernizing critical capabilities, updating our posture, refining our operations, and strengthening our allies and partners to accomplish the mission.

**Joint Concept for Competing**

**The Joint Concept for Competing published by the Joint Staff in February 2023 warns that U.S. adversaries intend to “win without fighting” and that “by ignoring the threat of strategic competition, the United States risks ceding strategic influence, advantage, and leverage while preparing for a war that never occurs.”**

**12. In your view, how does the Joint Concept for Competing relate to the Indo-Pacific region and, specifically, our strategic competition with China?**

Successful competition with our adversaries requires an integrated, whole-of-government approach. USINDOPACOM is preparing for a wide spectrum of competition to conflict contingencies and can respond as a leader in the Indo-Pacific does: deliberately, proportionally, and reliably to bolster stability. In addition to seamless integration across the joint force and U.S. interagency, we must remain

aligned with our allies and partners. The ability to continuously integrate and improve coalitions of like-minded nations is significant to our competitive advantage and demands consistent engagement across the Indo-Pacific.

**13. Do you believe additional resources or new authorities for INDOPACOM are required to effectively compete with China as envisioned by the Joint Concept for Competing?**

I assess USINDOPACOM's Independent Assessment to Congress outlined the resources required to deter and compete with the PRC. If confirmed, I will continuously assess resources and authorities as informed by the capabilities and activities of our adversaries, the strategic and operational environment, and our own strengths and weaknesses.

**14. In your view, what non-military elements of national power need to be strengthened to effectively compete with China?**

Competing with the PRC requires strengthening, aligning, and strategically employing all elements of national power. We must tirelessly and purposefully compete in economic, diplomatic, military, and information spaces to be effective against the PRC.

**Force Posture**

**15. In your view, is the current U.S. force posture in the Indo-Pacific region sufficient to support our security strategy in the region? How would you restructure U.S. security posture in the Indo-Pacific best to compete with China, reassure allies and partners, and deter Chinese aggression? Please explain your answer.**

Yes. The forward bases and rotational joint force provide persistent, combat-credible presence throughout the western Pacific. This is the most effective way the military can demonstrate our commitment and resolve to competitors, deter aggression, and assure allies and partners. Forward posture locations must be capable of supporting operations and exercises, as well as projecting combat power. Distributing a forward-deployed, joint force across the battlespace, while balancing lethality and survivability, demonstrates the capability, capacity, and design to rapidly and seamlessly transition from competition to crisis or conflict. If confirmed, I will continuously assess force posture and report to this committee.

**16. How important is a forward basing strategy to the ability of INDOPACOM to execute its day-to-day mission? What about its operational contingency plans?**

Sufficient capability, postured forward to deter with the capacity and readiness to respond should deterrence fail, is essential. The force posture recommendations identified in the USINDOPACOM Commander's Independent Assessment provide

the foundation for an integrated joint force west of the IDL and improvement in interoperability with our regional allies and partners. If confirmed, I will continuously assess the effectiveness of forward basing and regularly report to this committee.

**17. In your assessment, does DOD need to invest in a wider range of primary bases as well as alternate operating locations throughout the Indo-Pacific?**

The Indo-Pacific geography is vast and access throughout the region is essential, requiring close coordination with our allies and partners. The Department's global posture review highlighted the imperative to focus on a broad range of basing options and alternatives for persistent presence of forward-based and rotational joint forces west of the IDL. If confirmed, I will continuously assess the effectiveness of forward basing and regularly report to this committee.

**18. In the event of a contingency, do you have any concerns about the timing and readiness of follow-on forces arriving in INDOPACOM to meet operational plans? If yes, what are they and how can they be resolved?**

Contingency response requires ready and on-time forces. I am always concerned about manning, training, and equipping all of our follow-on forces. Credible deterrence is based on a highly trained, properly equipped, quick-response and surge force. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for the necessary forward-deployed forces and the associated readiness to meet our nation's most pressing requirements. I will also continue to advocate for improvements in strategic sea and airlift to reduce the timeline necessary for surge forces to arrive in the theater.

**19. Do you believe that INDOPACOM is adequately prepared to execute concurrent operational plans? If not, then what do you believe are the necessary measures to be able to do so?**

I assess USINDOPACOM would require additional resources to execute concurrent operational plans against the pacing challenge. The vast expanse of the Indo-Pacific makes projecting and sustaining combat power challenging. If confirmed, I will assess current posture and readiness and identify options for improvement. Additional funding for service exercises, such as U.S. Army Pacific Command's Pacific Pathways, allows our forces to be deployed consistently within the First Island Chain and throughout the theater. These actions would buy down operational risk by reducing lift requirements, posturing the right forces in place at the right time to provide effects, and demonstrating a combat credible force to deter aggression.

**20. How do you view the relative value of permanent versus rotational forces in the INDOPACOM AOR?**

Permanent, forward-based forces provide the most visible sign of U.S. resolve and commitment to supporting regional peace and stability. Rotational forces allow us to

maintain a high level of readiness without sacrificing the ability to respond quickly and effectively to contingencies. USINDOPACOM requires a mix of rotational and permanently stationed forces and a recalibrated force posture to be able to mass effects and to be flexible and responsive to changes in the strategic environment.

**21. How does the planned relocation of U.S. forces from Okinawa to Guam and other locations in the Pacific relate to U.S. security objectives in the INDOPACOM AOR?**

The Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI) strengthens our alliance with Japan and maintains the right permanent forces that enhance our deterrence and interoperability, while ensuring the joint force is prepared to fight and win should deterrence fail. It allows the joint force to disperse and enable quicker responses to areas outside Okinawa. Additionally, the relocation to Guam also provides increased training opportunities with allies and partners. The Department, along with the Government of Japan, has committed more than \$7B for military construction and family housing projects on Guam in FY22-FY28 to meet our commitment with Japan under the DPRI. This investment in Guam, which is home to 170,000 American citizens, highlights the importance of the island for sustaining the joint force as a main operating base.

**22. Do you believe the INDOPACOM commander has adequate numbers of airborne intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets available to meet requirements in the event of war?**

The joint force requires persistent, redundant, resilient, and reliable intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR). Presently, our ISR requirements are best provided by airborne ISR assets supported by national technical means. If confirmed, I will work with the joint force, services, and across the government to assess how we can improve our ISR capabilities, capacity, and coverage.

**Joint Force Requirements**

**23. What, if any, are the major U.S. capability or capacity gaps you assess in the INDOPACOM theater that are needed to enhance deterrence against Chinese aggression?**

To compete and defend U.S. interests, the most critical capabilities are those that address the gaps in force protection, Homeland Defense, joint force lethality, long range precision fires, IAMD (integrated air and missile defense), ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance), training, and logistics enablers. Additionally, we must enable modernized integration and information sharing across all domains with our allies and partners.

**24. In your view, what are the key areas in which each Military Service must improve in order to provide the necessary capabilities and capacity to the Joint**

## **Force to prevail in a potential conflict with China?**

USINDOPACOM's key capabilities are aligned to deter, and if necessary, defeat, the PLA. Specifically, the joint force requires capabilities to blind (Counter - Command, Control, Computing, Communications, Cyber, Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance and Targeting (C-C5ISR)), see (persistent real-time awareness of the battlespace in all domains) and kill (long-range precision fire enabled the Joint Fires Network). Additionally, we require capabilities that assure air superiority, sea control, undersea warfare dominance, space control, integrated air and missile defense, and logistics to support our distributed operations. If confirmed, I look forward to working cooperatively with each service regarding these capabilities.

### **25. Which programs, in your assessment, are the highest priorities for mitigating current and emerging warfighting capability and/or capacity shortfalls in the Joint Force?**

If confirmed, I will assess specific programs against our mission requirements (e.g. the need to undermine adversary awareness, maintain a persistent and targetable operating picture, and execute survivable and lethal long-range precision fires) and make appropriate recommendations.

## **Ground Forces in the Indo-Pacific**

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

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

The U.S. Army plays a crucial role in the Indo-Pacific and provides a combat credible, scalable force. The role of ground forces in creating an A2/AD challenge is to provide a persistent forward presence of sensors and shooters capable of finding, fixing, tracking, targeting, engaging, and assessing targets on key terrain. In order to support this process, ground forces must provide fires, logistics support, command and control, and force protection. The ability to quickly maneuver while commanding and controlling forces is critical to this mission. The U.S. Army also trains our allies and partners, provides air-defense, sustainment and distribution, and command and control. These mission sets strengthen our alliances and partnerships while demonstrating firm resolve to uphold our treaty obligations.

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



USINDOPACOM has been improving its ground force posture through campaigning activities to create a more enduring forward presence with persistent forward deployed rotational and assigned forces. These forces provide lethal capability that can operate and exercise with our allies and partners. If confirmed, I will seek to improve the survivability and sustainment of distributed joint forces. In the near term, arming U.S. Marine Corp's Marine Littoral Regiments and U.S. Army's Multi-Domain Task Forces with advanced warfighting capabilities will immediately improve our lethality and enhance our deterrence mission.

### **Pacific Deterrence Initiative**

**The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 authorized \$14.7 billion for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) to support the stability and security of the region and deter Chinese aggression.**

**28. In your view, is PDI a useful tool to improve U.S. posture in the Indo-Pacific?**

Yes. PDI investments continue to improve our posture and remain an important tool to identify and secure the resources necessary to meet the operational requirements in the region. PDI investment must continue in order to deter our adversaries and reassure our allies and partners.

**29. In your view, what strategic objectives and specific areas of investment should be prioritized for funding under the PDI?**

Guam is U.S. homeland territory. Defending Guam, including the infrastructure to manage an integrated joint force west of the IDL, should be PDI's number one priority. Additional priorities include establishing a distributed force posture, establishing an Indo-Pacific Mission Network (IMN), and advancing Pacific Multi-Domain Training and Experimentation Capability (PMTEC) to modernize our ranges.

**30. Do you believe that there are changes to the Department's process for considering budget proposals by the military services that could more effectively enable the fielding of capabilities that support joint, rather than service-specific, requirements under the PDI? Please explain your answer.**

If confirmed, I will comprehensively review current processes and make appropriate recommendations for improvement. This is a critical issue, and I look forward to working with all stakeholders to ensure we have the best possible system in place.

### **INDOPACOM Organization**

**The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22 NDAA) required the Secretary of Defense to establish an operational joint force headquarters in the area of operations of INDOPACOM to, among other things, integrate joint all domain**

**command and control effects chains and mission command and control, as well as the integration of new capabilities as they transition to operational deployment.**

**31. What is your understanding of the purpose and status of the operational joint force headquarters required by the FY22 NDAA?**

My understanding is that the FY22 National Defense Authorization Act required the creation of an operational Joint Task Force to integrate joint, all-domain command and control effects in the Indo-Pacific theater, to deter aggression, and, if necessary, to fight and win in conflict.

**32. In your view, how does the operational joint force headquarters required by the FY22 NDAA relate to the Joint Task Force-Micronesia established by INDOPACOM?**

If confirmed, I will assess all options and make appropriate recommendations to meet the intent of the NDAA as informed by the capabilities and actions of our adversaries, the strategic and operational environments, and our own strengths, weaknesses, and posture.

**33. Do you believe any additional changes are necessary to optimize INDOPACOM's operational command and control for competition, crisis, and, if necessary, conflict?**

If confirmed, I will assess USINDOPACOM's operational command and control structure and determine if it is the most effective organizational construct. If not, I will make appropriate recommendations to ensure the joint force in the Indo-Pacific is optimally postured to deter aggression and, if necessary, to fight and win in conflict.

**Missile Defense**

**34. How would you assess the threat to U.S. forces and bases from Chinese and North Korean missile forces and our ability to address such threats? In your assessment, have U.S. investments, concepts of operations, and posture shifts sufficiently addressed this threat for the Indo Pacific region, including Hawaii?**

Although the ballistic missile threat facing U.S. interests in Northeast Asia remains significant, we are well-postured to protect against existing and emerging threats from the DPRK. Additionally, U.S. Forces Korea continues to benefit from significant investments and performance enhancements to its current ballistic missile defense systems. If confirmed, I will seek to continuously improve our posture and readiness against the threat from the DPRK.

PRC ballistic and cruise missile systems, as well as its development of hypersonic weapons, present a significant and increasing risk to our forces, bases, and allies and partners. Enhanced investment in layered and credible IAMD, to include the Guam

Defense System, is imperative to underpin integrated deterrence. Discussions regarding concepts of operations and posture shifts require discussion at a higher classification level.

**35. Do you assess that rotational missile defense capabilities such as THAAD, Patriot, and Aegis ships, that need to be deployed to protect major combat projection platforms such as air bases are adequate to deter Chinese aggression given anticipated indication and warning timelines?**

A more robust defensive posture is the most pressing priority for the Indo-Pacific to adequately address the threats we face from the PRC. The People's Liberation Army Rocket Forces have a growing inventory of medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles that can threaten U.S. bases in the region, including those in the Republic of Korea (ROK), Japan, and Guam. Additionally, the PRC is evolving its missile technology, increasing its missile range, maneuverability, survivability, accuracy, and lethality.

**36. What is your assessment of INDOPACOM's ability to defend Hawaii from missile threats?**

Homeland Defense for Hawaii and Guam is the Indo-Pacific Command's top priority and a no-fail mission. If confirmed, I will continue pursuing joint and multilateral capabilities to ensure we have the best possible Integrated Air and Missile Defense capabilities to underpin integrated deterrence – including working cooperatively with Service components, the Missile Defense Agency, allies and partners, and the defense industry to integrate the best advanced technologies into operations.

**Given its geographic location and strategic importance, the defense of Guam remains a significant priority of INDOPACOM.**

**37. What is your assessment of the current state of the defense of Guam from missile threats?**

Homeland Defense is the Indo-Pacific Command's number-one priority. Guam is the most forward U.S. territory and a strategic outpost in the Western Pacific. Guam's defense, which will include various active and passive missile defense capabilities, will contribute to the overall integrity of integrated deterrence and bolster U.S. operational strategy in the Indo-Pacific region. Missile Defense capabilities are deployed in Guam today and the Department is funding the Guam Defense System to defend the island against the evolving regional missile threats. The Guam Defense System is the top Homeland Defense acquisition priority for the Indo-Pacific Command. Guam requires a 360-degree, persistent, layered, integrated air, and missile defense system to defend the island against the evolving capabilities of the PRC. If confirmed, I will continue to work with the larger defense enterprise to refine, accelerate, and optimize the Guam Defense System capabilities.

**38. What is your assessment of the current acquisition planning and timelines for an integrated missile defense system to defend Guam?**

If confirmed, I will work tirelessly with all stakeholders to accelerate the fielding of the entire system ahead of current delivery timelines.

**39. What do you believe are the major hurdles in acquiring an integrated missile defense system to defend Guam?**

There are several challenges to fielding an Integrated Air and Missile Defense architecture on Guam. We must ensure that proper policies and agreements are in place among our allies and partners to enable interoperability and establish a robust Integrated Air and Missile Defense architecture to operate in contested space, sustain target quality, maintain real-time battlespace awareness, and deliver advanced multi-domain joint fires munitions.

**Contested Logistics**

**DOD and INDOPACOM have conducted or sponsored several studies on contested mobility and logistics which have resulted a significant number of recommendations, many of which have not been implemented. As a result, DOD and INDOPACOM may be missing an opportunity to leverage existing knowledge on mobility challenges in contested environments and increase resilience for major conflicts as envisioned in the National Defense Strategy and as part of the Joint Warfighting Concept. Given the “tyranny of distance” in the Pacific, there are significant challenges specifically related to energy and munitions requirements in a contested environment, some of which could be mitigated by making targeted investments and operational energy improvements to both military platforms and installations.**

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

Commercially procured warfighting capabilities that enable mission success, specifically those that deal with power, transport, fuel, and communications, are vulnerable to cyberattacks, disruptions, or denial of services. More specifically, the United States Transportation Command and the Defense Logistics Agency are working with industry to reinforce network security best practices. The execution of USINDOPACOM operational plans are contingent on the use of vital logistics capabilities requiring utmost protection.

**41. If confirmed, how will you seek to decrease the logistics vulnerabilities in the INDOPACOM AOR?**

The most effective means to decrease logistics vulnerabilities is to enhance our logistics posture within the theater. By improving airfields, sea ports, and warehousing in both the homeland and with our allies and partners, we can increase

our ability to distribute, disperse, and support capabilities in both developed and austere locations. I also note that our combat logistics capabilities will be operating in a contested environment. I can provide more details in a classified setting.

**42. If confirmed, how will you seek to achieve operational energy improvements throughout INDOPACOM?**

If confirmed, I will work with the Services and DoD programs such as the Operational Energy Capability Improvement Fund (OECIF) and the Rapid Defense Experimentation Reserve (RDER) to advocate for prioritizing investments in forward fuel capacity and capabilities, balanced with reducing energy demand by military platforms. We must be able to refuel ourselves when commercial capabilities may not be available, and to do this, we must ensure theater posture locations have enough capacity through both military construction and expeditionary fuel storage – along with the requisite equipment in place to distribute fuel to the point of need in contested environments. I will also continue to direct experimentation with and advocate for long-range, uncrewed, multi-domain platforms, both for operational missions and logistics transportation. These systems often consume less fuel than crewed systems, and are capable of using renewable or alternative energy sources.

**Information Operations**

**During the COVID-19 pandemic, China has embarked on a misinformation campaign to sow confusion over the origins of the virus and malign the response of the United States and other nations. This appears to have been done not only to shield China from blame for the initial outbreak, but also to undermine democratic nations and institutions.**

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

Information-related capabilities are critical in combating malign behavior. USINDOPACOM has a broad mix of information-related capabilities, including military information support operations and military deception operations, which are designed to change an adversary's attitudes and behaviors. When employed effectively and in coordination with other U.S. government stakeholders, these capabilities provide USINDOPACOM opportunities to enhance U.S. national security interests.

We must also employ information-related capabilities to transparently bring attention to malign behavior, such as the United States and our partners publicly releasing video of coercive and risky PLA intercepts of our lawfully operating ships and aircraft. If confirmed, I will assess current information-related capabilities and

consider all viable options to improve our information operations posture and readiness.

**44. Are DOD and INDOPACOM efforts in this regard effectively integrated with other U.S. Government organizations and activities?**

DoD efforts throughout the information environment cross traditional department and agency lines. I fully recognize the military represents only one tool of national power. We must be fully integrated within the whole of government to maximize our collective information related capabilities.

**45. Do you believe that DOD and INDOPACOM have sufficient authorities and resources to conduct information operations effectively? If not, what additional authorities and resources would you request, if confirmed?**

I am not currently aware of new authorities required. If confirmed, I will regularly assess authorities, resource availability and allocation, and strategic alignment to prioritize essential information operations in direct support of the National Defense and National Military Strategies.

**Combatant commanders have expressed a need for the intelligence community to be more responsive in downgrading and declassifying intelligence to share with foreign partners and for messaging purposes. The power of this approach was seen in the run up to Russia's invasion of Ukraine as the Administration was successful in deliberately releasing information derived from intelligence in order to expose Russia's true plans and intentions.**

**46. Do you believe there are lessons to be learned from our experience in Ukraine?**

Yes. Several lessons from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine are salient for the Indo-Pacific. For example, we are witnessing the growing importance of mass data analytics, third party targeting, and long-range precision fires. In addition, mission success requires countering the enemy's ability to see and understand the battlespace and conduct targeting. Ukraine also reinforced the fact that our allies and partners represent our greatest strategic advantage – and that the international community cannot tolerate unlawful aggression. Finally, we learned how the timely sharing of previously classified intelligence with our partners and the public revealed Russia's imminent plans for an attack and helped spur the international community to act in support of Ukraine. Timely transparency can be an effective tool to counter aggression.

**47. Do you believe similar tactics could be used to more effectively expose China's coercive behavior and aggressive actions towards Taiwan and others in the Indo-Pacific?**

Yes. If confirmed, I can provide more details in a classified setting.

## China

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

### **48. How would you characterize the current U.S. relationship with China?**

While there are significant economic and people-to-people ties, the United States and the PRC have different visions for the future. The PRC’s threats, coercion, and aggression stand in stark contrast to our fundamental values of freedom, sovereignty, and transparency. Our first duty is to deter conflict. I am committed to using our readiness and credible fighting force when I must, but first leverage a military-military communications channels to prevent misunderstanding and resolve disputes before they escalate.

### **49. What is your assessment of the current state of U.S.-China military-to-military relations? What do you believe should be the objectives of U.S.-China military-to-military dialogue? What are the limitations on this kind of dialogue?**

Following a period in which the PLA largely denied or cancelled military-to-military engagement with the United States, there has been some recent positive movement regarding the state of U.S.-PRC defense relations. It was important, for example, that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Brown, spoke with his PRC counterpart last December, and that our annual defense policy dialogue with the PRC occurred in January. We are likewise preparing for a round of annual maritime safety focused operator-to-operator talks this spring. Substantive and durable engagement is key to clarifying our respective priorities and intentions—and reducing the risk of misperception, miscalculation, and crisis. While the Department is committed to maintaining open lines of communication with the PRC to ensure that competition does not veer into conflict, we remain clear-eyed that the PRC views these channels of communication as a tool to punish or reward the United States for its perceived behavior, versus being valuable to maintaining peace and stability.

### **50. What do you believe are the objectives of China’s steady increase in defense spending and its overall military modernization program? In what technology areas are you most concerned about the erosion of U.S. advantages?**

Open source reports indicate the PRC’s military objective is clear: fully modernize the PLA by 2027 to be ready to take Taiwan by force if necessary. Additionally, PRC leaders have repeatedly stated that transforming the PLA into a world-class military is an essential element in its strategy to displace U.S. power and influence while remaking the global order. A fully modernized PLA will complement its economic,

information, diplomatic, and provocative legal efforts to expand PRC national power, push its governance system, and revise the international order through the logic of its own coercion.

Today, every domain – air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace – is contested. The pace at which the PRC is fielding advanced capabilities is accelerating at an alarming rate. The PRC is focused on exploiting any perceived vulnerabilities to gain an economic, diplomatic, and military advantage while remaining below the threshold of conflict. Our advances in AI, offensive fires, directed energy, hypersonic missiles, and quantum computing must keep pace.

**51. What is your assessment of China’s militarization and other aggressive activities in the South and East China Seas? What challenges do these activities pose to INDOPACOM’s current operations and operational plans?**

The PRC’s militarization in the region and aggressive activities are unlawful and destabilizing. PRC actions threaten the sovereignty of our allies and partners, limit freedom of navigation, and undermine regional stability. However, our allies and partners are increasingly responding in the face of that aggression. It is critical that we continue highlighting malign PRC activities in the information environment, conducting joint and combined operations to promote freedom of the seas and airspace, and acting in concert with allies and partners to safeguard sovereign rights.

**52. What is your assessment of China’s increasing military presence overseas, including such installations as its base in Djibouti and across Africa as well as other infrastructure projects across the Indian Ocean?**

The PRC’s expansive infrastructure projects are designed to expand its influence worldwide and establish a more robust overseas logistics and basing infrastructure for the PLA. Greater access to foreign ports and airfields enable the PRC to pre-position the logistics support necessary to sustain military operations abroad, including naval deployments in the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean Sea, and the Atlantic Ocean. A global PLA logistics network will enable Beijing to project and sustain military power at greater distances from the PRC, interfere with U.S. military operations, and provide flexibility to support offensive operations against the United States.

**53. What is your assessment of the strategic and military implications of China’s Belt and Road Initiative for the United States and other countries in the INDOPACOM AOR?**

The Belt and Road Initiative provides the PRC an opportunity to expand its global reach by gaining access to foreign air and maritime port facilities and foreign economic markets. The initiative primarily benefits the PRC in their effort to gain broader access, influence, and leverage.

**The DOD’s annual report on Military and Security Developments Involving the PRC estimates that China will have more than 1,000 nuclear warheads by 2030.**



**Additionally, China has developed Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Fields, nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines that can hold the United States at risk from PRC literal waters, and fractional orbital and hypersonic capabilities for nuclear power projection.**

**54. Do you believe that China seeks to become a nuclear peer adversary to the United States?**

It is more accurate to say the PRC seeks to remove the U.S. nuclear advantage to achieve its strategy of nuclear deterrence and assured counterstrike capability. It does not necessarily mean they will build and field the same number of warheads as we have, but Beijing clearly seeks peer-level capabilities to achieve their strategic objectives.

**55. What do you believe are the consequences of having a nuclear armed peer adversary in the Indo-Pacific region?**

The PRC's nuclear expansion adds to threats from both Russian and DPRK nuclear arsenals. Operationally, it increases risk in the region as it emboldens conventional aggression. This is especially true because the PLA is increasingly co-mingling nuclear and conventional missile units. Additionally, attacks on the PRC's missile command and control intended to affect only conventional missiles could inadvertently affect nuclear C3 if units are co-mingled, unintentionally triggering potential escalation.

**The DOD's annual report on Military and Security Developments Involving the PRC notes that "The PLA owns and operates about half of the world's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems, most of which could support monitoring, tracking, and targeting of U.S. and allied forces worldwide, especially throughout the Indo-Pacific region." The report also notes that "The People's Liberation Army Rocket Force conventionally-armed CSS-5 Mod 5 (DF-21D) anti-ship ballistic missile variant gives the PLA the capability to conduct long-range precision strikes against ships, including aircraft carriers, out to the Western Pacific from mainland China."**

**56. What is your assessment of these strategic capabilities on the ability of INDOPACOM to project military power in the region?**

The PLA's long-range strike capabilities are growing and present risk to our forces. However, USINDOPACOM retains the ability to operate throughout the region, regardless of PRC developments. If confirmed, I will work tirelessly to ensure the joint force maintains the ability to conduct all-domain operations according to strategic or operational imperatives. I ask that we discuss details in a classified session.

**Taiwan**

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

The PRC continues to pressure Taiwan in multiple domains. The United States can help prevent miscalculation by maintaining our longstanding policy in support of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.

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

The PLA continues to field a broad array of advanced weapons and systems as part of ongoing force modernization specifically intended to achieve decisive overmatch against Taiwan. Taiwan is committed to strengthening its reserve forces. In my view, Taiwan should continue to prioritize acquisition of asymmetric systems that are highly mobile, distributed, and lethal to enable Taiwan to defend themselves against attack. The United States will continue to meet its commitments consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act and our longstanding policy.

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

The United States presently maintains its longstanding commitments as outlined in the Taiwan Relations Act, Three Communiqués, and the Six Assurances. If confirmed, I ask that we discuss the benefits and risks of a policy change in a classified session.

**60. Do you consider presidential drawdown authority to be a tool that could be used to bolster Taiwan's military? In your view, is replenishment funding critical to backfill the U.S. weapons sent to Taiwan based on presidential drawdown authority?**

Presidential drawdown authority enables rapid transfer of equipment and training to Taiwan to bolster self-defense. Funding these authorities signals bipartisan, whole-of-government commitment to strengthening Taiwan's self-defense and our continued interest in cross-Strait peace, stability, and deterrence. As Secretary Austin has said in multiple settings, including before Congress, the Department believes that existing authorities from Congress for security assistance to Taiwan should be met by full appropriations. Additionally, operational readiness assessments of U.S. inventory can play a critical role in determining risks associated with future drawdowns.

**61. Do you consider the \$2 billion authorized for Foreign Military Financing as part of the Taiwan Enhanced Resilience Act, which was included in FY23 NDAA, to be a critical tool that could be used to bolster Taiwan's military?**

Yes. The \$2B authorized for Foreign Military Financing (FMF) could facilitate equipping Taiwan with critical munitions, weapons, and Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence (C4I) systems to deter aggression and defend itself if necessary.

## Japan

### **62. What is your assessment of our military-to-military relationship with Japan?**

Our relationship with the Japanese Self Defense Force is strong and advancing rapidly. This is particularly true in the areas of bilateral planning and multilateral cooperation. If confirmed, I will seek to further strengthen this relationship.

### **63. How does Japan's relationship with its regional neighbors—including China, North Korea, South Korea, and Taiwan—influence the U.S.-Japan relationship?**

The United States and the Government of Japan remain closely aligned on the DPRK, long-term strategic competition with the PRC, and maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific. Our alignment has led to closer coordination and cooperation in addressing both current and future security challenges, while also expanding the U.S.-Japan security relationship in domains such as cyber and space.

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

### **64. In your view, how can the United States best support Japan's defense transformation in line with its strategic documents, to include command-and-control related issues?**

USINDOPACOM is working to strengthen our alliance and optimize our force posture with Japan through the forward-deployment of more versatile, resilient, and mobile capabilities. First, U.S. forces will assist Japan with developing its command and control procedures for the new Japanese Joint Operations Command. In addition, the United States will continue to execute increasingly challenging bilateral and multi-lateral exercises and command post activities. We will also enhance defense security cooperation through programs such as Tomahawk Land Attack Missile procurement and training. Finally, our support to Japan's defense transformation will be underpinned through our day-to-day engagement at all levels of command between the approximately 50,000 U.S. forces stationed in Japan and their Japanese counterparts, who work daily to further integrate the operations and activities of our combined forces.

### **65. Do you believe we should consider modifications to U.S. military organizational and command and control relationships to better align with the Permanent Joint Headquarters of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces?**

Yes. It is important that military organizational and command and control relationships evolve to meet the current environment.

**Current plans under the Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI) call for the relocation of Marines from Okinawa to Guam, Hawaii, and other locations in the Indo-Pacific and the closure of the Marine Corps Air Station on Okinawa after the construction of a Futenma Replacement Facility (FRF) at Camp Schwab.**

**66. Do you support the DPRI? Do you believe modifications to current DPRI plans, including the mix of capabilities remaining in Okinawa, should be considered in light of regional security challenges?**

The Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI) is a part of ensuring balanced and sustainable force posture. I understand recent adjustments to DPRI will maintain permanent forces that enhance our deterrence and interoperability while ensuring the joint force is prepared to fight and win should deterrence fail. If confirmed, I will work to ensure U.S. force posture in Japan is versatile, resilient, mobile, and meets the requirements of both the joint force and Japan.

**67. What is your opinion of the prospects for the successful construction of the Futenma Replacement Facility at Camp Schwab on Okinawa?**

While the project has experienced delays, both governments remain committed to completing the FRF and DPRI.

**68. What is your understanding of the ability of U.S. forces planned to be transferred from Okinawa to Guam to be able to train for full spectrum combat, and are there mitigation plans to address potential training shortfalls?**

Presently, I assess sites in Guam and its neighboring islands will be adequate to meet training requirements for the Marines who will be stationed there. The Marines would also benefit from training opportunities with implementation of the Pacific Multi-Domain Test and Experimentation Capability (PMTEC). If confirmed, I will advance PMTEC in order to maximize our training effectiveness by linking our ranges via a federation of interconnected live, virtual, and constructive effects, simulation centers, and mobile training support systems.

## **Australia**

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

The alliance between our two countries is the strongest I have seen in 37 years of service. Our relationship with Australia has continued to increase in strength through bilateral engagements and cooperation for both nations' resolve against destabilizing PRC actions in the Indo-Pacific. Additionally, under AUKUS, the partnership

continues to mature. It highlights Australia's importance as an anchor of U.S. security in the Indo-Pacific. We enjoy a robust relationship and actively seek to continue to deepen our relationship through military engagements, defense acquisitions, and force posture initiatives.

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

**70. What are your views of the AUKUS partnership?**

The AUKUS agreement is a generational opportunity to enhance our combined military capability to successfully compete globally against the PRC and ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific. AUKUS expands the competitive space and deepens partnerships – which confers advantage on the joint force. Continued development and execution of Pillars I and II is vital in furthering cooperation.

**71. In your view, how will the acquisition of nuclear-propelled submarines by Australia affect regional security dynamics?**

Strengthening Australia's defense capabilities, including through nuclear-powered submarines, will form part of Australia's contribution to a secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific. Australia's acquisition of nuclear-powered attack submarines and expanding trilateral advanced military technology sharing builds on the unique advantages of the joint force. As a three-ocean nation, nuclear-powered submarines provide Australia with the capability it requires for its own defense. They allow Australia to further contribute to shaping our region's strategic trajectory in line with our shared regional security interests.

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

Efforts to advance both Pillar I and Pillar II of AUKUS have faced challenges from U.S. export control restrictions that have limited technology sharing and cooperation with both Great Britain and Australia. I want to thank the committee for the recent AUKUS provisions included in the FY24 NDAA, which should alleviate these challenges significantly. As we begin working within the new authorities, and if confirmed, I will alert the committee to any impediments that may arise.

**73. Do you believe we should consider modifications to U.S. military organizational and command and control relationships to better align with the Australian military?**

I presently assess these command and control relationships are adequate and aligned. If confirmed, I will continuously assess and report back to the committee if that changes.

## **Republic of Korea**

### **74. What is your assessment of the U.S.-South Korea security relationship? What measures, if any, would you take to improve this security relationship?**

The U.S.-ROK alliance is ironclad and is the linchpin of peace and security on the Korean peninsula. It is important that the United States facilitates an increased role for the ROK, commensurate with its economic status and influence, in as many multilateral venues as possible. If confirmed, I will work hard to maintain close contact with USFK and ROK military and civilian leadership to further develop this essential security partnership.

### **75. Do you believe South Korea is investing appropriately in its defensive capabilities?**

Yes. The ROK's defense expenditures remain the highest among our allies and partners as a percentage of their GDP. Although the ROK continues to acquire significant U.S. systems and platforms worth billions of dollars, it also prioritizes a substantial share of its resources to develop domestic defense capabilities, industry, and export. Given the U.S. and ROK commitment to maintaining interoperability, the ROK's domestic investments contribute to the combined deterrence and defense posture.

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

Both the United States and Republic of Korea are fully committed to a conditions-based operational control transition and continue to work toward that end. The requirements for transfer are outlined in the 2015 Conditions-based Operational control Transition Plan (COTP) and the 2018 update to COTP (Change One). If confirmed, I intend to fully comply with the existing plan and ensure the alliance is ready for the transition when that time comes.

### **77. What is your vision for the future of US tactical fighter force posture on the Korean peninsula?**

USINDOPACOM requires a ready fighter force in place on the Korean peninsula to maintain our commitment to our alliance with the ROK and to ensure a 'fight tonight' posture to deter aggression and respond to DPRK provocations. Additional information requires discussion at a higher classification level.

## North Korea

**North Korea has been expanding its nuclear and missile capabilities, this includes the three tests last year of the solid fueled Hwasong-18 intercontinental ballistic missile, which has an estimated range of 15,000 kilometers, as well as a series of other intermediate and shorter-range ballistic missile tests.**

**78. What is your assessment of the progress North Korea is making in its strategic systems and their impact on regional stability and our national security?**

The United States has been very clear on the threat posed by the DPRK's military programs – while reaffirming our commitment to the defense of the ROK, Japan, and region. If confirmed, I will continue to work with my ROK and Japanese counterparts to address the threats posed by the DPRK.

**79. What is your assessment of the strategic and military risks of a potential conflict with North Korea?**

There are significant strategic and military risks associated with a potential conflict on the Korean Peninsula, despite efforts to lower tensions. The DPRK continues to advance both its conventional and strategic capabilities. If confirmed, I will make regular assessments of the risk and report that risk to the National Command Authority.

**80. In your assessment, what changes, if any, to U.S. force posture and activity in the INDOPACOM AOR would improve U.S. deterrence against North Korea?**

Our current posture and presence in the ROK provide for our mutual defense while deterring DPRK aggression against the U.S. and our allies and partners. I support bilateral efforts to modernize forces, equipment, and enduring locations to ensure combat credible forces in the ROK, particularly those that counter the DPRK's asymmetric capabilities. We must also continue to explore, improve, and resource our missile defense capabilities. Our airborne ISR allocation is less than what we require to support the theater's multifaceted problem-set and to enhance deterrence by detection. A modernized, well-trained force positioned on the Korean Peninsula, paired with a credible, rapid reinforcement capability assigned and postured forward in the region, offers the greatest deterrent effect vis-à-vis the DPRK.

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

The United States is working to strengthen our alliances and optimize our force posture with Japan and the ROK through the forward-deployment of more versatile,

resilient, and mobile capabilities. Also, USINDOPACOM can continue to implement the trilateral exercise plan, further expand trilateral operations, and maintain the new trilateral missile warning data system. If confirmed, I will assess our overall defenses against DPRK missile capabilities and make appropriate changes/recommendations to optimize our posture and capabilities.

**82. What is your assessment of the ability of China to exert influence on North Korean decision making with respect to the development of nuclear and missile capabilities?**

The PRC has not fulfilled its international obligations regarding multiple UN Security Council Resolutions restricting the DPRK's nuclear and missile development and related activities. Simply stated, I do not assess we should rely on the PRC to restrain the DPRK.

**83. What is your assessment of the Joint Force's ability to secure North Korean weapons of mass destruction sites in the event of a contingency? What capability and/or capacity shortfalls present the most significant challenge to executing such an operation?**

Without transparency and clarity into the DPRK's nuclear program, it is difficult to assess our ability to secure the DPRK's weapons of mass destruction sites in the event of a contingency. If confirmed, I will review the major operational plans, contingency plans, and associated execution orders outlining the joint force's ability to counter and secure DPRK weapons of mass destruction.

**84. What is your assessment of the Joint Force's ability to conduct a noncombatant evacuation of approximately 250,000 U.S. citizens from South Korea in the event of a contingency? What capability and/or capacity shortfalls present the most significant challenge to executing such an operation?**

Conducting noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO) in the ROK is highly challenging and dependent on the level of support, amount of warning, and resources from the ROK and Japan. Inside the ROK, we depend on their transportation assets to move noncombatant evacuees (NCEs) from assembly points to relocation centers, as well as to air/seaports of departure from the Peninsula. In Japan, we depend on their capacity and capability to receive, shelter, and support NCEs as a temporary safe haven. Synchronization and coordination for access and use of these resources requires constant engagement with our partners in both countries.

**Philippines**

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



The relationship between the joint force and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is strong, aligned, and growing. If confirmed, I will also prioritize and seek to further strengthen this critical relationship.

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

Yes. If confirmed, I will continue to pursue a deeper partnership with the AFP.

**87. What, if anything, can be done to build upon the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) between the United States and the Philippines and most effectively utilize access to EDCA sites?**

The addition of four new EDCA locations was a welcome development. To date, the U.S. has allocated over \$109M toward EDCA implementation at the five existing locations and two of the new proposed locations, allowing us to complete dozens of projects, including the runway rehabilitation project at Basa Air Base. Additional appropriated funds will go toward completing the 90+ bilaterally agreed-upon projects that build an enduring security infrastructure to fill short-term capability gaps, promote long-term modernization, build a credible mutual defense posture, maintain humanitarian assistance and disaster response capabilities, and enhance the strength of our alliance.

**88. What is your assessment of the effectiveness of the U.S. military assistance being provided to the Philippines armed forces in its fight against violent extremist groups?**

U.S. military assistance to the Philippine Security Forces is very effective in directly confronting violent extremist groups in Southeast Asia. This assistance enhances the Philippines' ability to build and maintain internal stability, allowing for allocation of more resources to counter threats to its national sovereignty.

**89. What is your assessment of the relationship between the Philippines and other United States allies and partners in the region, including Japan and Australia? In your opinion, what can we do to help strengthen these relationships?**

The Philippines' relationships with regional partners, particularly Japan and Australia, continue to strengthen. Bilateral and multilateral maritime activities show solidarity between likeminded partners. The United States should support additional training, cooperation, and capability-building opportunities among these key allies.

**90. In your view, would increasing Foreign Military Financing for the Philippines bolster its military, deterrence in the South China Sea, and provide benefits to U.S. national security?**

Yes, on all accounts. Through a combination of DoD initiatives and in-country engagement, we have introduced the Philippines to new asymmetric capabilities that are dynamic force multipliers, which will further enable their operations, enhance our interoperability, and reinforce our U.S. national security objectives.

## **India**

### **91. What is your assessment of our military-to-military relationship with India?**

Over the past decade, the Major Defense Partnership between India and the United States has strengthened considerably with increasingly robust joint military exercises, defense sales, and strategic dialogue. The U.S.-India Major Defense Partnership is enabled by a joint commitment to maintaining regional security and addressing common threats.

### **92. What is your assessment of the relationship between India and Russia? What impact does that relationship have on the U.S.-India relationship?**

The relationship between India and Russia is complex, owing to the nations' long-standing defense and energy ties. India has traditionally relied on Russia for military equipment, and has taken a pragmatic approach in its foreign policy with Moscow in order to balance relationships with other major powers. Our growing convergence in strategic interests permits the United States and India to overcome those challenges and find new ways to enhance military cooperation.

### **93. If confirmed, what steps, if any, would you take to ensure the close coordination of U.S. security policy and activities with respect to South Asia—much of which is in the United States Central Command AOR?**

If confirmed, I will work with CENTCOM and AFRICOM to ensure regular high-level dialogues that prioritize shared regional concerns such as maritime security, counterterrorism, and humanitarian aid.

## **Strengthening Alliances and Attracting New Partners**

### **94. In your view, how can INDOPACOM more effectively cultivate multilateral cooperation in the AOR?**

The regional network of alliances and partnerships is a strategic advantage that our competitors cannot match and critical to maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific. USINDOPACOM conducts security cooperation activities, training, and exercises to strengthen relationships, build partner capacity, and enhance interoperability. Multilateral events are a force multiplier and if confirmed, I will prioritize multilateral activities.

### **The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or “Quad” between the United States, Japan,**

**India, and Australia is designed to uphold the international rules-based order, ensure freedom of navigation, promote democratic values, improve information sharing, and enhance technological collaboration.**

**95. What are your views on the Quad and, in your view, how can it be more effectively utilized as a multilateral platform for addressing challenges in the Indo-Pacific region?**

The Quad partnership is a key multilateral framework within the Indo-Pacific that allows us to collaborate and coordinate with like-minded partners. Activities in the Quad framework demonstrate commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific.

**The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its member states are critical to maintaining peace and security in the region.**

**96. In what ways do you believe INDOPACOM can more effectively engage with ASEAN and its member states?**

ASEAN centrality is an important aspect of our coordination and engagement in the region. If confirmed, and in synchronization with the Department of Defense and Department of State, I will encourage ASEAN's further progress on security matters, to include maritime domain awareness, maritime security, cyber, counter-terrorism, and humanitarian assistance and disaster response.

**97. If confirmed, what priorities would you establish for such engagement?**

If confirmed, I will prioritize building trust and enduring training relationships. Initiatives will prioritize protecting sovereignty, enhancing maritime security, safeguarding exclusive economic zone rights, conducting humanitarian assistance and disaster response exercises, and providing professional education to emerging leaders. Ultimately, we intend to contribute to ASEAN security activities that promote ASEAN centrality.

**Over the last several years, China has exerted its influence with our partner nations, particularly in the Pacific Islands region, regarding competition over economic resources, fishing areas, access to water, concerns over rising sea levels, and elsewhere.**

**98. If confirmed, how will you seek to engage with partner nations in the Pacific Islands region to better support their ability to protect their sovereignty and natural resources?**

Engaging with Pacific Island Countries (PICs) to better support their ability to protect their sovereignty and natural resources is a key component in supporting a free and open Indo-Pacific. The PRC is aggressively engaged in coercive and predatory economic and diplomatic tactics across the PICs that focus on undermining good governance, promoting corruption, and elite capture. The PICs have consistently

prioritized countering maritime security concerns and resilience in sea level rise and natural disasters for engagements. If confirmed, I will review our military, security, and capacity building engagements with the PICs, including those without militaries.

### **Building Partner Capacity**

- 99. In your view, what are our strategic objectives in building the capacities of partner nations in the INDOPACOM AOR? How would you prioritize the types of programs or activities that should receive support under these security assistance authorities?**

Building partner capacity promotes stability in the region and ensures access and influence. If confirmed, I will prioritize building partnership capacity authorities to support security cooperation initiatives and activities, and bolstering our partners' land, maritime, and air forces to resist coercion and protect critical information. Foreign Military Sales (FMS), International Military Education and Training (IMET), and the Global Peace Operations Initiative are critical tools to meet these objectives.

- 100. What is your assessment of the Maritime Security Initiative (MSI)? How can MSI be leveraged to build shared maritime domain awareness capabilities and build multilateral cooperation amongst participating nations?**

The Indo-Pacific MSI has increased maritime security, improved regional Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), supported the development of a common regional maritime picture, increased regional information sharing, and provided reassurance to regional partners while helping to build and sustain maritime relationships. MSI has been and will continue to be leveraged to augment our existing exercises to promote information sharing technologies, platforms, and procedures that allow our partners to experience first-hand the benefits of shared maritime awareness while operating in a coalition with the U.S. and other like-minded nations.

**Respect for human rights has long been a core principle of United States foreign and security policy.**

- 101. In your view, what role does U.S. military engagement, including efforts to help professionalize foreign partner militaries, play in encouraging respect for human rights?**

U.S. military engagement with allies and partners in the region plays a critical role in the development of professional military standards and demonstrates our values including human dignity and human rights.

### **Law of the Sea**

- 102. Do you support U.S. accession to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea? If so, why?**

Yes. U.S. accession will confer credibility on our efforts to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific. Consistent with U.S. policy, our forces already train to these rules, operate by these rules, and safeguard these rules to preserve freedom of navigation and the sovereign rights of all nations.

**103. Would U.S. accession to the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention benefit the U.S. military's mission in the Asia-Pacific region? If so, how?**

Yes. Accession would significantly enhance U.S. credibility when engaging with allies, partners, and other nations, most of which are parties to UNCLOS.

**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.**

**104. What is your view of the steps taken to prevent and respond to sexual assaults in INDOPACOM, including assaults by and against U.S. civilian and contractor personnel?**

Acting with a sense of urgency, we must continue our work to counter sexual assault and sexual harassment. I will work tirelessly to achieve this. There is no greater priority than taking care of our people. Sexual assault undermines the health and well-being of our people and the overall readiness of the force. As leaders, we owe all of our people a respectful and safe work environment in which to execute their mission and fulfill their oath to the Constitution.

I have seen great focus by DoD on the prevention of incidents and the immediate response to reported incidents. Despite continued efforts, sexual assault remains a significant problem and many victims do not feel supported by their command nor safe reporting crimes. We must be more effective in our actions. I will closely monitor the implementation of the Office of Special Trial Counsel and impact it has on victim confidence and the incidence of these crimes.

USINDOPACOM established the first full-time Combatant Command (COCOM) Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program Manager to liaise and coordinate with DoD SAPRO, all Service Components, and other DoD/Federal agencies to improve operational support and to enhance the Theater's SAPR network to support all victims of sex-related crimes. If confirmed, I will assess the effectiveness of this organization and make necessary adjustments.

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

From the perspective of a service component commander, my view is that USINDOPACOM has strong policies and procedures in place to protect victims of sexual assault from retaliation or reprisal, and if confirmed I intend to reinforce and improve them.

If confirmed, I will unendingly work with all leaders to communicate my priorities and expectations on sexual assault and harassment. On my watch USINDOPACOM will continue to ensure that leaders are appropriately taking actions to prevent victims from reprisal for reporting assault and harassment.

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

Each of the services has established guidelines for a 24 hour, seven-day-a-week sexual assault response capability in all locations. Additionally, from my perspective as a service component commander, USINDOPACOM provides oversight for ensuring that adequate resources are present at deployed locations to maintain the ability to appropriately respond to incidents.

If confirmed, I will continue existing efforts to support the Services to undertake the restructuring, professionalizing, strengthening, and resourcing the new Sexual Assault Response Workforce. The workforce will reduce reliance on collateral duty personnel functioning in victim assistance roles and will give Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs) and Victim Advocates (VAs) independence from command reporting structures. The initiative moves us closer to accomplishing our shared goal of a highly skilled workforce providing high quality victim assistance.

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

At the end of 2023, the Department fully implemented the Office of Special Trial Counsel (OSTC) within each Service. Being fully independent from the military chain of command, the OSTC military prosecutors will decide whether to prosecute allegations of sexual assault. The creation of this independent special victim's prosecution office is a step forward in the right direction to restore Service member confidence in military justice process and encourage victims to report.

The Services have enhanced the availability and effectiveness of SAPR and the Victims' Legal Counsel (VLC) Programs to provide advocacy, promote care and treatment for victims, and provide legal counsel.

In USINDOPACOM Area of Responsibility (AOR), Service SAPR Program Managers are closely connected with the Forensic Healthcare Lead Provider Defense Health Network Indo-Pacific (DHN-IP) to ensure sexual assault cases are treated as

an emergency. In addition, healthcare providers are empowered to participate in the larger victim support processes.

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

At all levels, the chain of command is the most consequential actor in providing support to victims of sexual assault. Leaders set the tone and must ensure everyone within the chain of command prioritizes countering sexual assault while taking all necessary actions in a timely manner to support victims.

Leaders now have new Service SAPR policies to remove barriers and encourage victims to seek assistance. These policies include (1) "Safe-To-Report" which prescribes the handling of alleged minor collateral misconduct of a Service member who is the victim of sexual assault; (2) "No Wrong Door" approach – a new system for getting more timely and effective assistance for sexual assault/harassment and domestic violence; and (3) "Convalescent Leave" to allow non-chargeable time-off for seeking services or recovery support.

**109. What is your view about the role of the chain of command in changing the military culture in which these sexual assaults have occurred? Do you consider the current sexual assault policies and procedures, particularly those on restricted reporting, to be effective?**

My view is that the chain of command is the most consequential actor in establishing a culture that demands everyone is treated with dignity and respect at all times. Leadership must prioritize countering sexual assault -- but it takes leadership at all levels of an organization to fully implement and sustain changes in culture.

Restricted Reporting allows victim care to be a top priority. Victims may come forward without triggering an investigation and receive Special Victims' Counsel/Victims' Legal Counsel advice and medical and advocacy services while maintaining confidentiality. Without restricted reporting, some victims would not report.

I believe the expanded eligibility for Restricted Reporting for leaders and victims is an option that will encourage more victims to come forward to seek assistance. Expanded eligibility allows a leader the option to send the victim immediately to the SARC for support should the victim disclose a sexual assault to personnel in the chain of command and does not want to participate in an investigation. At the same time, the leader must report the assault to the Military Criminal Investigative Organization (MCIO) to be processed.

**110. If confirmed, what actions will you take to reassess current policies, procedures, and programs and to ensure senior level direction and oversight of efforts to prevent and respond to sexual assaults in INDOPACOM?**

If confirmed, I will continue to ensure compliance with governing law and policy for leaders at all levels to take action to prevent sexual assault while protecting those involved from retaliation and support victims. This is not a legal obligation alone – it is a moral imperative.

I will continue to set the example by establishing a command climate in which a victim can report a sexual assault without fear of retaliation. I will review and make any necessary changes to the programs and policies in place at USINDOPACOM designed to ensure necessary visibility and oversight within the theater.

**111. 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 as INDOPACOM Commander?**

If confirmed, I will continue to emphasize the importance of a healthy command climate and ensure sexual assault prevention and response resources continue to be available at all locations in the AOR.

The Department measures command climate using a variety data, including administrative records, reports, interview data, focus group data, and survey data such as the Defense Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS). The DoD Integrated Primary Prevention Policy for Prevention Workforce and Leaders outlines how the integrated primary prevention workforce will collaborate with leaders to incorporate and interpret these various data sets to reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors, promoting healthier climates across the Force.

The Services are in the process of hiring an Integrated Primary Prevention Workforce to build healthy climates and create environments free from abuse and harm. I look forward to actively supporting and promoting their efforts as they onboard.

I will continue to fully support the investigative and prosecutorial processes in place to provide victims all the necessary legal resources – and will ensure my subordinate Commanders do the same. I will specifically prioritize and emphasize proactive coordination as appropriate with the Office of Special Trial Counsel to ensure the fair administration of justice.

**Congressional Oversight**

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

**112. What are your views on the state of INDOPACOM's relationship with the Senate Armed Services Committee in particular, and with Congress in general?**



If confirmed, I will assess INDOPACOM's relationship with Congress in general and the Senate Armed Services Committee in particular. My expectation is that these relationships will continue to be cooperative, productive and respectful of the Congress's oversight responsibilities.

**113. If confirmed, what actions would you take to sustain a productive and mutually beneficial relationship between Congress and INDOPACOM?**

If confirmed, I will sustain the productive relationship between Congress and USINDOPACOM by maintaining transparent and open communication. I will maintain a robust legislative affairs program to facilitate effective interactions and be personally available to members of Congress and their staffs.

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

Yes.

**115. 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 with a simple yes or no.**

Yes.

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

**118. 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 with a simple yes or no.**

Yes.

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

Yes.

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

Yes.