

**Senate Armed Services Committee**  
**Advance Questions for LTG Laura J. Richardson, USA**  
**Nominee to be Commander, United States Southern Command**

**Duties and Qualifications**

**What is your understanding of the duties and functions of the Commander, U. S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM)?**

Title 10 of the United States Code and the 2020 Unified Command Plan (UCP) outlines U. S. SOUTHCOM's (SOUTHCOM) missions, responsibilities, and geographic area of responsibility (AOR). SOUTHCOM is a unified Combatant Command responsible for contingency planning, operations, and security cooperation for Central and South America and the Caribbean. In this capacity, the SOUTHCOM Commander is responsible for detecting, deterring, and preventing threats and attacks against the United States. Specific tasks include defending the Panama Canal and Canal area, building and enhancing regional security partnerships, and being the principal contact on military matters pertaining to the AOR enabling interagency and DoD counterparts to advance U.S. influence and interests in the region.

**What background and experience do you possess that you believe qualify you to perform these duties?**

I am humbled and honored to be nominated as Commander, SOUTHCOM. If confirmed, I will use the combined experience of my 34 years in uniform. Commanding at multiple echelons provided me numerous opportunities to work with interagency teammates and multinational militaries, and to lead joint formations comprised of all services in the Department of Defense. Most recently, as the Commander of U.S. Army North, I served as NORTHCOM's Joint Force Land Component Command for the Homeland. This included the command, control, and employment of the Joint Force in support of the lead federal agencies in charge of COVID operations, hurricane and wildfire responses, foreign disaster relief in the Bahamas, earthquake response in Puerto Rico, and the Southwest Border mission. Simultaneously, we executed security cooperation programs and developed strong relationships with our Mexican Army and Air Force partners, as well as our Canadian Army allies.

As a General Officer in NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Command, I was responsible for ISAF's strategic communications, with the additional mission to train, advise, and assist the President, Ministry of Defense, and Ministry of Interior Spokesmen/Public Affairs Teams. Working with the militaries of more than 40 nations on the ISAF Staff demonstrated to me the strategic importance of NATO and the coalition of allies and partners. I have also had the privilege to serve as the Army's Chief of Legislative Liaison, and also the Army Senate Liaison Chief, which broadened my understanding of the Legislative Branch, our government processes and the vital constitutional role of Congress in defense and oversight. I commanded Soldiers in combat during the initial assault and first year in Iraq while assigned to the 101st Airborne Division, and conducted stability operations for a geographic area working with Iraqi civilian leaders to provide security and care for their citizens. As a young officer, I served in the Executive Branch as an emergency action officer for the Vice President and worked

within our national security enterprise at the strategic level which was foundational as I progressed through my career. These experiences have prepared me for the challenges and opportunities I will face as Commander SOUTHCOM, and if confirmed, I will draw upon the lessons I have learned throughout my career.

**Do you believe that there are any steps that you need to take to enhance your expertise to perform the duties of the SOUTHCOM Commander?**

If confirmed, I will review all plans for which SOUTHCOM is responsible. I will utilize the expertise of the SOUTHCOM staff to understand the laws, treaties, and agreements applicable within the SOUTHCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR). I will also seek out the expert perspectives within the U.S. Government, academia, and the private sector. Traveling in the AOR and meeting directly with our U.S. missions and the partner nations' leaders and security forces, will be the best opportunity to learn about their culture, country, and security challenges. Working with our Partner Nations is a privilege, and I am extremely humbled to be afforded the opportunity to advance our vital national interests in a region with whom we share such deep cultural ties and geographical proximity.

**Relationships**

**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. Other sections of law and traditional practice, however, establish important relationships outside the chain of command. Please describe your understanding of the relationship of the Commander, U.S. Southern Command, to the following:**

**The Secretary of Defense**

The Commander, U.S. Southern Command, reports directly to the Secretary of Defense and is responsible to the President and the Secretary of Defense for performing the military missions assigned to the Command and for exercising command authority over the forces assigned by the Secretary of Defense. The Commander is directly responsible to the Secretary of Defense for the ability of the Command to carry out its mission and looks to the Secretary to provide sufficient authority and forces to carry out those missions.

**The Deputy Secretary of Defense**

The Deputy Secretary of Defense performs duties delegated by the Secretary and performs the Secretary's duties in his absence. The Commander, U.S. Southern Command must ensure that the Deputy Secretary has the information necessary to perform those duties and coordinates with the Deputy on delegated issues.

## **The Under Secretaries of Defense**

While the Commander, U.S. Southern Command does not have a direct command relationship with the Under Secretaries of Defense, it is important that the Commander communicate regularly with the appropriate Under Secretaries on strategic and regional security issues to ensure alignment within the Department.

## **The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff**

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) is the principle military advisor to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense. According to the 2021 Unified Command Plan, the CJCS serves as the global integrator across combatant commands and the communication link between the Secretary of Defense or the President to the Combatant Commander. Facilitating the Chairman's role requires consistent communication and information from the Commander, U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) on events and activities in the AOR. The Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff performs duties assigned by the CJCS and performs the Chairman's duties in his absence. Accordingly, the SOUTHCOM Commander communicates with the Vice Chairman to enable his performance of these duties and responsibilities.

## **The Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs**

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs is the principal advisor to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and the Secretary of Defense on all matters of international security strategy and DoD policy in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Russia, Eurasia, and, most importantly for the SOUTHCOM Commander, the Western Hemisphere. This position also oversees security cooperation programs and military education and training, which are ultimately the primary engagement tools in the Western Hemisphere. Although the SOUTHCOM Commander does not have a direct command relationship with the Assistant Secretary, in my view, SOUTHCOM should be in regular communication with this office to ensure alignment with DoD security policy in the Western Hemisphere.

## **The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Global Security**

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Global Security's responsibility in the areas of cyber, space, countering weapons of mass destruction, and homeland defense, make it a cross-cutting policy office. Given SOUTHCOM's mission to deter threats in all domains, I believe that the Commander should coordinate with the Assistant Secretary on all matters impacting the Homeland from Central and South America and the Caribbean, even though there is no direct command relationship with this office.

## **The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict**

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (SO/LIC) is responsible for many of the activities conducted every day within the U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) AOR including counterterrorism, information operations, counterdrug operations, detention operations, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts. While the SOUTHCOM Commander does not have a direct command relationship with the Assistant Secretary, my view is that regular coordination with the Assistant Secretary on issues of mutual concern and interest is important to mission success in these important areas.

## **The Service Secretaries and Service Chiefs**

The Service Secretaries and Service Chiefs are responsible for organizing, training, and equipping their forces. They execute administrative control and support of forces assigned to SOUTHCOM through the Service Component Commands. The SOUTHCOM Commander coordinates regularly with the Service Secretaries and Chiefs to ensure the Services provide trained and ready forces to fulfill specific roles and missions. In order to be operationally successful and permit the Services to provide forces globally, the SOUTHCOM Commander clearly communicates operational requirements, and works with the Services to effectively and efficiently employ the assigned capabilities. The Commander also must convey future capability requirements so that the Services may program, design, and develop a lethal Joint Force.

## **The other Combatant Commanders, particularly U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM)**

The Commander U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) must frequently crosstalk and maintain open lines of communication with other Combatant Commanders in order to synchronize efforts against global threats. This means sharing information, intelligence, and coordinating across all domains. The SOUTHCOM Commander must maintain a close relationship with Commander of NORTHCOM regarding matters of Homeland Defense and Hemispheric concerns in order to secure the southern approaches to the homeland.

## **U. S. Chiefs of Mission within the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility (AOR)**

All SOUTHCOM operations and initiatives in the AOR are executed by, with, and through the embassies and Chiefs of Mission—the U.S. leadership and expertise on the ground. While the Commander, U.S. Southern Command does not have a formal relationship with the Chiefs of Mission, they are in regular communication to ensure unity of effort in each country, to include planning of security cooperation programs to meet national security objectives. SOUTHCOM also benefits from having a Civilian Deputy to the Commander, a senior State Department official, to facilitate regular engagement with Chiefs of Mission and the Department of State. On the ground, Senior Defense Officials are integrated into the country team and provide daily coordination with the embassies.

## **National Defense Strategy and Global Posture Review**

**The 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) prioritized the long-term, strategic competition with revisionist powers China and Russia as the primary challenge with which the United States must contend, while also recognizing the need to deter and counter rogue regimes like North Korea and Iran and move to a more resource-sustainable approach to counterterrorism. Implementing the NDS will require the Secretary of Defense and combatant commanders to carry out missions efficiently and make hard choices – including in AORs such as SOUTHCOM which prior commanders have identified as an “economy of force” combatant command.**

**How would you define SOUTHCOM’s essential missions in the AOR and what steps would you take to accomplish them within an economy of force approach?**

I understand that SOUTHCOM deters aggression, defeats threats, rapidly responds to crises, and builds regional capacity, working with allies, partner nations, and U.S. government team members to enhance security and defend the U.S. homeland and national interests. This critical role in the hemisphere includes supporting USG interagency-led efforts to counter Transnational Criminal Organizations and counter narcotics operations, as well as building partner capacity efforts, and when called upon, humanitarian efforts and disaster relief. In my view, by working together with international allies, partners in the region and U.S. government organizations active in the theater, SOUTHCOM can achieve a great return on investment for the United States.

**If confirmed, how do you plan to support the objectives of the National Defense Strategy in the context of the SOUTHCOM AOR, particularly with respect to long-term, strategic competition with revisionist powers?**

Prevailing in strategic competition with China, or any other nation, is an enduring national security objective highlighted in both the 2018 National Defense Strategy and the 2021 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance. In the SOUTHCOM AOR, I assess that China, Russia, as well as Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) will seek to exploit vulnerabilities exacerbated by the global pandemic. If confirmed, I intend to maximize engagements with our military partners to strengthen regional resiliency, and expand the competitive space by reinforcing the actions of our diplomatic corps and key Executive Branch agencies including USAID and the Departments of State, Treasury, and others as they employ all elements of national power in the hemisphere. Additionally, the SOUTHCOM enterprise must deepen interoperability with allies and partners and integrate combined and joint solutions to global challenges. Together with our partners, I assess that we will overcome the corrupt and corrosive influence of China, the malign intentions of Russia, and stem the violent actions of TCOs.

**Secretary of Defense Austin has announced that the Department will conduct a Global Posture Review to assess requirements for military capability.**

**If confirmed, what role would you expect to play in that review?**

The Global Posture Review is a foundational process for achieving our national security objectives. If confirmed, I will provide my best military advice to the Secretary of Defense and the Department of Defense policy leadership on the appropriate level of presence and capability in the AOR.

**In your view, what, if any, changes should be considered in reshaping the National Defense Strategy, taking into account recent developments in the SOUTHCOM AOR?**

If confirmed, I will conduct a full review of the priorities, challenges, and opportunities in the SOUTHCOM AOR. Much of the 2018 National Defense Strategy is still applicable to today's defense challenges in the strategic environment, such as our long-term competition with China, and the importance of strengthening alliances and attracting new partners.

### **Major Challenges, Problems, Priorities**

**If confirmed as the Commander of SOUTHCOM, you will be responsible for all military operations in that region. These include operations supporting homeland defense and security; supporting law enforcement activities to counter illicit trafficking efforts in source and transit countries and to counter transnational criminal organizations; responding to natural disasters and building foreign capability for disaster response; conducting detainee operations at Guantanamo Bay; and building the institutional capacity of foreign security forces that promotes the development of democratic values within the militaries of the region.**

**In your view, what are the major challenges and problems you would confront if confirmed as the next Commander of SOUTHCOM?**

I am concerned about the increasing Chinese and Russian presence and influence in our hemisphere, particularly where these nations are strengthening ties with governments that do not share our democratic values (like Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua), or taking advantage of our partners facing insecurity, instability, and long-term impacts of COVID-19. I am also concerned about Transnational Criminal Organizations. These organizations pose a direct threat to the United States as they traffic in drugs, weapons, humans, and other illicit goods. Their activities enable violence and corruption, and also drive migration. Additionally, the SOUTHCOM Area of Responsibility is currently experiencing a humanitarian crisis as millions of Venezuelans flee the tragic conditions in their homeland. Further, the region is prone to natural disasters and SOUTHCOM must be ready to assist when these strike. Finally,

with instability in both Cuba and Haiti, SOUTHCOM must be ready to respond in the event of a mass migration event in the Caribbean. In addition to these challenges, if confirmed, I would also be responsible for continuing the detainee operations mission at Joint Task Force Guantanamo.

**If confirmed, what plans do you have for addressing these challenges and problems?**

If confirmed, I will maintain SOUTHCOM's primary mission of securing the southern approaches and collaborating with other U.S. government agencies to advance security, economic prosperity, and regional stability. I fully expect that SOUTHCOM will return to pre-COVID levels of bilateral and multilateral training exercises to deepen interoperability with key strategic partners. I will also ensure that SOUTHCOM strengthens security cooperation and civil-military coordination on shared challenges like disaster response, supporting interagency-led efforts to countering criminal and terrorist networks, and stemming the flow of illicit drugs and other goods. I will also seek opportunities to expand human rights-related engagements in the region, increase professional military exchanges through International Military Education and Training (IMET) and other education and training, and foster partner nation defense institution building. I believe that SOUTHCOM is stronger and more effective against the challenges in the region when our partners are better trained, ethical, and effective members of the profession of arms, who understand their role in a democratic society. If confirmed, I will also continue to ensure the safe, legal, and humane care and treatment of detainees at Joint Task Force Guantanamo for as long as this mission continues.

**If confirmed, what broad priorities would you establish and how would you define success and failure in your core missions in tangible terms?**

If confirmed, I see SOUTHCOM's success being determined by three mutually supporting priorities: (1) building regional resilience, (2) increasing interoperability and integration, and (3) remaining the partner of choice in the region. Building regional resilience will be an important key to countering all threats, including the corrosive influence of China, Russia, and Transnational Criminal Organizations. In my view, greater regional security and stability will, in turn, increase partner capacity to respond to crisis, provide humanitarian assistance, and execute disaster response, making the SOUTHCOM Area of Responsibility safer and stronger. Further, the United States can increase interoperability and integration with our partners across all domains by expanding participation in multilateral exercises, increasing professional military education opportunities, and expanding gender integration. These efforts will yield a high return on investment and will allow us to maintain a competitive security advantage. If confirmed, I will work to ensure the U.S. remains an engaged and trusted partner in the region, demonstrating our commitment through continued presence and serving as the example of a professional military force. In my view, failure would be SOUTHCOM's inability to (1) operate effectively below the level of conflict, (2) rapidly respond to a crisis when called upon, or (3) deter threats to the homeland emanating from this region. Undoubtedly, failure in our own hemisphere would threaten U.S. national security interests.

**If confirmed, how would you work to ensure that Department of Defense (DOD) efforts in your AOR complement the efforts of civilian agencies?**

I have learned that SOUTHCOM has multiple well-established relationships with intergovernmental organizations including USAID, the Departments of State, Homeland Security, Treasury, and other agencies. I understand that the civilian deputy position at SOUTHCOM is held by an ambassador who serves as a conduit with the Department of State, embassies, and key leaders in the region. Additionally, liaisons from many of these executive agencies are integrated into the SOUTHCOM staff and operations. If confirmed, I would capitalize on these relationships to expand our effectiveness in the region. SOUTHCOM serves as an enabler for the U.S. government in this region and the U.S. cannot be successful without a whole-of government approach in the SOUTHCOM Area of Responsibility.

**Influence of Countries Outside the Region in Latin America**

**In the last few years, China, Russia, and Iran have been increasingly engaged in Latin America, particularly expanding their relations with Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua. They have sought to use malign political and financial influence, corruption, and disinformation to gain strategic advantage in Latin America.**

**What is your assessment of China, Russia, and Iran’s presence and objectives in the region?**

In my assessment, China, Russia, and Iran all seek power and influence in SOUTHCOM’s Area of Responsibility. They are actively courting strategically important Latin American and Caribbean partners and support authoritarian, or anti-American regimes in various ways. China is aggressively expanding its economic, political, and diplomatic influence across the region through infrastructure investments, loans, financing, and disingenuous vaccine diplomacy. Globally, China seeks defense relationships and access to allow the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) to project and sustain military power on a global scale. As in other theaters, Russia employs the full range of diplomatic, intelligence, and informational tools to influence public attitudes and decision makers in the region. Russia has made significant inroads into the regional information domain, saturating the internet, social media, and television outlets to sow doubts about U.S. intentions. Iran’s efforts in the region have primarily been aimed at circumventing international sanctions.

**What is the extent of China, Russia, and Iran’s military-to-military engagement with Latin American countries?**

In my view, China and Russia continue to compete directly with the United States in arms sales and security cooperation in the Western Hemisphere. China and Russia conduct military deployments to the region ranging from the Chinese hospital ship PEACE ARK missions and PLA naval exercises, to Russian strategic bomber flights and partnered counter-narcotics



operations in Central America. China offers all-expenses-paid training at its military institutions in Beijing as it seeks to deepen military relationships. Iran is a leading sponsor of terrorism and its role in the region is concerning. In recent years, Iran has curtailed its overt military engagements, but maintains its ties, particularly with the Maduro regime in Venezuela.

**What is your assessment of the nature and extent to which China, Russia, and Iran are engaged with transnational criminal organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean?**

In my view, the potential for China, Russia or Iran to collaborate with transnational criminal organizations (TCO) in Latin America and the Caribbean is a concern. While it is publicly documented that Chinese and Russian enterprises and criminal elements operate in Latin America and the Caribbean, I am not aware of direct Chinese or Russian government participation in these activities. I assess that Iranian associates in Latin America are more likely to engage low-level criminal elements than TCOs through commercial ventures, as Iran seeks to acquire hard-currency (remittances, etc.) and circumvent economic sanctions.

**To what extent have China, Russia, and Iran taken advantage of the current pandemic crisis, and economic hardships exacerbated by that crisis, to expand their influence in the Latin American region?**

I believe the devastation caused by COVID-19 in this region is more than a humanitarian crisis; it is changing the geo-political landscape. COVID-19 has brought on a new era of vaccine, mask, and health diplomacy that China is leveraging to its advantage. In many cases, these acts of good will are thinly veiled extortion, leaving vulnerable nations beholden to Chinese coercion and economic leverage. Additionally, Chinese and Russian information operations are aggressive and full of disinformation hiding their minimal capacity to deliver on assistance and investment. China, Russia, and Iran are using their influence in the region to bolster authoritarian regimes, including the Maduro regime in Venezuela, with disastrous consequences to the populations there, furthering a humanitarian crisis and mass migration throughout the region.

**In your view, what is the appropriate method to counter any malign influence that countries from outside the region may attempt to exert on Latin American and Caribbean nations?**

In my view, with diplomacy as the lead element, all elements of national power are necessary to counter malign influence and compete with adversaries in long-term strategic competition. The military activities of the United States in the region should be integrated with diplomatic efforts through consistent security cooperation and engagement with our partner militaries. This will enable us to expand our competitive space and maintain our strength as the most trusted and reliable partner in the region.

## **DOD Counter-narcotics and Counter-Illicit Trafficking Activities**

**DOD serves as the single lead agency for the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime foreign shipments of drugs flowing toward the United States. On an annual basis, DOD's counter-narcotics (CN) program expends over \$750 million to support the Department's CN operations, including to build the capacity of U.S. federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, and certain foreign governments, and provide intelligence support on CN-related matters and a variety of other unique enabling capabilities. Much of this funding is directed towards the SOUTHCOM AOR.**

**In your view, what is the appropriate role of DOD – and by extension SOUTHCOM – in U.S. counterdrug and counter-illicit trafficking efforts?**

The Department of Defense (DOD) has a statutory mission to detect and monitor the aerial and maritime transit of US-bound illegal drugs. The intelligence and information gathered by these efforts are then used by law enforcement agencies to disrupt or interdict those drugs under the authorities those partner agencies bring to the fight. In my view, DOD also enables partner nation counterdrug efforts by sharing actionable information and intelligence, providing training and equipment, and minor infrastructure support.

**How would you measure the effectiveness of U.S. and DOD counter-narcotics and counter-illicit trafficking programs?**

Traditionally, I understand that the amount of drugs disrupted or interdicted has been the most widely-used metric for counterdrug programs. In my view, this may not be the most effective measurement of success because it only measures the impact to the final product of large transnational criminal organizations and does not measure the impact to the organizations themselves. The efforts to prevent hundreds of tons of drugs from entering the U.S. and harming our citizens should continue but, in my view, stopping the drug shipments is only part of the solution. Ultimate success in this mission will depend on continued partnerships to enable the dismantling of the transnational criminal organizations responsible for the trafficking of drugs and other illegal commodities. If confirmed, I commit to fostering these continued partnerships, and I also believe that SOUTHCOM should consider the effectiveness of U.S security cooperation programs that build partner capacity to participate in this transregional mission.

**In your view, what should be the role of the United States in countering the flow of narcotics to other nations in Latin America?**

DOD's statutory mission is to detect and monitor the flow of illicit drugs heading to the United States. However, as those illicit drugs make their way to the U.S., they leave in its wake corruption and violence that destabilize our hemisphere and drive migration toward our border. I believe this poses a national security threat, as well as a regional threat and that we should work

with our partner nations through security cooperation programs to build their capacity to face this challenge with us.

**The production and trafficking of particular drugs in the SOUTHCOM AOR – such as cocaine and, to a lesser extent, heroin and synthetic opioids – threatens the health and safety of U.S. citizens, Latin Americans, and regional stability.**

**What is your understanding of the principal illegal drugs produced and trafficked in the SOUTHCOM AOR?**

The Center for Disease Control has released data showing that over 93,000 people died from drug overdoses in the United States in 2020—an increase of almost 30% from the previous year. This reflects an increase in deaths from opioids, as well as cocaine. Cocaine is almost exclusively produced in this Hemisphere, with all the world’s source countries in South America. There is also a small amount of heroin produced in SOUTHCOM’s AOR. My understanding of these substances is that they—and the criminal networks that create and move them—represent an enduring threat to our citizens and to our partner nations.

**What is your assessment of the threat posed by the trafficking of heroin into the United States from Mexico, Central and South America?**

Heroin is a highly addictive and dangerous drug. The rising death toll in the United States is destroying families and fracturing communities. Although the majority of heroin entering the United States originates in Mexico, I understand that China has been trafficking precursor chemicals for synthetic opioids through the SOUTHCOM AOR. It is well known that illicit drugs and precursors are the primary source of funding for Transnational Criminal Organizations in the region, which threaten stability and security in the southern approaches to the United States.

**What is your assessment of the threat posed by the flow of fentanyl and chemical precursors from China and elsewhere in Asia into Mexico and Central America, and from there into the United States?**

I understand that China is the principal source of precursor chemicals used in the production of fentanyl and other synthetic opioids that are killing thousands of Americans every year. The data shows that in 2020, the number of deaths in the U.S. from opioids alone was nearly 70,000. Fentanyl is also being mixed into more commonly used drugs like cocaine, making them exponentially more lethal to users. Accordingly, the threat posed by the flow of precursor chemicals through the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility to the United States is very high.

**In your view, what more can DOD do to combat this effort, including in cooperation with U.S. Northern Command and with interagency and law enforcement partners?**

Intelligence drives operations, and effective sharing of intelligence across the interagency is vital. SOUTHCOM's coordination with NORTHCOM in this effort is robust and regular. The Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-S) joint operating area overlaps the NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM areas of responsibility, which enables the Task Force to act as a natural synchronizer of efforts. JIATF-S also integrates personnel from the law enforcement and intelligence communities, as well as from our partner nations, to integrate efforts across stakeholders. I believe that more can always be done against transnational criminal organizations, but targeting how they do business—including financial flows, logistics and communications will yield more impactful results. If confirmed, I will also look to enable interagency and partner nation efforts to combat the flow of narcotics through the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility into the United States, and increase security cooperation efforts to improve regional interoperability to combat narcotics trafficking.

**Building Partner Capacity**

**In the past few years, Congress has provided DOD a number of authorities to build the capacity of partner nations' security forces and institutions.**

**In your view, what should be our strategic objectives in building the capacities of partner nations in the SOUTHCOM AOR?**

In my view, building partner capacity in the SOUTHCOM Area of Responsibility is a strategic imperative and a long-term approach to regional and global security challenges. By increasing interoperability with partners and integrating whole-of-government efforts, SOUTHCOM can improve domain awareness, enable regional solutions, and expedite threat interdictions. I assess that strengthening defense institutions achieves regional resiliency against the corrosive effects of China, Russia, and Transnational Criminal Organizations.

**What would be your priorities, if confirmed, for building partner capacity, including institutional capacity, and other security cooperation efforts in the SOUTHCOM AOR?**

I believe the United States must be present and engaged in our shared neighborhood. We cannot expect to remain relevant in our hemisphere if we are not engaged with our regional partners. Partner nations in the SOUTHCOM Area of Responsibility share common objectives, face common threats and frequently have the same desired outcomes. If confirmed, a priority for me would be a focused regional approach to security cooperation that would enable us to identify and respond to shared threats, narrow and constrict capability gaps in the region, and create synergies in the delivery and development of capabilities. If confirmed, I will continue

developing partner institutional capacity to reflect responsible, effective, and sustainable defense institutions.

**In your view, what is the appropriate balance between efforts to build partnership capacity at the tactical and operational level and at the institutional and ministerial-level?**

In my view, establishing and building partner nation capacity at the tactical and operational levels works for near-term operations, however, over time there is an invariable erosion of those capabilities without a sustainable institutional infrastructure. Building capacity at the institutional and ministerial levels is foundational to the long-term success of building partner capacity. This is a whole-of-government approach through various efforts, to include engagement with Ministry of Defense Advisors, to ensure SOUTHCOM incorporates institutional capability building in security cooperation efforts.

**In your view, how should our security cooperation be modified, conditioned, or restricted with countries in which there is significant corruption at the institutional and ministerial level?**

If confirmed, I will review the existing authorities periodically to ensure the adequacy of these authorities to enable SOUTHCOM's responsiveness to emergent requirements, and I will recommend any necessary changes to the Secretary of Defense and Congress.

**In your view, how should SOUTHCOM approach building partner capacity with host nation militaries that have been tasked to take on the role of police and internal security forces?**

In my view, SOUTHCOM must continue to cooperate and synchronize efforts and resource expenditures with other U.S. Government institutions that are the lead federal agencies for providing security and policing support to regional partner nations. At the same time, it is important to recognize the times when defense support to civil authorities is necessary and legitimate in cases where the threat exceeds the ability of a nation's public security forces to secure its citizens. In these cases, working closely with the Department of State and Department of Justice, if confirmed, I will emphasize the importance of respect for human rights with my counterparts, and will ensure that human rights training is incorporated into SOUTHCOM's security cooperation program.

## **Transnational Criminal Organizations**

**Transnational criminal organizations are engaged in a diversity of illicit activities, including money laundering, human trafficking illicit financial flows, illegal trade in natural resources and wildlife, and trade in illegal drugs, precursors and weapons. These activities reach not only the entirety of the Western Hemisphere, but increasingly throughout the world.**

**In your assessment, how has the threat to the United States from transnational criminal organizations, evolved?**

It is my understanding that Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) traffic in arms, humans, and drugs, engage in illegal mining, corrupt money laundering, and perpetrate illegal unregulated and unreported fishing - estimated at billions of dollars a year. These organizations capitalize on the instability that drives illegal migration, fuels violence, and causes great security concerns throughout the region. TCOs are dynamic and were able to continue and, in some cases, increase their trafficking activities despite the global pandemic, ultimately undermining security and prosperity for our partners in the region.

**In your view, what kind of additional support, if any, should DOD – and SOUTHCOM in particular – provide to U.S. law enforcement to counter and degrade these transnational criminal organizations?**

Transnational criminal organizations are a national threat that directly impacts the security of our citizens. In my view, DOD should continue to conduct detection and monitoring of the transit of illegal drugs, support interdiction operations, and build the capacity of partner nation defense and security forces through training, equipping, and infrastructure support. If confirmed, I will work tirelessly within DOD and across the U.S. government to enable those operations that combat transnational threats.

**What additional resources, if any, do you believe SOUTHCOM requires to more effectively carry out its mission in countering transnational criminal organizations?**

It is my understanding that SOUTHCOM receives less than one percent of the Department's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance allocation each year. Intelligence is critical to success in this region. A small investment in this region provides an enhanced return on the investment toward stability and our national security. It is also critical that SOUTHCOM remains present and engaged. It is my understanding that for the first time SOUTHCOM is employing Security Force Assistance Teams to provide training and expert exchanges to the Colombian, Honduran, and Panamanian forces. I believe that efforts like these make a measurable impact for a relatively small investment, and pays significant dividends when it comes to building trust and interoperability in the region.

## **Northern Triangle**

**In April, the Biden Administration announced a \$4 billion plan to address the causes of migration in the Northern Triangle countries of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. These causes include corruption, anti-democratic governance, criminal violence, environmental devastation from two hurricanes and the coronavirus pandemic.**

**What is your understanding of the objectives and priorities of the Administration's plan for the Northern Triangle countries?**

I understand the Administration's plan in the Northern Triangle is a long-term effort designed to address the root causes of some of the most significant challenges causing irregular migration, corruption, and the looming humanitarian crisis in the area. It is my understanding that President Biden has pledged \$4 billion in additional assistance to the region to focus on these root causes.

**What is your understanding of how SOUTHCOM's activities will implement or complement the plan for the region?**

As I understand them currently, SOUTHCOM's ongoing activities and operations complement whole-of-government efforts in the region. Security cooperation and humanitarian assistance activities in the Northern Triangle help achieve improvements in regional security and health environments, help reduce irregular migration, and mitigate drivers of instability. SOUTHCOM's human rights initiative improves host nation security forces' respect for fundamental human rights. It also promotes better governance, respect for the rule of law, and increased transparency and anti-corruption goals with military leadership. All of these efforts strengthen partner capacity, degrade the transnational criminal organization threat networks, and advance and support U.S. national interests in the region.

**In your view, what is the impact of corruption among government and military leaders in the Northern Triangle countries on the stability and security of the region?**

Corruption at any level weakens public institutions which negatively affects stability and security. DOD and SOUTHCOM serve as an example for other governments and military leaders to follow, not only for honesty and integrity, but also respect for human rights and adherence to the rule of law.

**What do you believe is the appropriate role, if any, of SOUTHCOM in supporting civilian-led stabilization assistance activities in the region?**

It is my understanding that SOUTHCOM has a lot to offer in support of civil activities in the Northern Triangle. Many of SOUTHCOM's activities are in support of a civilian lead federal agency, and I am familiar with this concept from my time as the Commander of U.S. Army

North. I believe SOUTHCOM will continue to contribute to solutions by supporting our partners, building regional resiliency, and increasing interoperability.

### **Mexico and Cooperation with U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM)**

**Much of the illegal narcotics supply flowing into Mexico comes from the SOUTHCOM AOR. While Mexico is in the NORTHCOM AOR, the rest of Latin America is in the SOUTHCOM AOR.**

**In your view, how should SOUTHCOM and NORTHCOM work together to ensure a fully coordinated effort with respect to illegal narcotics flowing into Mexico and other security challenges?**

In my view, SOUTHCOM has been effective against illegal narcotics entering the U.S. through air and maritime avenues of the Caribbean and Pacific. However, I assess that a missing element is the land domain. Working with NORTHCOM in support of the US law enforcement agencies to synchronize and integrate the joint, interagency, and multinational efforts in this hemisphere will begin to close this gap. Working in concert with partner nation LEAs and militaries will require the continuous coordination and integration that should exist in the interagency and between the Combatant Commands.

### **Colombia**

**U.S. assistance and security cooperation programs operating through Plan Colombia contributed to enabling the Colombian government to engage in an intensive peace and reconciliation process with members of the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and other paramilitary forces. Now implementation of the peace accord appears at risk as violence escalates.**

**What is your assessment of the current security situation in Colombia?**

I assess that, although Colombia and the FARC reached a formal peace agreement in 2016, Colombia continues to face security challenges from Transnational Criminal Organizations, FARC dissidents, and the designated terrorist organization ELN. The current crisis in Venezuela has allowed these actors freedom of movement and resulted in over one million refugees straining Colombia's government services. If confirmed, I will work with our willing and able Colombian partners to support security and humanitarian efforts that will enable them to defeat COVID, provide security for their people, effectively fight transnational criminal organizations, and withstand the pressures of mass migration.



**How should U.S. security cooperation programs and activities be adjusted in response to the situation on the ground in Colombia?**

Like all U.S. security cooperation programs, consistent engagement and support is important to the success of our security efforts and our strong partnerships; Colombia is no exception. If confirmed, I will make a full assessment of the situation on the ground in Colombia. Colombia is one of our strongest partners in the region, and in my view we should continue our support.

**How would you approach the issue of respect for human rights in the Colombian military?**

It is my understanding that promoting respect for human rights has been a top priority for SOUTHCOM for over two decades. SOUTHCOM integrates human rights across its operations and activities, including in its engagement and assistance programs with its partners. If confirmed, I will continue SOUTHCOM's emphasis on human rights in all forms of security assistance.

**Colombia has demonstrated a willingness to become more involved internationally, to include increased engagements with regional partners. Colombia has also deployed forces as part of overseas peacekeeping missions.**

**How should SOUTHCOM assist Colombia in its efforts to assume a greater role as a security provider, both regionally and internationally?**

I believe persistent support of Colombia is critical to its continued efforts to provide both regional and international security. Colombia has become a key exporter of security to the region, and the Colombian military now trains—through the U.S. Colombia Action Plan and other programs—our partner militaries throughout the region. Additionally, Colombia's status as NATO's only Global Partner in Latin America demonstrates its commitment to the shared values of the alliance, as well as its political and security leadership role in the region. The United States' encouragement and support of such leadership provides a valuable contribution to Colombia's efforts—and those of the United States—to provide both regional and international security.

**Venezuela**

**Venezuela continues to suffer a deep political and economic crisis under President Maduro's authoritarian regime. As a result, Venezuela's dysfunction threatens stability throughout the region.**

**What is your assessment of the impact of Venezuela's deteriorating political and economic situation on regional security in the SOUTHCOM AOR?**

In my view, the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela is broadly impacting the security and stability of the region. Driven by food insecurity and repression, millions of Venezuelans have sought refuge in neighboring countries, straining limited healthcare, security and economic resources.

**What is your understanding of U.S. policy towards Venezuela and DOD's role in carrying out that policy?**

The United States recognizes Juan Guaido as the interim President of Venezuela. The U.S. also supports the Venezuelan people and their right to basic civil liberties. DOD's role would be limited in support of a broader U.S. diplomatic effort for a peaceful transition to democracy.

**What is your view of President Maduro's intentions in the region?**

I believe the Maduro regime looks to consolidate authority and subvert regional democracies. The regime also seeks to undermine the United States and like-minded partners in the region through extensive disinformation and misinformation campaigns.

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

In my view, Venezuela offers a permissive environment for countries that seek to undermine the United States. The Maduro regime relies on China, Russia, Cuba, and Iran to help control its narrative and its population, provide security assistance, and evade sanctions. China offers Venezuela economic and political support. The Russian military supports the Venezuelan military with training and intelligence support. Cuba helps Maduro stay in power by advising on tactics to control its population. Iran and Venezuela support each other in evading sanctions.

**What is your understanding of the extent to which Venezuelan government or military forces are involved in the drug trade?**

It is my understanding that senior members of the Venezuelan government have been sanctioned by the Department of Treasury for their involvement in illicit activity, to include the drug trade.

**Cuba**

**What is your assessment of Cuba's impact on regional security in the SOUTHCOM AOR?**

In my assessment, Cuba has had a significant impact on security in the region. For decades, the authoritarian dictatorship in Cuba has worked to destabilize the region, undermine U.S. authority, and support other like-minded regimes in the SOUTHCOM AOR, to include the

Maduro regime in Venezuela. I understand that Cuba supports these other authoritarian governments with intelligence and security support, and provides as the leaders of these governments with advice on how to maintain power over their populations.

**What is your understanding of U.S. policy towards Cuba and DOD's role in carrying out that policy?**

The White House has recently stated that its U.S. policy toward Cuba is under review. I understand that U.S. law prohibits security assistance to Cuba and current policy prevents military-to-military engagement, including security cooperation activities. While the U.S. Coast Guard does maintain minimal communication with its Cuban counterparts on issues like trafficking and migration, I am aware that the Department of Defense's only contact with the Cuban military is between the Commander of the U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay and the local Cuban military commander. However, I understand that this engagement is limited to local matters.

**Detainee Matters**

**What role do you expect to play, if confirmed, in regard to the operation, management, and oversight of the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and the policies applicable to the facility's detainee population?**

If confirmed, I expect that my role as the SOUTHCOM Commander will be to oversee the safe, humane, and legal detention operations, to include detainee healthcare delivery at Joint Task Force Guantanamo.

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

Yes.

**In your view, how will President Biden's ordered withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan affect the Department's detention of unlawful enemy combatants at Guantanamo?**

The decision to withdraw U.S. Forces from Afghanistan is a national strategic-level decision, as is the policy related to the detention of unlawful enemy combatants. Joint Task Force Guantanamo executes detention operations in accordance with the law and the policy of the

President and the Secretary of Defense. If confirmed, Joint Task Force Guantanamo will continue to do so with my oversight and supervision.

**In your view, how has the establishment of a Chief Medical Officer to oversee the provision of medical care to individuals detained at Guantanamo affected the standard of medical care provided to such detainees?**

I understand that there is a Chief Medical Officer (CMO) in place on the island who has an oversight role of the medical care being provided to the individuals detained at Guantanamo Bay. The CMO position is managed by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs and the staff at Guantanamo Bay work closely with the CMO on these medical issues. In my view, this type of conduit is essential to ensure smooth medical policy implementation.

**It is the committee's understanding that as many as 9 of the 40 detainees still at GTMO have been designated for transfer.**

**What role would you expect to play, if confirmed, in the Periodic Review Board process applicable to detainees at Guantanamo?**

As I understand, the Commander of SOUTHCOM does not have a direct role in the Periodic Review Board, but SOUTHCOM currently supports the Periodic Review Board process with medical summaries and intelligence reports. If confirmed, I intend to ensure this support continues, providing oversight and supervision of the support.

**What role would you expect to play, if confirmed, in the detainee transfer process?**

Based on my current understanding, SOUTHCOM provides medical and intelligence reports to the interagency team responsible for making recommendations to the Secretary of Defense in the detainee transfer process. Additionally, SOUTHCOM works across multiple commands to execute detainee transfers if and when they are directed. If confirmed, I expect to provide this same level of support to the detainee transfer process and will provide oversight and supervision of this support.

### **Military Commissions**

**In your view, do military commissions constituted pursuant to the Military Commissions Act of 2009 provide an effective forum for addressing the crimes committed by detainees at Guantanamo Bay?**

I believe this is a policy question that is best answered by the Department of Defense and the Administration. If confirmed, I will be committed to overseeing the safe, humane, and legal detention operations, to include detainee healthcare delivery at Joint Task Force Guantanamo as long as SOUTHCOM is directed to do so.

**What role would you expect to play, if confirmed, in the preparation for and conduct of trials by Military Commission of detainees at Guantanamo?**

I understand that SOUTHCOM and Joint Task Force Guantanamo are responsible for providing security and limited logistical support to the Office of Military Commissions at Guantanamo Bay. If confirmed, I expect SOUTHCOM to provide the same support.

**SOUTHCOM Force Requirements**

**SOUTHCOM does not have assigned forces and, as a result, is required to compete for forces within the global request for forces process.**

**Given the Department's shift to long-term strategic competition with near-peer rivals will you be able to ensure, if confirmed, that you are able to secure the necessary personnel to carry out SOUTHCOM's partnering and engagement missions within the AOR?**

I believe the Southern Command Area of Responsibility is of tremendous strategic importance. This region contains the southern approaches to the homeland, and our competitors are expanding their presence and influence at a rapid rate. From my perspective, communication is key to ensuring that a Combatant Command has the forces necessary to execute its mission. If confirmed, I will advocate for the missions that will yield the greatest improvement to security and stability in the region, and for the resources (including personnel) to succeed in those missions. Further, I will ensure that SOUTHCOM uses all forces and resources to their fullest effect.

**If not, how would you assess the risk to U.S. strategic interests in the region?**

If confirmed, managing risk is a key component of command, and risk management informs decisions at every echelon. Strategic risk to our interests in the region will be a foundational element in my best military advice to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary of Defense.

**Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation**

**The Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), which replaced the School of the Americas in 2001, has the mission of contributing to theater cooperation activities through the education and training of students in the Western Hemisphere from Canada to Chile.**

**What is the relationship between SOUTHCOM and WHINSEC?**

In my view, professional military education and training is one of the most important tools our nation has, not just for building the technical capacity of partner nation militaries, but for

building strong relationships with the future leaders of those militaries. WHINSEC provides education and training grounded in democratic values, including respect for human rights and the rule of law. WHINSEC focuses on partner nations from the Western Hemisphere, and its courses directly support the security cooperation plans of both NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM. I understand that the SOUTHCOM Commander has a permanent position on the WHINSEC Board of Visitors, participating in curriculum selection and periodic reviews to ensure the institute is appropriately supporting the security cooperation goals of the Command.

**In your view, does WHINSEC promote the national security interests of the United States in the Western Hemisphere?**

Based on WHINSEC's charter and the transparency with which it conducts its instruction, I believe that WHINSEC promotes U.S. national security interests in the Western Hemisphere. It does so, first, by working closely with both NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM to maintain alignment with their theater security cooperation plans. Additionally, WHINSEC increases interoperability of regional partners to advance regional security. Finally, it instills respect for human rights, the rule of law, due process, civilian control of the military, and the role of the military in a democratic society.

**In your view, what more – if anything – does WHINSEC need to do to emphasize human rights in its curriculum and contribute to institutional capacity building in the region?**

I am aware that WHINSEC has a Human Rights Center that provides human rights training to all its students and helps develop human rights capabilities in partner nation militaries and Ministries of Defense. If confirmed, I will actively participate in the WHINSEC Board of Visitors, including studying more closely the current curriculum and making any recommendations that I believe would strengthen its education and training program.

**Will you attend the regularly scheduled WHINSEC Board of Visitors meetings?**

Yes.

**Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief**

**What should be the role for the U.S. military in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in the SOUTHCOM AOR?**

As specified in the Unified Command Plan, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief is one of SOUTHCOM's primary missions. The SOUTHCOM Area of Responsibility experiences a broad range of natural disasters every year, to include hurricanes, earthquakes, and volcano eruptions. The DOD has unique capabilities to save lives immediately following these disasters. Beyond immediate life-saving, the military is in support of the lead federal agency in a disaster

response, and can deliver unique military capabilities (like air lift) that are critical in these operations.

**What role should SOUTHCOM play in building the capabilities of foreign military and security forces to conduct humanitarian response and disaster risk reduction?**

I understand that many of the nations in the SOUTHCOM Area of Responsibility are very willing partners who, with just a little support, can step up to respond to either their own or a regional humanitarian crisis. SOUTHCOM provides training on response and risk reduction through the exercise program, subject matter expert exchanges, and key leader engagements. In my view, SOUTHCOM's regular engagements with partners are critical to building their capabilities, as well as strengthening our partnerships and interoperability, which are key to success in any disaster or other humanitarian response.

**Are the resources and authorities necessary to fulfill this role currently available to the SOUTHCOM Commander? If not, what additional resources or authorities are necessary, in your view?**

I am aware of the recent humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations SOUTHCOM has conducted in response to Hurricanes Eta and Iota. If confirmed, I will fully assess the resources and authorities available to the command in greater detail, and I will make any recommendations on additional requirements or authorities to the Secretary of Defense.

**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.**

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

I have not conducted a full assessment of SOUTHCOM's procedures at this time, but if confirmed, I will undertake a thorough review of SOUTHCOM's sexual assault prevention and response efforts. I will also ensure that review covers not only service members, but also assaults by and against U.S. civilian and contractor personnel.

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

There is no place in the Armed Forces for retaliation against individuals who report sexual assault and retaliation is an offense under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Such retaliation

not only has the potential to cause serious harm to the lives and careers of victims, but it also undermines readiness and weakens our culture of dignity and respect. At this point, I do not have a view of the adequacy of SOUTHCOM's policies and procedures to protect from retaliation those who report sexual assault, but if confirmed, I will conduct a thorough review of those policies to ensure that SOUTHCOM has effective measures in place.

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

Effective investigation of sexual assault allegations is the cornerstone of accountability for perpetrators. Response to those offenses, including care and ongoing support, is the cornerstone of healing for victims. If confirmed, I will immediately review and evaluate the adequacy of training and resources in place at SOUTHCOM to investigate and respond to allegations of sexual assault.

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

In my experience, military leaders are both willing and able to hold service members appropriately accountable for sexual misconduct. As a current General Court-Martial Convening Authority, I have been diligent in carrying out my responsibilities under the law, holding service members appropriately accountable for sexual misconduct, with the advice of my legal advisor, based on the facts of the individual case, and the applicable law, policy, and regulation. I have also personally observed the same diligence among other commanders at all levels in the chain of command. In my exercise of this authority, I feel neither outside pressure nor undue or unlawful influence.

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

I have not yet had the opportunity to fully assess the adequacy of SOUTHCOM's resources and programs, particularly those related to sexual assault. If confirmed, however, I will carefully assess the adequacy of the resources and programs in SOUTHCOM to provide victims of sexual assault the medical, psychological, and legal help they need.

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

I absolutely agree with the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military on the role of the chain of command in supporting victims of sexual assault. Specifically, as the report stated, "In the military, no one is more consequential to the wellbeing and recovery of survivors of sexual assault and sexual harassment than their commanders. Commanders who



grasp the seriousness of these crimes and are equipped to respond can make a measurable difference in survivors' lives.”

My charter for the Joint Base San Antonio – Fort Sam Houston Sexual Assault Review Board, which I chair, includes three separate and mutually supporting purposes: (1) ensure victim safety; (2) facilitate victim access to restorative services; and (3) direct response system coordination and appropriate accountability. To effect these ends, I continuously emphasize commander involvement and accountability in providing ongoing support to sexual assault victims in their formations. If confirmed, I will continue to hold commanders and leaders appropriately accountable for the support they provide sexual assault victims in their formations.

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

Under DoD policy (DoD Directive 6495.01), sexual assault awareness and prevention programs are commanders' programs, required to be established by, and supported by, all commanders. Accordingly, the chain of command's role in the changing of the military culture in which sexual assaults have occurred is absolutely fundamental. This is a leadership issue and requires engaged leadership. Longstanding Department research finds that there is a strong correlation between unit sexual harassment rates and unit sexual assault rates. It is incumbent upon commanders and leaders at all levels to discourage harmful behaviors and ensure workplaces that value dignity, respect, and inclusion. This means every level of leadership is responsible for ensuring good order and discipline and holding perpetrators appropriately accountable for their actions. Commanders must also ensure that service members under their command have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and the consequences for misconduct.

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

Ensuring that sexual assault perpetrators are held appropriately accountable is essential in combatting the scourge of sexual assault. The Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military recommended that an independent prosecution authority, rather than military commanders, should decide whether to pursue criminal charges in sexual assault and related cases. Secretary Austin has endorsed this recommendation and has committed to working with Congress to effect the legislative change necessary to implement it. I fully support the Secretary's position and his efforts. However, I cannot speculate on how such a system might be constructed or the potential effects. If confirmed, I will provide my best insight as a commander to the Secretary regarding changes to the UCMJ.

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

In my experience, I have found current sexual assault policies and procedures, including those on restricted reporting, to be effective. I am aware, however, of instances where restricted reports became unrestricted—inadvertently, but against the victims’ wishes—causing additional and unnecessary trauma to the victims who expected their reports to remain confidential. I would support strengthening the restricted reporting process and giving victims more agency over their reporting process.

**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 SOUTHCOM?**

If confirmed, I will undertake a thorough review to, first, ensure we are in full compliance with the Secretary of Defense’s directives to combatant commanders concerning sexual assault prevention and response and, second, to determine the effectiveness of current policies, procedures, and programs. This review will be interdisciplinary, consisting of both trained SHARP personnel and other appropriate members of my staff, and it will identify and develop measures of performance and measures of effectiveness, with the ultimate goals of reducing the percentage of personnel sexually assaulted each year and increasing the percentage of sexual assault victims who file unrestricted reports. Recognizing that, if confirmed, I will be responsible for direction and oversight of these policies, procedures, and programs, I will rely on this review to determine the areas that require immediate focus, and identify the best way to ensure ongoing senior-level direction and oversight.

**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 SOUTHCOM Commander?**

In my experience, receiving periodic briefings on key measures of performance and effectiveness, and receiving subordinate commander feedback on trends and the effectiveness of key measures, are two important ways to monitor commanders’ efforts. If confirmed, I will assess the methods currently in place for monitoring overall trends and gauging the sufficiency of component commanders’ efforts in preventing and responding to incidents of sexual assault.

**Relations with Congress**

**If confirmed, what actions would you take to sustain a productive and mutually beneficial relationship between SOUTHCOM and Congress, and in particular the congressional defense committees?**

Ensuring a productive and mutually beneficial relationship between SOUTHCOM and Congress will be a priority for me if I am confirmed. As a former Chief of Legislative Liaison for the Army, I have been fortunate to work directly with Congress in my career, and I have seen firsthand the value of an open and collaborative relationship between Congress and the Department of Defense. I understand that SOUTHCOM has developed strong relationships with Congress, and in particular, with the defense oversight committees. I understand that strong Congressional support has been key to ensuring that SOUTHCOM has the resources and authorities necessary to carry out its responsibilities in the region. If confirmed, I intend to empower my team to continue the collaborative activities that have led to such a productive and mutually beneficial relationship, and I will lead by example through regular personal engagement and communication with Congress.

### **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, reports, records (including documents and electronic communications) and other information from the Department.**

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

**Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to keep this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective**

**staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided? Please answer with a simple yes or no.**

Yes.

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

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

Yes.