

Senate Armed Services Committee
Advance Policy Questions for Lieutenant General John Daniel Caine (USAF), Retired,
Nominee for Appointment to Grade of General and
to the position of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Duties and Qualifications

Section 151 of title 10, U.S. Code, provides that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the principal military adviser to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense. Subject to the authority, direction, and control of the President and the Secretary of Defense, section 153 of title 10 further assigns the Chairman responsibility for assisting the President and the Secretary in providing for the strategic direction of the armed forces; strategic and contingency planning; global military integration; comprehensive joint readiness; joint capability development; and joint force development activities, among other matters.

- 1. Given the responsibilities of the Chairman, as enumerated in law, what background, experience, and expertise do you possess that qualify you to serve as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?**

In my 34 years of military service, I have led warfighters in a variety of roles across the Joint Force, Total Force, and Interagency. These experiences have ranged from flying an F-16 in combat overseas and over Washington, DC on September 11th, 2001, to helping coordinate our response to Hurricane Katrina while at the Department of Agriculture, to serving alongside our Special Operations warriors in combat.

My years in the National Guard make me uniquely aware of the challenges faced by our citizen-soldiers. I also may be the only officer ever nominated for this position with experience in the venture capital world, an experience I will draw on as the DoD looks to modernize its business systems and revitalize America's Defense Industrial Base.

Finally, in my last role as Associate Director for Military Affairs at the CIA, I built a global perspective on the challenges America faces in achieving effective deterrence against our adversaries. Each of these experiences have prepared me for the humbling responsibility of serving as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at this crucial time in our nation's history.

- 2. Do you believe there is any action that you need to take to enhance your ability to exercise the responsibilities of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?**

I do not have any recommendations at present. If confirmed, I will be attuned to any possible actions necessary to exercise the responsibilities of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

In matters requiring global military strategic and operational integration, the Chairman is responsible for providing advice to the President and Secretary of Defense on ongoing military operations and advising the Secretary on the allocation and transfer of forces among geographic and functional Combatant Commands, as may be

necessary, to address transregional, multi-domain, and multifunctional threats.

- 3. If confirmed, how would you execute these advisory functions, while ensuring that your role does not invoke command authority or infringe on the responsibilities of the Combatant Commanders?**

I understand the advisory functions of the Chairman and the command authorities and responsibilities of the Combatant Commanders.

If confirmed, I would perform the roles and functions of the Chairman consistent with all laws and policies, while maintaining awareness and knowledge of issues within and across Combatant Command areas of responsibility.

- 4. If confirmed, how would you structure your relationship with the Combatant Commanders to carry out these responsibilities?**

I am grateful that, during my last assignment as the Associate Director for Military Affairs, I had regular interaction with all US Combatant Commanders and I have close relationships with each. If confirmed I look forward to working with each of them and my relationship with the Combatant Commanders will be structured according to the existing mechanisms and procedures specified in law and policy.

- 5. If confirmed, what innovative ideas would you consider providing to the Secretary of Defense regarding the organization and operation of the Joint Staff?**

If confirmed, I intend to look more closely at the Joint Staff's use of advanced tech tools (AI/ML) to improve efficiencies and make recommendations for the prioritization and allocation of forces to the Secretary.

- 6. To the extent the Joint Staff performs functions that overlap with those of other DOD components—particularly with regard to regional or functional topics—what would be your approach, if confirmed, to consolidating and reducing those redundancies?**

If confirmed, my approach to this topic would be based on thoroughly examining the details and history of related functions and processes prior to making any recommendations.

Section 163(a) of title 10 provides that the President may assign duties to the Chairman to assist the President and the Secretary of Defense in exercising their command function.

- 7. In your view, are there other roles or responsibilities that should be assigned to the Chairman, to better enable the Chairman's assistance to the President and the Secretary of Defense in their exercise of command functions?**

At this time, I believe the roles and responsibilities currently assigned to the Chairman are sufficient. I do not have recommendations for any additional roles and responsibilities.

If confirmed, I will consult with the Secretary and with Congress should I conclude there are additional roles or responsibilities that should be considered.

Major Challenges and Opportunities

8. What do you consider to be the most significant challenges you would face if confirmed as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

The President directed the Joint Force to achieve Peace through Strength and defend our Homeland.

The President made clear that this begins with securing our own borders. The Joint Force is moving out alongside our Interagency partners to achieve this objective, but significant challenges remain to achieve lasting security of America's borders.

Additionally, the threat posed by China to American interests in the Indo-Pacific is real and growing. Th U.S. needs to work with Allies and Partners to deter China's aggression in this region.

Unfortunately, at this critical moment, the Joint Force is contending with an acquisition process and Defense Industrial Base that are not optimized for protracted conflict. The U.S. does not have the throughput, responsiveness, or agility needed to deter our adversaries.

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

Given the global set of challenges before the United States the Joint Force must enhance the integration of options with the Services, the Interagency, our Allies and Partners and the Private Sector. The U.S. cannot miss a single opportunity to integrate fully our mutual efforts to provide the greatest return on those investments.

If confirmed, I will focus on working with the Secretary of Defense and Congress to implement recommendations made by recent Congressional commissions on PPBE, Acquisition Reform, and Strategic Posture. I will also review the Joint Staff's recommendations on reforming the requirements process as directed by the FY2024 NDAA. We know what the problems are and how to solve them, we just need to focus on implementing the solutions.

I strongly believe in the primacy of people. The Joint Force needs the talent found in America's sons and daughters to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The warrior ethos, meritocracy, and clear standards will attract this talent, and I will work with the Services and the Department to strengthen recruiting.

Civilian Control of the Military

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

For my 34 years of service, I have been fully committed to the laws, policies, and norms of civilian control of the military. It is a fundamental pillar of our Armed Services.

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

If confirmed, I will stress to my Staff in the J3 and J5 the need for a close and trusting relationship with OUSD/P as both Staffs prepare plans.

12. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to ensure that the Secretary of Defense and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness are fully engaged in evaluating and reporting on the readiness of DOD Components, and if necessary, in mitigating readiness gaps and shortfalls?

If confirmed, I will continue the relationship and practice of frequent coordination and collaboration on readiness issues between Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and the Joint Staff, ensuring we are fully engaged in evaluating and reporting the readiness of DOD Components. OSD and the Joint Staff share a statutorily mandated Title 10 Sec 482 readiness reports with each other before submitting to Congress, and each host high level reviews and discussions at Deputies Management Action Group (DMAGs) and JCS Readiness Tanks semi-annually. The statutory functions of the CJCS require joint planning sessions to align priorities and strategies for mitigating readiness issues, while also advocating for necessary resources and funding to address identified gaps.

13. How would you define effective civilian control of the military? Aside from civilian control of the military via the Executive Branch, please describe the extent to which you believe Congress plays a role in furthering civilian control of our military?

Per Article 1, the Congress is charged to raise our Army and Navy and, therefore a key constituent in the totality of our National Defense. If confirmed, I intend to have a strong, trusting, bipartisan relationship with the Congress.

14. As a military officer, you take an oath to support and defend the Constitution. How do you balance this obligation with the responsibility to provide your best

military advice to civilian leadership, even when that advice may differ from civilian political priorities?

If confirmed, in accordance with my oath to support and defend the constitution, I will provide military advice to the chain of command, identifying options in support of national policy and security. The advice would be focused on overall strategy, risk, readiness and resourcing considerations to best enable decisions from the Nation's civilian leadership. As I always have for 34 years, I will always speak truth to power.

If confirmed as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, you will testify regularly before Congress and may be asked to comment on partisan political matters.

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

If confirmed as Chairman, I will meet my responsibilities to advise the President and Secretary and consult with Congress. My best military advice will remain non-partisan and apolitical.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff

Section 151 of title 10, U. S. Code, codifies the role of the Joint Chiefs as military advisors to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense.

16. If confirmed, would you commit to provide your best military advice to the President, the National Security Council, and the Homeland Security Council, even when your advice and opinions might differ from those of other members of the Cabinet, the President's other senior advisors, or from the President's own views?

I will.

17. If confirmed, would you commit to provide your best military advice to the Secretary of Defense, even when your advice and opinions might differ from those of other DOD senior officials, or from the Secretary's own views?

I will.

18. If confirmed, how would you elicit from the individual Service Chiefs, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and the Combatant Commanders, their best military advice, including advice and opinions that may diverge your own?

If confirmed, I would elicit military analysis and advice from the Joint Force, to include other

Service Chiefs, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and Combatant Commanders. The Unified Command Plan directs communications between the President, or the Secretary and the Combatant Commanders be transmitted through the CJCS unless otherwise directed by the President or the Secretary. As the global integrator, I will have mechanisms in place to elicit this advice and communications from all Combatant Commanders and pass them through the appropriate channels along with my own advice.

19. What is your assessment of the size and effectiveness of the Joint Staff?

I have not yet had the opportunity to observe and assess the Joint Staff's size and effectiveness. If confirmed, I will conduct a thorough assessment before deciding to recommend any changes to the Secretary of Defense, the President, and Congress. In my past experience, they are the most professional staff in the world.

Role of Department of Defense Inspector General

The Inspector General Act of 1978 requires that Inspectors General of Federal departments “be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, without regard to political affiliation and solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations” in order to “conduct and supervise audits and investigations relating to the programs and operations of” the Department of Defense.

20. What is your view of the necessity of the Department of Defense Inspector General to conduct and supervise audits and investigations relating to the programs and operations of the Department in an independent, objective, and apolitical manner?

The necessity of the Department of Defense Inspector General (DoD IG) conducting and supervising audits and investigations in an independent, objective, and apolitical manner is crucial for ensuring the integrity, accountability, and effectiveness of DoD programs and operations.

The DoD IG is necessary for combating waste, fraud, and abuse, promoting economy, efficiency, and effectiveness on government programs and operations by identifying and recommending corrective actions.

21. If confirmed, do you commit to respecting the independence of the DOD Inspector General, subject only to the requirements and limitations contained in the Inspector General Act of 1978?

Yes

Role of Judge Advocates General

Federal law states that no officer or employee of the Department of Defense may interfere with the ability of the Judge Advocate General of a military service to give independent legal advice to their chief of service, or interfere with the ability of judge advocates of the military services assigned or attached to, or performing duty with, military units to give independent legal advice to commanders.

22. What is your view of the propriety of and need for uniformed military lawyers to exercise their independent legal and professional judgment when providing legal advice to military commanders, military service leadership, and Department of Defense leadership?

I absolutely value the independence and professionalism of uniformed military lawyers to provide legal advice to military commanders, military service leadership, and Department of Defense leadership. I have relied on JAGs throughout my career to provide candid and independent legal advice on the broad range of legal issues involved in military operations and activities. I will continue to do so.

23. If confirmed, do you commit to respecting the independence of uniformed military attorneys to provide their best legal advice free from inappropriate influence and reprisal?

I commit to respecting the independence of uniformed military attorneys to provide their best legal advice free from inappropriate influence and reprisal. I have done so throughout my career and, if confirmed, will do so as Chairman.

Strategic Guidance Documents within the Department of Defense

24. If confirmed as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, specifically what would be your role in generating and shaping the content of, and improving DOD component compliance with, each such document?

- **National Security Strategy**

If confirmed, as the senior military advisor to the President and the Secretary of Defense, I will advise both on the Joint Force capabilities necessary to deter aggression and implement the President's national security priorities. I will advise on ability, options, and risk to execute the strategic direction given to the military in the National Security Strategy (NSS) and work closely with the Secretary of Defense to implement it.

- **National Defense Strategy**

I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense to provide advice and assistance on the military ways, means, and options for implementing the Secretary's defense priorities. I will focus particular attention on the threats and opportunities we face in the strategic environment; the military roles, missions, posture, and capabilities necessary to defend U.S. interests; and determine the investments necessary to protect and simultaneously defend the U.S. Homeland and deter or defeat adversaries that work against our nation's

interests and security. I will ensure the Joint Staff is collaborative and responsive to the Secretary of Defense's staff to ensure they have everything they need to develop a strategy that achieves peace through strength.

- **National Military Strategy**

Title 10, §153 directs the NMS to support the objectives of the United States as articulated by the President and Secretary of Defense through national security and defense guidance, direction, and strategies. If confirmed as Chairman, I will lead the NMS development to support the President's objectives to achieve peace through strength and the Secretary of Defense's priorities. If confirmed, I will develop an NMS that is integrated with the NDS. Together, we can ensure the Joint Force has a clear understanding of the country's strategic defense priorities over the near- and long-term to defend America's interests. I will work closely with the Services and Combatant Commands (CCMDs) to provide a strategy that includes clear military options to the Secretary of Defense and the President. If confirmed, I will provide my military advice on implementation of the NMS, assess progress and risk, and adjust when necessary and as directed.

- **Chairman's Risk Assessment**

Title 10, §153 directs the Chairman to prepare an annual assessment that identifies and defines the military strategic risks to United States interests and military risks to the execution of the NMS. The Chairman's Risk Assessment (CRA) is developed in collaboration with the Services and CCMDs, with the final approval and discretion of the Chairman, using a common methodology to appraise and communicate risk. If confirmed, I will continue to use the CRA as my recommendation to the Secretary of Defense, and ultimately Congress, on risks to U.S. security interests and executing the NMS to inform resourcing and capability development decisions in the Department.

- **Contingency Planning Guidance**

The Chairman directs the implementation of the Contingency Planning Guidance (CPG) and integrates contingency planning across Combatant Commands for each of the NDS key threats. The Chairman uses the guidance in the CPG in the development of the Joint Strategic Campaign Plan (JSCP). Additionally, the Chairman provides guidance for preparing and reviewing contingency plans that conform to policy guidance from the President and Secretary of Defense. Lastly, the Chairman ensures that plans are feasible, suitable, acceptable, and complete for presentation to the Secretary. If confirmed, I will continue directing the implementation of the CPG and its use in the development of the JSCP.

- **Defense Planning Guidance**

The Defense Planning Guidance (DPG) establishes the Secretary of Defense's strategic resource priorities. If confirmed, as the Chairman I would produce the Chairman's Program Recommendation (CPR) which directly informs the DPG. I would consider a multitude of assessments to include the annual Capability Gap Assessment, Chairman's Risk Assessment, and others to ensure the Joint Force aligns means to ends and ways, in light of risk.

- **Joint Strategic Campaign Plan**

The Joint Strategic Campaign Plan (JSCP) enables the execution of the Chairman's statutory responsibilities for strategic and contingency planning, global military integration, and the Chairman's oversight prescribed in Title 10, U.S. Code, Sections 153, 163, and 113. If confirmed, I would use the JSCP to implement the President and Secretary of Defense's strategic planning guidance by providing direction for development of campaign and contingency plans that advance strategic objectives, priorities, and tasks.

- **Global Force Management Implementation Guidance**

The Global Force Management Implementation Guidance (GFMIG) enables the Secretary of Defense to integrate complementary policy and guidance on directed readiness, assignment, allocation, apportionment, and assessment into a single authoritative document. If confirmed, my role is to advise the Secretary of Defense on matters of readiness and requirements of the CCMDs to achieve U.S. defense objectives. Additionally, I would advise the Secretary of Defense on matters of risk related to allocation and assignment of forces to better support resource-informed planning and enable the force to be dynamically employed.

25. Will you commit that, if confirmed, you would undertake all necessary action to ensure that each of these strategic guidance documents is timely generated and issued, and updated, as necessary to reflect changes in assumptions, policy, or other factors?

Yes.

Use of Military Force

26. In your view, what is the appropriate role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in establishing policies for the use of military force and the rules of engagement?

The President, as Commander-in-Chief, determines when to use military force. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are advisors to the President and the Secretary of Defense and should actively advise on the policies for the use of military force and the rules of engagement.

27. If confirmed, what factors would you consider in making recommendations to the President and the Secretary of Defense on the use of military force?

The use of military force must always be carefully considered. If confirmed, my recommendations to the President and Secretary of Defense on the use of military force will be consistent with U.S. domestic and international law. Additionally, I would consider probability of success, cost in terms of casualties, and strategic risk.

28. What factors would you consider, if confirmed, in recommending to the Secretary of Defense which forces of other nations should be eligible for Collective Self-Defense by U.S. forces, and under what conditions?

When “collective self-defense” rules of engagement are authorized, U.S. forces may defend foreign forces against any attack or threat of imminent attack. The key factors I would consider in a recommendation to the Secretary of Defense would be if it is legal to do so, and if it is in U.S. interests to do so.

29. What is your understanding and assessment of the authorities and agreements in place to permit U.S. military personnel to carry out missions under the provisions of title 50, U.S. Code? If confirmed, how would you modify these agreements or authorities, if at all?

I understand that relevant authorities and agreements provide the necessary framework for military forces to support activities of other U.S. Government departments and agencies when called upon by the President or Secretary of Defense as the situation dictates. I believe that the current authorities and agreements are sufficient. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing work within the Department and with colleagues in other U.S. Government departments and agencies to adjust existing arrangements as the need arises.

Civilian Casualties

30. In your view, what are the primary challenges for the combatant commands in mitigating, investigating, and responding to allegations of civilian casualties resulting from U.S. military operations?

The primary challenges combatant commands face is timely access to evidence and the ability to share evidence with our allies, our partners, and non-governmental organizations. These challenges are due to restrictive data sharing policies with each of these entities, which slows the assessment and response process. This results in decreased integration, analysis, and dissemination of civilian casualty information and effects.

31. What is your understanding of the implementation status of the Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan (CHMR-AP) and what additional actions do you believe should be taken to enable the Department of Defense to effectively and credibly mitigate, investigate, and respond to allegations of civilian casualties resulting from U.S. military operations?

The Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan, or CHMR-AP, is in its fourth and final year of implementation. A workforce is in place, doctrine has been updated, and education and training are ongoing. I understand the combatant commands see positive impacts from the program. As with any new program, there comes a time to pause and reflect, listen to feedback, and assess the future path. That is where we are today. It is appropriate to look at the resources, the distribution of those resources, and the changing

world environment to determine the best course of action moving forward.

Joint Operations

The Goldwater Nichols Act enabled an unprecedented degree of jointness within the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Combatant Commanders. Today, both the DOD and Congress recognize the need for a deeper level of integration and interoperability to overcome anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) networks and to deter and defeat large-scale aggression.

32. What do you perceive to be the role and capability requirements for close combat formations in future joint force operations?

Service led joint and coalition experimentation events are improving interoperability and identifying critical gaps.

33. What is the Joint Staff's appropriate role in experimentation?

There are two main experimentation roles in the Joint Staff. One, within the Chairman's responsibilities for Joint Force development, the Chairman formulates policies for experimentation on urgent and long-term concepts for force employment, to include analyzing prioritized gaps in capabilities. Two, within the Chairman's responsibilities for joint capability development, the Joint Staff works to recommend new joint military capabilities that maintain technological and operational superiority of the Joint Force based on advances of new technology and new joint concepts. To do this, the Chairman leverages convening power, Joint Experimentation Guidance, the Warfighter Lab Incentive Fund, and other tools to catalyze a campaign approach to joint experimentation that promises progress in addressing specific problems, gaps, and critical capabilities identified in the Joint Warfighting Concept. The Chairman also uses the learning from this campaign to make annual program recommendations to the Secretary of Defense.

34. How would you ensure the Joint Staff is appropriately facilitating joint experimentation during the capabilities development process?

I would publish specific Joint Experimentation Guidance and continue to integrate and synchronize Joint Force experimentation not only across the Department of Defense and with Allies and Partners, but also with Interagency Partners.

35. What role do you foresee playing in influencing joint and enabling capabilities development that will link or knit together service-specific capabilities, such as Joint All Domain Command and Control (JADC2) or contested logistics?

The Chairman's Title 10 authorities for joint capability development are exercised through the Joint Requirements Oversight Council. The JROC plays a critical role in developing a globally integrated and interoperable joint force, without which the DoD risks stove-piped, Service-specific capabilities. This function is particularly critical with key capability areas

such as JADC2 or contested logistics, which are inherently joint, multi-domain, and multi-theater.

Joint Force Headquarters and Component Commands

36. Is the current model for creating joint force headquarters below the unified command level appropriate and adequate to meet the challenges articulated in the 2022 NDS? In your view, are there other models you have seen that we should be considering?

While the existing framework for establishing Joint Force headquarters beneath the unified command level is suitable and sufficient, if confirmed, I will be committed to exploring alternative models. This review will encompass an examination of various Joint Force headquarters structures to ensure the Joint Force is optimally postured to address the challenges outlined in the 2022 National Defense Strategy.

37. Given the time required to stand up, man, and train joint force headquarters, and the short warning time that is expected before a potential conflict in certain areas of operation, would Combatant Commanders' operations and contingency planning and preparedness be improved by creating and exercising subordinate joint force headquarters during the competition phase?

Proactively establishing subordinate Joint Force headquarters before a crisis erupts could indeed enhance operational readiness, planning, and preparedness. However, this must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. A thorough analysis is crucial to determine when the benefits of early establishment outweigh the potential costs, including manpower allocation, staff workload, and financial implications across the Joint Force. If confirmed, I will collaborate with the Combatant Commanders and Joint Chiefs to carefully evaluate this approach.

38. The fiscal year 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) required the Secretary of Defense to establish a standing joint force headquarters (JFHQ) in the INDOPACOM Area of Responsibility (AOR). What is your view on the need for a JFHQ in this AOR?

The Indo-Pacific region is a top priority for a U.S. military, with China presenting a significant and evolving challenge. As such, the ability to respond effectively to crises in the region, using the Joint Force with all its combined capabilities, is paramount.

While the 2023 NDAA mandates a standing Joint Force Headquarters (JFHQ) in the INDOPACOM AOR, the current approach provides a strong foundation for responding to potential crises.

Admiral Paparo has stated that, in a Joint Operations Area (JOA) within the Theater of War, the U.S. Pacific Fleet would serve as the Joint Task Force (JTF), a capability for which they were certified in 2023.

The existing structure, which leverages the proven capabilities of service components and their ability to function as JTFs, provides the necessary flexibility and responsiveness to address a wide range of potential crises within the INDOPACOM AO, and meets the intent of the NDAA to ensure optimal C2 for winning any conflict in the region.

39. What are the most significant obstacles to establishing and exercising such joint force headquarters in advance of a crisis, and what could be done to overcome those obstacles, in your view?

One of the primary challenges in prematurely establishing Joint Force headquarters lies in the potential strain on resources. Combatant Commanders currently possess sufficient staffing to manage daily operations and pre-crisis scenarios. Creating additional headquarters prematurely could divert critical resources from other ongoing global missions. Therefore, if confirmed, I will work with the Combatant Commanders and Joint Chiefs of Staff to assess each unique situation in advance of a crisis on its resources in order to best posture the joint force for success.

40. What new technical capabilities, processes, or concepts of employment do you think would be needed to improve our ability to achieve high levels of readiness for, and realistically exercise, such joint force headquarters prior to a crisis, or to rapidly establish in the event of an unforeseen crisis?

The Combatant Commanders prioritize maintaining a high level of readiness when it comes to establishing Joint Force headquarters. The Joint Force conducts regular exercises and tests to ensure the ability to stand up these headquarters efficiently, even in the face of unforeseen crises.

The Joint Force remains committed to innovation, constantly evaluating emerging technologies, refining processes, and exploring new operational concepts. Regular joint exercises play a crucial role in this process, allowing the Joint Force to test and refine these advancements while informing the development of new concepts.

If confirmed, I will ensure these efforts continue and will actively seek opportunities to further enhance readiness in this critical area.

2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS)

The 2022 NDS outlines that the United States faces a rising China, an aggressive Russia, and the continued threat from rogue regimes and global terrorism. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the NDS Commission testified in July 2024 that China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea have formed an “axis of aggressors”, supporting each other’s military aggression and illegal wars.

41. What is your assessment of the military threat posed by the People’s Republic of China?

The PLA has made significant military improvements to include adjusting its military structures, fielding modern indigenous systems, building readiness, and strengthening its competency to conduct joint operations. Numerically, China has the largest navy in the world, with a battle force of over 370 ships and submarines, including more than 140 major surface combatants. The PLA Air Force is modernizing and indigenizing its aircraft and unmanned aerial systems rapidly, matching U.S. standards. The PLA Rocket Force and China's hypersonic missile technologies have greatly advanced during the past 20 years. Many of China's missile programs are comparable to other international top-tier producers. However, the PLA still has deficiencies in commander proficiency, long-distance logistics, urban warfare, and the PLA lacks modern warfare experience writ large.

42. What is your assessment of the military threat posed by Russia?

Russia very likely remains deterred from an overt military attack against the U.S. or NATO; however, Moscow retains the ability and willingness to conduct asymmetric activity below what it assesses to be the threshold of military conflict. The conflict in Ukraine very likely has strained its conventional military forces, increasing Russia's dependence on its nuclear arsenal as a means of deterrence to protect itself from perceived external military threats. Despite the near-term increase in Russia's Defense Industrial Base, this production is unlikely sustainable over the mid- to long-term due to labor shortages, decreased weapons and equipment shortfalls, and inability to fully compensate for dual-use components they can no longer acquire due to sanctions.

43. What is your assessment of the military threat posed by collusion among Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea?

Russia, China, Iran and the DPRK share broadly similar goals and transactionally cooperate at the bilateral—and sometimes trilateral—levels on arms sales, sanctions evasion, and limited military exercises. However, these countries are not acting as a bloc, nor are they trending toward a NATO-style alliance. Militarily, Russia likely is emboldened to continue its war in Ukraine, in part, due to munitions and soldiers provided by the DPRK, as well as armed UAVs supplied by Iran. Moscow and Pyongyang have committed to strengthening their defense capacities as part of their comprehensive strategic partnership treaty, which could expedite the DPRK's military modernization goals. Beijing supports Moscow by purchasing oil, selling dual-use technologies such as microelectronics, and providing diplomatic cover in international fora, though it has avoided providing military aid. Though it is a partner to the DPRK and Russia, Beijing has publicly distanced itself from Moscow and Pyongyang's growing defense cooperation, referring to it as a strictly bilateral matter. Tehran seeks to deepen its bilateral relationships with other U.S. adversaries to derive maximum diplomatic, economic, and military benefits.

44. In your view, should the Defense Department's force sizing construct be based on the need to conduct simultaneous conflicts in Asia and Europe?

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs, and the Combatant Commanders to review and evaluate the force sizing construct to ensure that it is focused on the most pressing requirements.

45. Are there significant opportunities that, in your view, DOD has been unable to leverage, or has leveraged only in part, since the NDS was published in 2022? If so, how would you correct this situation, if confirmed?

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs, and the Combatant Commanders to review threats posed by collusion among Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea. I am willing to discuss more detail in a classified setting.

46. If confirmed, what would you do if you determine that the DOD cannot meet the demands placed on it by the 2022 NDS?

If confirmed, I will take a disciplined approach to assess risk and the Joint Force's posture and capabilities in accordance with guidance from the Secretary and the President. I will also work closely with allies and partners to advance interoperability and burden-sharing to help decrease risk globally and strengthen ability to meet current and future defense challenges. If necessary, I would recommend re-prioritizing and re-allocating resources to focus on the most critical areas by reducing or eliminating less critical programs or initiative to free up resources for more pressing needs. I will communicate clearly and transparently with you and the Secretary of Defense, via my Chairman's Risk Assessment, about the risks, challenges, and limitations facing the Joint Force.

47. If confirmed, what revisions or adjustments, if any, would you recommend the Secretary of Defense make to the 2022 NDS as a result of changes in assumptions, policy, or other factors?

If confirmed, my recommendations will prioritize Joint Force preparation and flexibility for both global opportunities and challenges in a dynamic strategic environment. Title 10 directs the Chairman to provide advice relating to global military and strategic and operational integration. Effective global integration of the Joint Force is necessary to support defense objectives in the modern strategic environment. I will advise the Secretary of Defense to align the NDS guidance and priorities to reflect strategic global integration and will ensure consistency with the President's national policy directives and the NSS. I will also advocate investment and use of emerging technologies. Finally, I will advance options for the Secretary that will facilitate cross coordination and integration with other departments and agencies

Department of Defense Budget

48. In your view, are the programs and resources required to generate the capabilities necessary to implement the 2022 NDS properly prioritized within the

Department of Defense? If confirmed, do you believe the Department needs to realign or refocus programs and funding, if at all?

The FY25 budget request was strategy-driven and focused on executing the NDS. If confirmed, I will work with the Administration to ensure future budgets have the right mix of capabilities and capacity to defend against current and future threats. If confirmed, I will continue to support the Department in aligning resources to current strategy.

49. Do you believe that 3-5% real budgetary growth through the FYDP is required to implement the 2022 NDS effectively? Please explain your answer.

The FY25 budget request was strategy-driven and focused on executing the NDS. If confirmed, I will work with the Administration to ensure future budgets have the right mix of capabilities and capacity to defend against current and future threats. If confirmed, I will continue to support the Department in aligning resources to current strategy.

50. Looking forward, what types of resource shortfalls are likely to hamper the Department's execution of the 2022 NDS and other national defense priorities in your view? How would you address or mitigate these shortfalls, if confirmed?

The FY25 budget request adequately resourced the Department to execute the 2022 NDS. If confirmed, I will work with the Administration to ensure future budgets have the right mix of capabilities and capacity to defend against current and future threats. I will also continue to work with Congress and advocate for on-time appropriations so that we may fully capitalize on executing the Administration's strategy.

Section 222a of title 10, U.S. Code, provides that not later than 10 days after the President's submission of the annual defense budget to Congress, each Service Chief and Combatant Commander must submit to the congressional defense committees a report that lists, in order of priority, the unfunded priorities of the armed force or combatant command.

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

I recognize the critical importance of this statutory requirement in ensuring transparency and strategic alignment of defense priorities. These lists serve as essential tools in communicating to Congress the areas where additional resources could significantly enhance military readiness and capabilities. The Department relies on several tools to illuminate joint priorities and develop a budget that is aligned to the Department's strategy. While the unfunded priority lists are required by law, they are not the only tool to build a strategy-informed defense budget.

52. If confirmed, would you commit to supporting the Service Chiefs and Combatant Commanders in providing their unfunded priorities lists to Congress in a timely manner, beginning with the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 budget request?

If confirmed, I will be fully committed to supporting the Service Chiefs and Combatant Commanders in providing their unfunded priorities lists (UPLs) to Congress in a timely manner, beginning with the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 budget request.

Joint Officer Management

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff wields significant influence over joint officer management—the policies and procedures that guide joint officer career development and the attainment of joint experience and education. The NDAA for FY 2017 modified the Joint Qualified Officer (JQO) system established by the Goldwater-Nichols Act in two significant ways. First, it broadened the statutory definition of “joint matters” to expand the types of positions for which an officer can receive joint duty credit. Further, it reduced from three years to two the minimum tour length required for joint duty credit.

53. What is your assessment of the effectiveness of the FY 2017 modifications to the JQO system?

The two significant modifications have provided the Department additional flexibility in the Joint Qualification System. The expansion of the “joint matters” definition has ensured the ability to award joint duty credit to additional officers making contributions to the development and achievement of strategic objectives. The reduced statutory tour length required (From 36 Months to 24 Months) for joint duty credit has provided the Services additional flexibility in officer assignment for tightly managed career timelines and milestones.

54. In your view, are the requirements associated with becoming a JQO, and the link between attaining joint qualification and eligibility for promotion to General/Flag (G/FO) officer rank, consistent with the operational and professional demands of Service line officers?

Yes. Although careers are managed according to Service specific milestones and operational demands, the 24-month minimum joint tour and associated JPME completion for joint qualification are sensible and greatly enhance an officer’s perspective and knowledge to perform at the GO/FO ranks.

55. In your view, what additional modifications to the JQO system are necessary to ensure that military officers are able to attain both meaningful joint and Service-specific leadership experience, and adequate professional development?

The existing joint officer qualification requirements provide a tested and flexible means to ensure officers develop the skills necessary for successful service at the

operational and strategic levels; therefore, no additional modification to the JQO system is necessary at this time.

56. What are your ideas for improving the JQO system better to meet the needs of Reserve Component officers?

Major changes to the JQO system were made in 2007 to incorporate Reserve Component officers and the Reserve policy was adjusted in 2018 to increase joint qualification opportunities for Reserve Component officers. I do not currently recommend changing the JQO system with respect to the Reserve Component, but we must continue to explore areas that allow Reserve Component officers to attend training while balancing their civilian job.

57. Should the requirement to be a JQO be eliminated as a consideration in selecting officers for promotion and assignment?

No. JQO requirements enhance the ability of General/Flag officers to operate effectively in the joint environment at the operational and strategic level. Officers who meet the requirements provide benefit to both the Services and joint organizations, and ultimately the Department as a whole.

58. If confirmed, what modifications would you suggest to provide DOD and the Military Services the force management and talent management tools necessary to recruit, develop, sustain, and retain a 21st century, joint, All-Volunteer Force?

To maintain the competitive edge and strengthen the lethality of the All-Volunteer Force, I will collaborate with OSD and the Service Chiefs to enhance force and talent management strategies. This involves leveraging advanced technologies like AI for recruitment, developing targeted outreach campaigns, revising training programs to include leadership and technical skills, and expanding educational opportunities. Additionally, I will prioritize initiatives to improve the quality of life for service members, incentivize performance, and implement flexible policies aligned with executive orders, while fostering leadership accountability to effectively recruit, develop, sustain, and retain a modern, joint, All-Volunteer Force.

59. Do you believe current DOD and Military Service procedures and practices for reviewing the records of officers pending the President's nomination for promotion or assignment are sufficient to enable fully-informed decisions by the Secretaries of the Military Departments, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense, and the President?

Yes, the Services evaluate officer qualifications, past performance, future potential, and any available adverse or reportable information, and each service has a rigorous process in place to ensure all decisions are fully informed.

60. In your view, are these procedures and practices fair to the individual military officers proceeding through the promotion or assignment process?

Yes. I believe these procedures and practices are fair and reasonable for the officers involved.

Joint Professional Military Education (JPME)

61. Based on your assessment of the threats facing the United States, now and in the future, what knowledge, skills, and abilities will officers need to succeed in great power competition against the nation's adversaries?

The Joint Force's professional military education programs must provide an integrated approach to understanding joint warfighting and our adversaries within the context of a rapidly changing character of war, from accession to senior leader courses for general and flag officers and senior enlisted leaders. Future leaders require the knowledge and skills to prepare them for service as joint warfighting leaders, senior staff positions, and strategists who:

- Discern the military dimensions of a challenge affecting national interests, frame the issue at the policy level, and recommend viable military options within the overarching frameworks of globally integrated operations, and be able to develop strategies nested with U.S. interests.
- Anticipate and lead rapid adaptation and innovation during a dynamic period of acceleration in the rate of change in warfare, under the conditions of great power competition and disruptive technology;
- Plan and conduct joint warfighting at the operational to strategic levels, as all-domain, globally integrated operations, including the ability to integrate allied and partner contributions.
- Remain agile to develop, execute, and adapt strategy through campaigns and operations to achieve policy end states; and
- Demonstrate critical and creative thinking skills, emotional intelligence, and effective written, verbal, and visual communications skills to support the development and implementation of military strategies and complex operations and communicate to senior officials and subordinates.

A number of independent reviews have found that the current JPME system insufficiently prepares future military leaders to operate in a geopolitical environment shaped by multiple nuclear-armed adversaries and lacks sufficient rigor and instruction in strategic deterrence missions.

62. In your view, what additional steps should be taken to increase the proficiency of future senior military leaders in leading the joint force during a period of increased strategic competition, particularly in the nuclear domain?

In terms of the military's contribution to strategic competition, the Joint Force has mature doctrine on the uses and applications of military force short of war. All the JPME programs leverage this doctrine as part of their curriculum and instruction.

- The war colleges have existing programs on deterrence, to include coursework on coercion theory. As such, strategic deterrence is an enduring special area of interest as assessed by Joint Staff J-7 for the Chairman.
- Every year, the Joint Staff J-7 in coordination with Marine Corps University sponsors a Faculty Development Seminar for instructors from all the DoD's JPME programs. This year's agenda will focus on contemporary nuclear operations and the latest thinking surrounding strategic deterrence and experts from across the DoD will present the instruction.
- Additionally, the Joint Staff will nominate a special area of emphasis on nuclear operations and combat operations in a nuclear environment. Every officer enrolled in a JPME program will benefit from this expanded instruction.

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

Understanding and anticipating emerging technologies and applications of cyber capabilities are important skills to be taught at all levels of professional military education. STEM is the hallmark of several military educational institutions including all the Service Academies and graduate schools such as Naval Post Graduate School and Air Force Institute of Technology. These institutions develop "deep" expertise in cyber and technology, tailored to the needs of the Joint Force. STEM aspects are balanced with joint warfighting considerations at the staff college and war college levels. Cyber and disruptive technology considerations are woven into curriculum and students are expected to demonstrate ability to consider these factors in their joint planning and operations assessments. In all, the JPME enterprise works extensively to develop both "depth and breadth" of operationally minded warfighters.

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

Future warfighters and warfighting leaders will inevitably confront both the opportunities and limitations associated with employing forces supported or enabled by software and automation. As operations and campaigns become increasingly complex, product management skills can enable and speed critical decision making. I am committed to

preparing joint warfighters to strategically employ software and automation skills and resources across all joint endeavors.

Legal Counsel to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Section 156 of title 10, U.S. Code, requires the Legal Counsel to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to be selected by a board of officers convened by the Secretary of Defense. To this day, the Chairman's Legal Counsel remains the only joint duty officer selected from among qualified officers of the Armed Forces in this manner.

65. Do you consider the board selection process required by section 156 to be an effective and efficient process for selecting an officer to serve in this critical joint position?

Yes, I believe the selection process for the position of the Legal Counsel to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is an effective, efficient, and equitable means to select an officer for this position from a pool of talented judge advocate leaders across the Services.

66. Would you support expanding application of the process employed to select the Legal Counsel to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to other joint officer positions? Why or why not?

I do not believe it is necessary to expand the LC selection process to other joint billets. The LC selection process pertains to a uniquely specific, statutorily authorized JS billet. The current, well-established processes used to select general/flag officers to other joint staff positions effectively facilitates a pool of candidates representing the best officers from each service. The JS process for identifying officers gives the Combatant Commander and the Chairman flexibility to meet operational demands and emergent requirements. The JS can select from across the Services (to include the Coast Guard) and the Active, Guard, and Reserve Components to identify the individual with appropriate skills and experience. Moreover, the current process provides commanders and other senior leaders an opportunity to quickly review a slate of nominated officers and conduct interviews as necessary. The JS can alert the Services to quickly identify eligible personnel, select candidates, nominate them, and have them in position in as little as 90 days, if necessary.

Alliances and Partnerships

U.S. alliances and partnerships are crucial to U.S. success in competition with, deterrence of, and potential conflict against long term strategic competitors.

67. What is your view of the strength of our current alliances, relationships, and partnerships, and the trust our partners have in the willingness of the U.S. to meet its obligations? If confirmed, how would you enhance that trust?

If confirmed, I will continue to collaborate with and seek ways to incorporate our highly capable and frontline Allies and partners in defense planning to maximize our global efforts

against adversaries. As the President and Secretary have made clear, our allies and partners, particularly those in Europe, must increase their contributions to collective security and I look forward to carrying this message to my Chief of Defense counterparts.

68. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to strengthen existing U.S. alliances and partnerships in each Combatant Commander's geographic AOR for long-term strategic competition?

We must continue to project unity and strength while strengthening military to military relationships with our Allies and partners. If confirmed, I will continue to collaborate with and seek ways to incorporate our highly capable and frontline Allies and partners in defense planning to maximize our global efforts against adversaries. I will continue the regular engagements with Ally and partner counterparts to understand their strategic concerns and to identify areas for increased global cooperation. Synchronization and transparency of our collective military global approaches results in greater pressure on our adversaries while also enabling increased flexibility to refocus U.S. military resources on U.S. national priorities.

In NORTHCOM, defense of the Homeland and ensuring operational control of the U.S. southern border will be my top priority. I will focus on the efforts to modernize NORAD and improve coordination with Canada to ensure our efforts are complementary. I will also continue to foster the strong mil-to-mil relationship with Mexico to confront shared challenges.

In INDOPACOM, if confirmed, I will focus on modernizing our Alliance with Japan by aligning strategic planning and priorities in a more integrated manner and deepening our Alliance with Australia through investments in posture and interoperability through the critical AUKUS security partnership, as well as expanding ongoing co-production and maintenance efforts for critical munitions, essential to building resilience into our Defense Industrial Base. The Joint Force stands to gain from the deepening strategic interests between the U.S. and India, by elevating military cooperation across multiple domains, increasing new procurements and co-production arrangements, and applying effort to streamline defense trade, technology exchange and maintenance, spare supplies and in-country repair and overhaul of U.S.-provided defense systems. If confirmed, I will continue to support our ongoing efforts to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability.

In SOUTHCOM, I will take specific actions to further strengthen defense of the Homeland, including greater focus on PRC military and financial investments in the theater, specifically in Panama. I will also strengthen existing alliances and partnerships and identify new partnerships, as necessary, to further degrade PRC influence in the hemisphere.

In EUCOM, we must encourage our Allies and partners to increase their capability and capacity, and prioritize outcome driven relationships. I will continue to work alongside our NATO Allies to deter and, if necessary, defend against any threat, and build resilience against malign influence and hybrid activities.

In CENTCOM, I will prioritize cooperation with our regional partners that results in a maximum pressure campaign to deter and defend against Iranian aggression. I will build upon the existing regional security constructs to enhance Integrated Air and Missile Defense and Maritime Security to best defend U.S. personnel and vital interests in the region, support allies and partners, and deter adversaries. I will also look for new opportunities for the entire Joint Force – including our new State Partnership Program relationships with Saudi Arabia and UAE – to contribute to shared regional security priorities.

In AFRICOM, I will prioritize partner-led, U.S. enabled efforts to achieve our shared security interests in degrading terrorist organizations, strengthening multilateral coordination, and promoting stability with the long-term goal of our partners achieving operational independence.

In SPACECOM, I will prioritize sustained freedom of action in space, optimization of our resources, and enhancing mission assurance. We must promote norms of behavior by all space-faring nations in space which support U.S. national security, economic, scientific, and commercial interests.

Industrial and technological integration between alliance members and international partners are critical to ensuring interoperability and economies of scale when modernizing and maintaining combat forces.

69. Based on your experience, do you have any recommendations for how DOD can leverage foreign military sales and industrial base integration as a tool to improve our own military systems, as well as improve our ability to fight by, with and through our allies and partners?

Foreign military sales have the potential to strengthen the U.S. Defense Industrial Base by increasing the demand signal for manufacturers, which, if properly incentivized, can enable needed investments in capacity expansion. Some capacity limitations can be offset by co-production initiatives in cases where the business case and U.S. national security benefits align. Ultimately, by equipping partners with U.S. systems, the U.S. increases interoperability and set the stage for more seamless coalition operations.

U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM)

AFRICOM has minimal assigned forces and, as a result, is required to compete for the vast majority of its U.S. forces in the global force management process.

70. What is your assessment of the availability and predictability of forces and associated capabilities to support the AFRICOM Theater Campaign Plan, the NDS, and other emergency requirements?

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense and the AFRICOM Commander as part of the Global Force Management Process. For AFRICOM, their forces include allocated forces and CONUS-based regionally aligned forces that rotate into the Area

of Responsibility (AOR) execute activities in support of the AFRICOM Theater Campaign Plan. Current posture allows for the forward staging of forces to provide required operational flexibility and timely crisis response, as required. Across AORs, I will work with the Department to balance competing requirements and resourcing demands in-line with DoD priorities.

71. Are there any changes you would implement to the allocation or assignment of forces to AFRICOM, if confirmed?

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense and the Combatant Commanders to review global force posture, to include that within the AFRICOM AOR, and make my recommendations.

72. What should be the primary objectives of the DOD specifically, and the United States more broadly, in the AFRICOM AOR?

Defending U.S. interests, protecting the Homeland, and deterring our adversaries are global requirements for DoD. Africa is an important AOR to implement our national security objectives to degrade terrorists' capability to strike the Homeland and our personnel and facilities abroad; and to counter our adversaries' ability to undermine U.S. strategic interests.

73. What is your assessment of the strategic objectives of Russia and China in Africa? In what areas, if any, do these oppose U.S. and partner objectives?

China and Russia both seek to expand their influence in Africa. China primarily focuses on economic investment and infrastructure projects via its Belt and Road Initiative, though there is nascent military cooperation with some nations. Russia focuses on military partnerships, arms sales, and resource extraction. Both powers aim to challenge Western influence, though China's approach has generally been more systematic and economically focused compared to Russia's more opportunistic and security-oriented strategy.

U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM)

74. In your opinion, what are the key U.S. national security interests in the Middle East? Please explain your answer.

Key U.S. national security interests in the Middle east are (1) deterring threats to the U.S. Homeland that emanate from the Middle East (Iranian Threat Network, potential nuclear weapons, and VEOs), (2) supporting our allies and partners in the region (Israel, NATO, etc.), (3) counter-proliferation, preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, and (4) ensuring the free flow of goods, trade, and stability in the world energy supply.

75. In your opinion, to what extent does achieving U.S. national security interests in the Middle East require a continuous U.S. military presence, and in your view is

the current U.S. force presence appropriately sized? Please explain your answer.

The Middle East continues to face challenges emanating from terrorism, failed and fragile states, and pressure from Russia, China, and Iran. If confirmed, I will continue to assess the U.S. military presence in the Middle East against our national strategic interests and in light of broader global requirements and make recommendations to the Secretary and the President.

76. What opportunities exist for increasing burden-sharing with U.S. partners to counter threats emanating from and affecting the CENTCOM AOR?

The CENTCOM AOR faces a number of threats across multiple domains. The combined military, economic, humanitarian, and environmental threats that impact across the globe must be addressed by the combined efforts of U.S. and its allies and partners.

Our partners in the Middle East are eager to improve security cooperation and assume a greater share of the burden defending themselves against Iranian aggression and terrorist threats such as the Houthis and ISIS.

Improving ally and partner capability through training and improving the Foreign Military Sales process, as well as building and strengthening intelligence sharing and cooperative agreements like the RSC (Regional Security Construct) and MEAD (Middle East Air Defense) partnership will enable our A&P to assume a greater role in addressing regional security issues, while solidifying U.S. influence and our role as partner of choice for strategically important allies.

77. What threat does Chinese and Russian involvement in the Middle East pose to U.S. operations and interests and to what extent does a continuous U.S. presence counter their involvement? In your view, what other policy tools might be useful in this regard?

Russia has historically used its military presence in the Middle East to threaten the U.S. and our allies from the Mediterranean Sea and into Africa. Russian-affiliated forces attacked U.S. troops in Syria but were disavowed by Moscow. Russian government and Chinese state-owned enterprises have aligned with Iran to proliferate weapons, technology, and expertise used by terrorist organizations such as the Houthis that attack the U.S. military, Israel and our other allies and partners in the region. Chinese IT also introduces risk into the defense infrastructure of those Middle Eastern countries that choose to procure Chinese tech and equipment. Therefore, it is important for the military to work alongside other departments and agencies in the U.S. government to address the diplomatic, economic, and informational threat posed by China and Russia as well as the direct military threat.

Iran

78. What is your understanding of the objectives of the U.S. national security interests with respect to Iran? What is the role of the U.S. military in this strategy?

U.S. policy and our interest to deny Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, neutralize Iran's campaign of regional aggression, and disrupt the IRGC's destabilizing activities.

The Joint Force will retain the ability to deny Iran a nuclear weapon; identify and support action against Iranian and Iranian-backed threats; and disrupt terrorist threats that endanger the U.S. Homeland and U.S. interests. The U.S. military will work with our regional Middle East partners to increase their ability to deter and defend against Iranian aggression.

79. What is your assessment of the current military threat posed by Iran? What is your assessment of the threat posed by Iranian proxy groups?

IRAN. Iran possesses thousands of ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and one-way attack UAVs capable of ranging Israeli and U.S. interests in the region and, over the past year, demonstrated its ability to employ its conventional military capabilities in two large-scale attacks directly against Israel. Their consideration of nuclear capability is troubling.

IRANIAN PROXIES. Iran maintains a network of nonstate partners and proxies in the Middle East which have targeted U.S. and partner interests across the region and in international shipping lanes, and they have publicly justified these attacks due to Israeli operations against HAMAS and Lebanese Hizballah.

- HOUTHIS. Since Oct 2023, the Houthis have launched missiles and UAVs against Israeli territory, U.S. military ships and aircraft, hit multiple commercial vessels in the Red Sea, and seized and impounded one commercial vessel.
- IAMGs. Since 19 Oct 2023, Iranian-aligned groups have conducted over 200 attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq, Jordan, and Syria, as recently January—demonstrating they maintain at least limited operational capabilities in Syria—and they may resume sustained attacks with little to no warning, pending Iranian approval.
- HIZBALLAH. Since Oct 2023, Hizballah has conducted cross-border attacks against Israel and combatting Israeli forces in Lebanon and has not expressed an intent to target U.S. forces or interests in the Middle East.
- HAMAS. As of early Mar, HAMAS is focused on its long-term survival and has not publicly expressed an intent to target U.S. forces or interests in the Middle East; however, HAMAS political officials have publicly opposed plans for a sustained foreign presence in Gaza, suggesting the group likely would seek to target any non-Palestinian security force deployed to Gaza after the conflict.

80. In your view, what would be the security implications for U.S. and regional security interests should Iran acquire a nuclear weapons capability?

Iranian leadership's decision calculus may be affected if its national priorities are threatened to include ensuring regime survival, maintaining national security from internal and external threats, and establishing itself as the regional dominant power in the Middle East.

Military force alone may not be sufficient to deter Iran, and an approach that includes diplomatic engagement and economic incentives may be necessary.

**81. In your opinion, can Iran be sufficiently deterred through military force alone?
Please explain your answer.**

Iranian leadership's decision calculus may be affected if its national priorities are threatened to include ensuring regime survival, maintaining national security from internal and external threats, and establishing itself as the regional dominant power in the Middle East.

Military force alone may not be sufficient to deter Iran, and an approach that includes diplomatic engagement and economic incentives may be necessary.

Israel

82. In your opinion, what are U.S. national security objectives with regards to Israel?

Israel is a model U.S. ally, and the U.S.-Israel alliance is of great importance to the United States. Enabling Israel's security and ability to defend itself is thus a key U.S. national security objective. Achieving durable security for Israel and strengthening formal and informal security cooperation between Israel and its Arab neighbors will reduce the burden on the Joint Force and enable greater focus on threats elsewhere around the globe.

83. In your opinion, what should DOD's role be in supporting Israeli efforts to degrade and defeat Hamas?

I defer to the Secretary and the President to set our policies towards foreign states, to include Israel. If confirmed, I will ensure that our military strategy and operations are aligned with the Secretary and the President's priorities and policies.

Syria and Iraq

**84. What is your understanding of current U.S. strategy and objectives in Syria?
How have those objectives changed, if at all, in light of the recent fall of the Assad regime?**

The United States is in Syria to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS and to prevent external operations from ISIS and al-Qa'ida from threatening the U.S. Homeland. The December 2024 fall of the Assad regime does not fundamentally alter these U.S. objectives.

I will work with the Secretary as this administration assesses and develops US policy for Syria.

85. From a DOD perspective, what must be done to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS? What non-military efforts are needed for the enduring defeat of ISIS?

The Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS must continue to cooperate on counterterrorism efforts. U.S. must continue to work closely with allies and partners to address shared security concerns through a whole-of-government approach to eliminate threats to the Homeland.

86. What do you perceive to be the role of the Syrian Democratic Forces and Iraqi Security Forces in countering ISIS and al Qaeda?

It is my understanding that our partners in the SDF and ISF lead the fight against ISIS by shouldering the burden of operations with some U.S. assistance. These partners play a critical role in enabling our CT objectives while keeping the risk to and investment from U.S. forces low and economical. I will seek to work with the Secretary and interagency on the future of these relationships as regional dynamics continue to change and the Administration reviews its policies regarding Syria and Iraq.

87. In your view, should U.S. troop levels in Syria be tied to the achievement of certain conditions on the ground? If so, what conditions would you factor into your recommendation to the President on future troop levels in Syria?

I believe that U.S. troop levels in Syria should accord with our national policy and objectives. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense and the Commander USCENTCOM to review our strategy and posture in Syria and make my recommendations.

In September, the U.S.-Iraq Higher Military Commission announced the transition of the global coalition to defeat ISIS to a bilateral security relationship with the Government of Iraq. However, many of the details of such a transition are still being negotiated with the Iraqi Government.

88. In your view, what should the guiding principles for DOD's presence in Iraq moving forward? Do you assess that U.S. forces should remain in Iraq beyond next September? Why or why not?

Iraq has become a key partner for the U.S. in the region. The U.S. Mission in Iraq is committed to a lasting strategic partnership with the Government of Iraq and its people. The U.S. government, along with the U.S. Mission to Iraq, actively collaborates with Iraqi partners to support a stable, prosperous, democratic, and unified Iraq. Our security relationship is an advisory, enabling, and assisting role.

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense and the Commander USCENTCOM to review our strategy and posture in Iraq and make my recommendations.

South Asia

89. In your opinion, what are U.S. national security objectives in Afghanistan, and what is your understanding of the current strategy to achieve them?

The most immediate U.S. interest in Afghanistan is to ensure the country is not a breeding ground for terrorist attacks against the United States, our overseas interests, and our allies and partners. This includes ensuring weapons provided to the former Afghan government do not fall into the hands of terrorists planning attacks on the United States. The U.S. works with partners in the region to achieve this objective. Over the long term, a more stable and self-sufficient Afghanistan would facilitate security and possibly open alternative trade routes from Central Asia.

90. In your view, is the United States properly postured to counter ISIS-Khorasan and al Qaeda and related groups in Afghanistan? Please explain your answer.

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense and the Combatant Commanders to review global force posture and capabilities, to include that within the CENTCOM AOR, and make my recommendations.

91. If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you recommend to U.S. relations with Pakistan?

Pakistan's location bordering China, India, Iran, and Afghanistan, and its status as a nuclear power make an ongoing strategic relationship important. I would aim to preserve the military-to-military relationship between the United States and Pakistan in areas of mutual interest such as counterterrorism. A constructive defense relationship facilitates regional stability and enhances counterterrorism efforts.

U.S. European Command (EUCOM)

92. Do you believe the deterrent posture in Europe is sufficient to deter further Russian aggression in Europe?

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs, and the Combatant Commanders to review our force posture, to include that in the USEUCOM AOR, and make my recommendations.

93. In your assessment, are there capability and/or capacity shortfalls in current U.S. posture that affect the U.S. ability to carry out the EUCOM Theater Campaign Plan?

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs, and the Combatant Commanders to review our capabilities, capacity, and force posture, to include that in the USEUCOM AOR, and make my recommendations.

94. In your assessment, does the United States have sufficient air and missile defense capability and capacity to defend critical infrastructure in EUCOM? If not, what are the areas of highest risk?

I have not been able to conduct an assessment of the US air and missile defense capabilities and capacities to defend EUCOM critical infrastructure. However, If confirmed, I will work closely with the Joint Chiefs, and all of the Combatant Commanders to review our capabilities, capacity, and force posture across all theaters, to include EUCOM, in order to make fully informed recommendations to the Secretary of Defense. Additionally, the department will continue to work closely with Allies and Partners to ensure that we have an efficient and effective air and missile defense force posture across the theater.

95. If confirmed, what specific changes would you make to U.S. capabilities or force posture in Europe to execute the Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance more effectively?

Europe continues to face challenges emanating from conventional to transnational threats in its immediate vicinity and beyond. If confirmed, I will continue to assess the U.S. military presence in Europe against our national strategic interests and in light of broader global requirements and make recommendations to the Secretary and the President.

European Deterrence Initiative (EDI)

Since establishment of the EDI in 2014, the NDAA has authorized billions of dollars each year for EDI investments to support stability and security, and to deter Russian aggression.

96. In your view, has EDI improved U.S. and allied capability and capacity to deter Russian aggression in the European theater?

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs, and the Combatant Commanders to review our capabilities, capacity, and force posture, to include the EDI, and make my recommendations.

97. Do you believe continued, robust dedicated funding for programs under EDI's five lines of effort is required to support implementation of the NDS in Europe?

If confirmed, I will need to assess the future requirements in Europe, with the Service Chiefs, to make recommendations regarding future EDI funding.

NATO Alliance

98. In your view, how important to U.S. strategic interests is the U.S. commitment to its obligations under the North Atlantic Treaty, especially Article 5?

The North Atlantic Treaty is very important to U.S. strategic interests. Any use of armed force to fulfill our commitments under Article 5 would need to be carried out pursuant to the President's powers under Article II of the U.S. Constitution, the War Powers Act, and subsequent congressional authorizations for use of military force or a formal declaration of war.

99. What do you view as the essential strategic objectives of the NATO Alliance and what do you perceive to be the greatest challenges in meeting those objectives?

At the 2024 Washington Summit, the Alliance reaffirmed its purpose and principles found in NATO's Strategic Concept, and its three core tasks of Collective Defense, Cooperative Security, and Crisis Management. I'm aligned with these objectives and in my view, the greatest challenge the Alliance faces is its ability to adapt and develop, politically and militarily, to meet the challenges of an unpredictable and competitive world.

100. NATO has long held the position that, "as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance." In your view, do you believe this principle requires the United States to continue to deploy nuclear weapons in NATO countries?

As long as NATO remains a nuclear alliance, it is important for the U.S. to maintain nuclear weapons forward deployed in NATO countries. These forward-based weapons contribute to U.S. extended deterrence, complicate adversary decision calculus, and reassure our NATO Allies.

The US nuclear commitment to NATO remains a core element of our deterrence policy and strategy. As the backbone of deterrence since its founding, NATO nuclear policy seeks to preserve peace, prevent coercion and deter aggression.

101. Do you believe that NATO should expand the nuclear sharing role to additional alliance members?

Nuclear sharing arrangements can refer both to U.S. nuclear weapons hosted on the territory of NATO Allies and to Allied provision of Dual-Capable Aircraft (DCA) that could carry U.S. nuclear weapons as part of a NATO nuclear mission. While these facets of nuclear sharing are related, one does not require the other. From a military perspective, expanding NATO allies' participation in the nuclear deterrence mission in some capacity would enhance flexibility, survivability, and military capability. If confirmed, I will work with USEUCOM and SACEUR to evaluate the cost/benefit of such a decision.

102. What do you see as the benefits, or negative consequences, of NATO countries individually pursuing their own nuclear weapons?

Nuclear proliferation, even among Allies, significantly limits U.S. ability to manage escalation risk. It could trigger further acceleration of adversary efforts to modernize and

expand their nuclear arsenals. Additionally, it would irreparably erode the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and could encourage proliferation around the world.

The dual-hatted position of the Commander of EUCOM as NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) allows U.S. and Allied forces to be highly integrated in Europe. Similar dual-hat responsibilities have been integrated to other senior U.S. Commanders, including Commander of U.S. Air Forces Europe and Africa as Commander NATO Allied Air Command (AIRCOM) and Commander U.S. Army Europe and Africa as Commander NATO Allied Land Command

103. What is your assessment of the benefits of these dual-hatted structures to allied cohesion and integration?

U.S. leadership within the Alliance is critical to Alliance cohesion and integration. As the most capable and largest NATO member, the U.S. is the only member that has the stature to lead the Alliance in a cohesive and unified manner. The dual-hatted positions throughout the NATO command structure ensure close integration of U.S. thought and operational intent and maintain unity of effort and focus across the Alliance. The dual-hatted arrangement, in which SACEUR is an American combatant commander, is particularly important for the fulfillment of the United States' nuclear deterrence commitment to NATO.

Russia

104. In your view, is Russia a threat to the United States and its allies?

Russia very likely remains deterred from an overt military attack against the U.S. or NATO; however, Moscow retains the ability and willingness to conduct asymmetric activity below what it assesses to be the threshold of military conflict. The conflict in Ukraine very likely has strained its conventional military forces, increasing Russia's dependence on its nuclear arsenal as a means of deterrence to protect itself from perceived external military threats.

105. In your view, which EUCOM and NATO activities most deter Russia and mitigate the Russian threat to NATO Allies and partners?

Russia very likely is deterred by the U.S. and NATO's nuclear arsenal and the threat of direct military confrontation with the U.S. and NATO. Russia's threat perceptions almost certainly are driven by a belief that the U.S. and broader West seek the strategic defeat of the Russian state. As such, Moscow views any actions by the U.S. and broader West, especially those in the vicinity of Moscow's perceived sphere of influence, as intended to undermine Russian interests. However, Moscow calibrates its responses to these perceived undermining activities to demonstrate resolve without prompting an escalatory response from the U.S. and/or the broader West.

106. What aspects of U.S. and NATO force posture do you assess as having the most significant deterrent effect on Russia?

Russia very likely is deterred by the U.S. and NATO's nuclear arsenal and the threat of direct military confrontation with the U.S. and NATO. Russia's threat perceptions almost certainly are driven by a belief that the U.S. and broader West seek the strategic defeat of the Russian state. As such, Moscow views any actions by the U.S. and broader West, especially those in the vicinity of Moscow's perceived sphere of influence, as intended to undermine Russian interests. However, Moscow calibrates its responses to these perceived undermining activities to demonstrate resolve without prompting an escalatory response from the U.S. and/or the broader West.

107. In your view, what should DOD do to counter Russian malign influence in Europe?

We must encourage our Allies and partners to increase their capability and capacity, and prioritize outcome driven relationships. I will continue to work alongside our NATO Allies to deter and, if necessary, defend against any threat, and build resilience against malign influence and hybrid activities.

Ukraine

In February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale, unprovoked, and illegal invasion on Ukraine.

108. How do you assess the trajectory of the conflict and the role that the Department of Defense should play?

Russian President Putin remains committed to pursuing his objectives in Ukraine to include securing territorial gains and forcing Ukrainian neutrality. Moscow likely views the conflict is in its favor and will continue to prosecute the war in 2025 despite high casualties from continued operations. Russia's approved 2025 budget contains higher levels of defense spending compared to 2024 and is the highest it has been since the Cold War. Defense spending is projected to be double that of social spending, which suggests Moscow is committed to sustaining its war efforts. The conflict in 2025 likely will continue to be a war of attrition, with both sides suffering heavy losses of personnel and materiel. Russian forces gained nearly 4,000 square kilometers in 2024, seven times more than in 2023, with the majority of those advances occurring in eastern Donetsk.

Following the 18 Feb meeting between U.S. and Russian officials in Riyadh, the Kremlin publicly reiterated willingness to work with Washington on a negotiated settlement and expressed interest in continued high-level dialogue with the United States. Russia later reiterated Moscow will not accept a ceasefire without a long-term settlement that addresses Russia's core security concerns.

109. Do you believe it is important for the United States to continue providing security assistance to Ukraine, including after the conclusion of the war, as a means to help Ukraine deter and defeat Russian aggression?

From a military standpoint, Ukraine has the right to self-defense, and from that standpoint our security assistance helps Ukraine to defend itself. Our assistance improves Ukraine's position at the negotiating table and deters Russia from further aggression. The United States is only a part of the network of states supporting Ukraine's defense, and we should focus on what unique capabilities only the U.S. can provide, while Europe increases its share of support. After the conclusion of the war, we should continue to assist Ukraine with its future force development and long-term stability.

110. What do you see as the role of U.S. security assistance in building the capabilities and capacity of Ukraine to meet its military requirements to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity in the short, medium, and long-term?

The U.S. and our Allies are studying Ukraine's immediate wartime needs to defend the front line, as well as how to build its future force and defense industry to develop organic capabilities for long-term self-defense. In this way, we are helping Ukraine become more self-sufficient. Other aspects of short, and long-term force development include advising missions and training.

U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM)

U.S. force posture in the Indo-Pacific region remains heavily concentrated in Japan and South Korea.

111. Is the current U.S. force posture in the Indo-Pacific region sufficient to support the Trump Administration's Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance? How would you propose to restructure U.S. security posture in the Indo-Pacific to counter Chinese aggression, if confirmed? Please explain your answer.

An increasingly aggressive China poses both short and long-term challenges. If confirmed, I will assess the U.S. military presence in the Indo-Pacific against our national strategic interests and make recommendations to the SecDef and POTUS.

112. In your view, what would be the impact of significant reductions to our force posture in Japan or South Korea on the security situation in the Indo-Pacific region?

North Korea's long-range missile and nuclear programs represent an immediate security challenge. If confirmed, I will assess the U.S. military presence in Japan and South Korea and make recommendations to the SecDef and POTUS.

113. In your assessment, what are the priority investments DOD could make to implement the NDS and improve the military balance in the Indo-Pacific?

The Department works closely with INDOPACOM and allies and partners in the region to ensure the Department is making investments that advance NDS priorities, close Combatant Commanders priority gaps, and improve integrated deterrence. Participating in regional multi-national exercises and sustaining forward forces assists with improving the military balance in the region. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Services and Congress to advance investments that improve lethality within INDOPACOM to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific.

114. Do you believe that continued, dedicated funding for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative is required to support implementation of the NDS in the Indo-Pacific? Please explain your answer.

The programs, investments, and activities included in the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) are critical for providing a credible combat deterrent and maintaining the free and open order in the Western Pacific. PDI is a subset of the Department's budget request, not a separate fund. If confirmed, I will work with the INDOPACOM and the Services to ensure we continue to fund the most important programs to strengthen deterrence.

115. In your view, what is the role of ground forces in the Indo-Pacific during competition, crisis, and conflict?

The role of ground forces in the Indo-Pacific region is complex and multifaceted, evolving across the spectrum of competition, crisis, and conflict. Right now, they serve as a deterrent and offer opportunities to expand training and partnerships with allies. In times of crisis, they can offer a rapid response option as well as a way of protecting U.S. interests in the region (U.S. citizens, infrastructure, etc). During conflict, they can provide options for force projection, area denial/control, and stabilization/reconstruction. In any case, the China threat is dynamic and US ground forces must continue to adapt and modernize to maintain a competitive edge.

116. Congress mandated the establishment of the Joint Force Headquarters at INDOPACOM. What is your view of INDOPACOM's progress in establishing the Joint Force Headquarters? What are the requirements for the Joint Force Headquarters at INDOPACOM to fully execute its function?

The ability to respond effectively to crises in the region, using the Joint Force with all its combined capabilities, is paramount. Admiral Paparo has stated that, in a Joint Operations Area (JOA) within the Theater of War, the U.S. Pacific Fleet would serve as the Joint Task Force (JTF), a capability for which they were certified in 2023. The existing structure, which leverages the proven capabilities of service components and their ability to function as JTFs, provides the necessary flexibility and responsiveness to address a wide range of potential crises within the INDOPACOM AOR. It should be able to fully execute its purpose in its

current form.

117. Can you describe the strategic and operational importance of Guam to executing INDOPACOM's plans and operations in the region? Can you describe the state of military infrastructure and facilities on Guam in the wake of Typhoon Mawar? Do you agree that it is critical for Guam to be reconstructed in a resilient manner so that the U.S. military can utilize Guam as a power projection platform in the Indo-Pacific?

Guam's strategic location and military capabilities make it a key hub indispensable for US power projection in the Indo-Pacific. However, Typhoon Mawar, which struck Guam in May 2023, caused significant damage to military infrastructure and facilities on the island. This highlighted the vulnerability of the island's critical infrastructure to natural disasters, which underscores the need to invest in order to ensure its ability to withstand future threats, both natural and man-made. A resilient Guam helps ensure the US can effectively deter aggression, respond to crises, and protect its interests in the region.

118. Do you support the efforts by the United States and Japan to establish a modernized command-and-control structure, to include an improved U.S. Forces Japan? Do you agree that the Department of Defense should move as fast as possible to establish a new command-and-control structure with Japan, considering its strategic importance as a capable ally in the Indo-Pacific?

Yes, modernizing the US-Japan command-and-control structure will help maintain a credible deterrent and ensure the alliance's effectiveness in a rapidly changing security environment.

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."

119. How would you characterize the current U.S. relationship with China?

The President has made it clear we must be clear-eyed about China's intentions and actions. Many of the Chinese Communist Party's values and interests are at odds with those of the United States. However, I defer to the Secretaries of Defense and State to characterize our current relationship.

120. 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?

Engagements with the PLA may offer opportunities for the U.S. to influence China's military behavior and encourage adherence to norms and standards, but we should be realistic about what we can achieve. A properly postured and equipped Joint Force does more to influence China's behavior than engagement. If the President and the Secretary believe I can move U.S. objectives forward by engaging with my PLA counterpart, I will.

121. 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?

The PLA remains focused on developing its capabilities across all warfare domains to become a joint force capable of the full range of land, air, and maritime as well as nuclear, space, counterspace, EW, and cyberspace operations. The PLA remains focused on developing capabilities to provide options for China to dissuade, deter, or, if ordered, defeat third-party intervention in the Indo-Pacific region. China's stated defense policy remains oriented toward advancing its sovereignty, security, and development interests while emphasizing a greater global role for itself. Beijing has demonstrated an increasing willingness to use military coercion and inducements to achieve these aims. The PLA's rapid developments in missile, aircraft, and unmanned aerial systems have greatly advanced in the past twenty years.

122. In your view what are the implications of China's nuclear build-up on the credibility of deterrence and extended deterrence in Asia?

China's nuclear buildup presents a challenge to U.S. deterrence capabilities and extended deterrence commitments to allies in the Indo-Pacific. To preserve stability in the region and deter potential aggression from China, the U.S. must continue to fully invest in a modernized nuclear force. This will ensure credibility for our deterrent and extended deterrence commitments in the future.

Taiwan

123. 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?

There is a very stark imbalance in capabilities across the Taiwan Strait. As indicated in DoD's annual China Military Power Report (CMPR), China continues to modernize its military capabilities and invest in advanced weapons systems. These include aircraft carriers, anti-ship missiles, submarines, ballistic missiles, and cyber capabilities. The PLA is capable of projecting power through operations and exercises near Taiwan and throughout the region. Taiwan's military, although growing, is much smaller in comparison and lacks many similar capabilities.

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense and the Commander USINDOPACOM to review the capabilities and requirements of Taiwan and make my recommendations.

124. 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?

My focus is implementing the President's current policy, which opposes any unilateral changes to the status quo from either side and to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability. Respectfully, I will provide my military advice on significant policy changes when the President and Secretary invite me to do so.

The Korean Peninsula

125. What is your assessment of the threat posed by North Korea to regional and global stability?

The DPRK nuclear, missile, and cyber capabilities continue to threaten the United States and its allies on a global scale. Pyongyang has tested multiple missile systems capable of striking U.S. forces in the ROK and Japan, as well as Guam, Alaska, Hawaii, and CONUS. Additionally, the DPRK conducts persistent cyber activities, such as cryptocurrency theft and adaptive cybercrime TTPs to generate funds and obtain technical information in support of the regime's military and WMD programs. Pyongyang's comprehensive strategic partnership with Moscow very likely will enable it to further improve its military capabilities, increasing the threat to regional stability and U.S. interests.

126. In your view, are there additional steps that DOD should take to improve U.S. and allied defenses against North Korea's nuclear and missile capabilities?

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense and the USNORTHCOM, USSTRATCOM, USSPACECOM, USINDOPACOM, and Combined Forces Command-Korea Commanders to review and enhance the status of our missile defense capabilities against the DPRK and make my recommendations in line with President Trump's Golden Dome for America.

127. What will you do to ensure that trilateral military cooperation between the U.S., Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) accelerates?

I support the Trilateral Security Cooperation Framework and, if confirmed, will continue to advocate for using the Trilateral Security Cooperation Framework as a blueprint for military cooperation in exercises like FREEDOM EDGE and operationally through efforts such as our trilateral missile data warning sharing mechanism.

128. Do you believe that the ROK has met the requirements for the conditions-based operational control transition plan allowing it to assume wartime control of its military? If not, what does the ROK still need to do to achieve OPCON transition?

The U.S. and ROK currently have a conditions-based operational control transition plan (COTP) in place. The COTP requires the ROK to meet the conditions associated with their stand-alone capability and that the security environment is conducive for the ROK to assume the lead of a U.S.-ROK combined command prior to transition. The ROK continues to increase and improve capabilities by acquiring equipment and experience through multi-domain and trilateral exercises. If confirmed, I will review the conditions outlined within the existing plan before making my recommendation.

130. What are your views on the use of landmines to deter conflict on the Korean Peninsula? Do you support continuing efforts by DOD to modernize related terrain shaping capabilities?

Landmines have been used on the Korean peninsula since the Korean War and there are still millions of landmines deployed along the demilitarized zone to deter North Korean aggression. If confirmed, I will review the deployment of landmines on the Korean peninsula.

U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM)

Defense Support to Civil Authorities

Civil authorities may request DOD support for domestic disasters and certain counter-drug operations as well as in managing the consequences of a terrorist event employing a weapon of mass destruction.

131. In your view, are the procedures by which Federal, State, and Local agencies request DOD support efficient, effective, and timely?

Yes, the procedures by which Federal, State, and Local agencies request DOD support have been honed over decades and are effective in ensuring that DOD is able to provide a rapid and flexible response for potential or actual emergencies or disasters within the US, territories, possessions, and protectorates, upon receiving a validated request for assistance formally asking DoD to provide assistance to a local, State, tribal, or other federal agency.

132. What factors should be considered in determining whether DOD will provide support to a civil authority?

If confirmed, I would ensure that DOD remains a reliable and responsive partner to civil authorities while adhering to legal and operational principles. By continuously refining procedures, enhancing interagency training, and leveraging lessons learned from past

emergencies, we can strengthen our collective ability to respond effectively to crises and safeguard the American people.

133. Do you believe it is in the best interests of DOD to provide support to civil authorities on a reimbursable basis?

Yes, providing DoD resources, when appropriately requested and validated, in response to emergencies, law enforcement support, and other domestic activities when non-DoD capabilities are overwhelmed or unavailable is appropriate.

Transnational Criminal Organizations

Transnational criminal organizations are engaged in a wide variety 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.

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

Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) almost certainly will continue to prioritize their profits and will engage in activities that may threaten the United States such as drug or human trafficking in pursuit of illicit business interests. Over the past two decades, TCOs have adapted to increased government regulation and enforcement efforts by diversifying their revenue streams, updating drug manufacturing processes, and changing trafficking TTP. Most fentanyl is trafficked through U.S. ports of entry, judging from CBP seizure information. TCO adaptability likely will challenge Latin American governments' capacities to effectively counter criminal violence for at least the next year.

TCOs likely seek to avoid excessive violence in the United States or against U.S. citizens that may attract additional law enforcement scrutiny. However, TCO-driven criminal violence in Latin America—particularly Mexico—raises the risk of spillover violence in the United States or towards U.S. personnel operating near the U.S. southern border. TCOs degrade Latin American state capacity through their engagement in corruption and some organizations' ability to overwhelm security forces in limited engagements. Weakened Latin American states almost certainly are less able to contain violence. In Mexico, the military generally maintains the capabilities to counter TCO attacks but lacks the capacity to sustain a long-term campaign to decisively defeat criminal groups.

U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM)

135. If confirmed, what recommendations would you make to the President to deter Russian, Cuban, and Chinese influence in the SOUTHCOM AOR?

The Chinese and Russian governments use economic pressure and disinformation campaigns to influence the governments in Latin America and the Caribbean in their favor. Their actions often counter U.S. interests and destabilize democratic partner nations. The U.S. should work to remain the partner of choice by maintaining strong regional presence and investing in programs that will build partner capacity to deter Chinese, Russian, and Cuban influence.

136. Do you believe these influences threaten hemispheric security and prosperity?

China and Russia use varying tools to influence the Western Hemisphere according to their interests. While in the short-term Chinese activities might translate into positive economic outcomes, long-term, we have seen that many of these projects undercut local competition or impede on partner nation's sovereignty. Russia's actions support authoritarian regimes who undermine the security and prosperity of the United States and other peace seeking nations.

Detainee Treatment and Guantanamo Bay Naval Station

137. Do you support the standards for detainee treatment specified in Army Field Manual 2-22.3, *Human Intelligence Collector Operations*, issued in September 2006 and DOD Directive 2310.01E, *Department of Defense Detainee Program*, dated August 19, 2014, and required by Section 1045 of the NDAA for FY 2016?

Yes.

Counternarcotics Activities

DOD serves as 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 expends nearly \$1 billion to build the counternarcotics capacity of U.S. Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies and certain foreign governments.

138. What changes, if any, should be made to DOD's counternarcotics strategy and supporting activities?

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense and the Combatant Commanders to review our approach to counternarcotics.

139. In your view, what should be DOD's role in countering the flow of narcotics to nations other than the United States?

The Joint Force should continue to assess how it can best leverage intelligence assets and partnership capacity building to support these partners' efforts to disrupt and degrade drug-trafficking organizations at the source. If confirmed, I can better assess the DOD's role in countering the global flow of narcotics.

140. How, if at all, should U.S. security assistance be scoped to address factors at the root of counternarcotics trafficking, in your opinion?

The Joint Force should continue to assess how it can best leverage intelligence assets and partnership capacity building to support these partners' efforts to disrupt and degrade drug-trafficking organizations at the source. If confirmed, I can better assess the DOD's role in countering the global flow of narcotics.

Venezuela

141. What is your assessment of the current situation in Venezuela and to what degree is the illegitimate Maduro regime dependent on support from external actors like Russia, Cuba, and China?

Disputed President Nicolas Maduro continues to hold on to power with support from the Venezuelan military and key partners Russia, China, and Iran very likely mitigating the impact of international sanctions through limited economic and defense support.

Historically, Russia was Venezuela's largest defense supplier, although military supply has declined in recent years. China provides economic cooperation, but mirrors Russia with declining defense support. Ties with Iran have weakened under President Maduro, but current security cooperation includes aircraft maintenance, chemical plant construction, and UAV sales. Cuba and Venezuela have shared a robust security, political, and economic relationship for nearly two decades.

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

The rationale for Venezuelan relations with China, Cuba, Iran, and Russia is the desire to prosper under U.S. sanctions through mutual trade and support. A current goal of the Maduro regime is to gain formal admittance into the international economic bloc, Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS). Caracas uses its oil reserves as its main bargaining tool, primarily with Beijing to whom they export the majority of their crude oil. The U.S. is Venezuela's preferred oil customer, and Caracas' dependence on foreign support correlates with U.S. sanctions. Russia and Venezuela are increasing economic trade and investment in the face of sanctions by the U.S. and other western countries. Venezuela has also signed various agreements with Iran in energy, science, oil, defense, culture, economy, and food sectors.

U.S. Space Force and U.S. Space Command (SPACECOM)

The United States is increasingly dependent on space, both economically and militarily. Our great power competitors are making concerted efforts to leap ahead of U.S. technology and impact U.S. freedom of action in the space warfighting domain.

The Space Force, within the Department of the Air Force, and a unified Space Command, deal with the contested domain of space, upon which the terrestrial forces of the United States and peer competitors are highly reliant for support.

143. In your view, does the current NDS accurately assess the strategic environment as it pertains to the domain of space? If confirmed, what changes would you make to the NDS regarding the space domain?

If confirmed, I will review the specifics of the 2025 Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance (INDSG) as it applies to Space. Our competitors continue to view space as a key competitive environment and future NDS documents should reflect this strategic reality.

144. In your view, what will “great power competition” look like in space and to what extent do you view China’s and Russia’s activities related to the space domain as a threat or challenge to U.S. national security interests?

Both China and Russia have developed and fielded counterspace capabilities designed to hold U.S. government and commercial satellites at risk and undermine U.S. advantages. We must accelerate the transition to a more resilient space architecture, strengthen our ability to deter, counter, and defeat threats in, from, through, and to space, and protect our Joint Force from adversary hostile uses of space. If confirmed, I will support the development of innovative concepts and cutting-edge space-based capabilities to maintain deterrence and preserve U.S. freedom of action in the space domain.

145. Are there other nation-states or actors operating in space that you perceive as a risk to the United States, or as cause for concern? Please explain your answer.

Yes. This past year, it was revealed that Russia is working on a nuclear space-based antisatellite (ASAT) capability, which would violate the 1967 Outer Space Treaty and indiscriminately threaten the vast majority of satellites operated by countries and companies around the world, leading to worldwide commercial disruptions. China is testing counterspace capabilities, including satellites capable of rendezvous and proximity operations and use of electronic jamming and cyber operations against ground networks; China’s aggressive cyber targeting of U.S. infrastructure, including satellite networks, may deny critical U.S. capabilities in the event of a conflict in the Indo-Pacific. In 2024, Iran placed six space payloads into orbit and continues to develop its space launch capabilities; knowledge gained from orbital launches is applicable to development of an ICBM that could directly threaten the U.S. Homeland, if Iran chose to pursue such a capability. The commercial sector and other nations are rapidly expanding activities in space, leading to the risk of increasing orbital congestion.

146. How would you assess current DOD readiness to implement the 2022 NDS and U.S. strategic objectives as they relate to the domain of space?

The United States’ space superiority is being challenged because our adversaries, notably

China and Russia, continue to rapidly develop counterspace systems to hold our space-based assets and capabilities at risk. China specifically is launching advanced threats at breakneck speeds which can target multiple capabilities across all orbital regimes. Additionally, Iran and North Korea are strengthening their own space programs with the assistance of China and Russia, which is increasing the threat environment. The United States needs to continue to prioritize the robustness and defense of our Space architecture across ground, link, and space segments to promote resilience, restore deterrence, and ensure that space-based capabilities are ready for the joint warfighter 24/7.

147. What do you perceive as the most significant threats to our national security space satellites and commercial space systems owned by U.S. companies?

This past year, it was revealed that Russia is working on a nuclear space-based antisatellite (ASAT) capability, which would violate the 1967 Outer Space Treaty and indiscriminately threaten the vast majority of satellites operated by countries and companies around the world, leading to worldwide commercial disruptions. China is testing counterspace capabilities, including satellites capable of rendezvous and proximity operations and use of electronic jamming and cyber operations against ground networks; China's aggressive cyber targeting of U.S. infrastructure, including satellite networks, might help it deny the U.S. with critical capabilities in the event of a conflict in the Indo-Pacific. In 2024, Iran placed six space payloads into orbit and continues to develop its space launch capabilities; knowledge gained from orbital launches is applicable to development of an ICBM that could directly threaten the U.S. Homeland, if Iran chose to pursue such a capability. The commercial sector and other nations are rapidly expanding activities in space, leading to the risk of increasing orbital congestion.

148. Do you support the development of offensive space systems to counter threats in the space warfighting domain?

Yes, I support the development of space systems that can be used offensively to protect the United State' and our allies' space systems and to restore deterrence. Space capabilities are only defensive, or offensive based on how they are employed. Space is integral to everyday life and a crucial component underpinning global security and the global economy. Competitors continue to grow their counterspace capabilities. To protect our national security interests, we should continue to scale a breadth of options across all domains to deter aggression, and if deterrence fails, to prevail in conflict.

149. Do you support the development of defensive space systems to counter threats in the space warfighting domain?

Space capabilities are only defensive, or offensive based on how they are employed. Space is integral to everyday life and a crucial component underpinning global security and the global economy. Competitors continue to grow their counterspace and space capabilities. We need to take actions to protect all our assets, to include those in space. There are both active and passive measures we can take to deter an attack on our space systems. By placing capabilities in different orbits, in different parts of the electromagnetic spectrum, or on ally or

commercial satellites, we can complicate our enemy's decision-making. Active on-orbit defensive capabilities are something we should consider and implement if it needed.

150. If confirmed, how would you ensure that commercial technology is appropriately incorporated into SPACECOM mission execution at acceptable risk levels?

If confirmed, a priority will be understanding the USSPACECOM and U.S. Space Force's methods of addressing capability gaps and leveraging commercial technologies to fulfil emerging requirements. I will seek ways to support the space industrial base and accelerate the acquisitions process. I intend to improve USSPACECOM's ability to rapidly field emerging technology to assist the joint force in being the strongest and most lethal force in the world.

Cybersecurity and U.S. Cyber Command (CYBERCOM)

In September 2023, DOD released its 2023 Cyber Strategy. The strategy charges DOD to persistently engage malicious cyber actors and other malign threats to U.S. interests in cyberspace.

151. What role do you envision for DOD and the Cyber Mission Force in defending the nation from an attack in cyberspace? In what ways is this role distinct from those of the Homeland security and law enforcement communities?

The Department's role in defending the nation from an attack in cyberspace continues to evolve. DOD partners with the Department of Homeland Security and other Federal, state and local law enforcement agencies in protecting against and responding to cyber-attacks against the nation and its critical infrastructure. The Cyber Mission Force is primarily charged with defending forward, conducting defensive cyber operations abroad, while DHS and law enforcement work directly with organizations at home.

The Joint Force is uniquely suited to integrating actions in multiple domains in defense of the DoD Information Network (DODIN) to compete now and prepare for escalation. Since cyber knows no borders, we must partner with our interagency partners and law enforcement to address the entire spectrum of cyberspace challenges.

While agencies like DHS and the FBI focus on civilian infrastructure and criminal investigations, the DOD and CMF's priority is defending against cyber threats with strategic or military implications. This includes global power projection, nuclear command and control, and support to DHS's CISA when responding to threats to the Defense Industrial Base. Effective national cybersecurity demands close collaboration between DOD and other entities. As an example, in January 2025, the DOD and DHS signed an Annex to the 2017 DoD-DHS Memorandum of Agreement on Cybersecurity and Cyberspace Operations. The Annex establishes a framework for the Coast Guard Cyber Command to present US Coast Guard cyber forces to the CMF under USCYBERCOM, which will further bolster CMF readiness and capabilities. It also provides a process for USCYBERCOM to present forces to

the Coast Guard.

152. How will “defend forward” and “persistent engagement” concepts deter and disrupt Russia and China in cyberspace?

The DoD uses “defend forward” to disrupt malicious cyber activity at its source and “persistent engagement” to intercept and halt cyber threats, degrade the capabilities and networks of adversaries, and continuously strengthen the cybersecurity of DOD networks and missions. This occurs both geographically (beyond DOD networks and into the networks of our Allies and partners) and temporally (ahead of potential adversary exploitation) to enable resilience in both domestic and foreign partner networks. For example, U.S. CYBERCOM hunt forward missions in the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility have discovered CCP malware on multiple foreign partner networks.

153. If confirmed, what role should DOD and the Cyber Mission Force have in combating foreign influence operations, especially those conducted via social media?

If confirmed, I will examine the role the Cyber Mission Force plays alongside our interagency partners to combat foreign influence on our shores. While our domestic authority is rightly limited, our foreign intelligence enterprise helps ascertain sources and objectives of foreign influence operations and can contribute to designing persistent approaches to counter these operations at their source.

154. What role should DOD and the Cyber Mission Force have in anticipating, preventing, or responding to attacks on U.S. commercial entities?

The DOD will partner with DHS, DOJ, and other entities to help defend U.S. key interests – especially where those entities underpin military operations. Cooperatively streamlining industry information sharing and seamlessly cooperating with interagency partners will enable us to predict, prevent, or, when necessary, speed the response of the most appropriate government agency.

155. Do you believe that the National Security Agency and U.S. Cyber Command should be dual-hatted? What are the “pros” and “cons” of this arrangement, in your view? Please explain your answer.

Yes, I believe that the Commander, USCYBERCOM and Director, NSA should be filled by the same person. The 2022 "Joint Study on the Dual-Hat" recommended the dual-hat arrangement not only be maintained but strengthened. I continue to agree with the findings of that study. The Dual-Hat arrangement provides the ability to look across both organizations and has empowered both USCYBERCOM and NSA to fulfill their missions better than each could do alone. It promotes agility and enables intelligence to be operationalized rapidly. It also facilitates relationships with key foreign allies and partners in part because the

corresponding foreign organizations with signals intelligence (SIGINT) and cyber operations missions are fully integrated, operating under a Dual-Hat leadership structure. The span of control, does however, place a burden on one leader.

156. If confirmed, what specific measures would you take to improve cybersecurity culture across the DOD workforce? How would you empower and hold key leaders accountable for improvements in DOD cybersecurity?

If confirmed, I am committed to taking action to foster a culture of cybersecurity and cyber awareness across the various levels of professional military and civilian education. Every member of the Joint Force, to include General Officer and Senior Executive Service leadership, must understand their role in cybersecurity and protecting DoD networks.

157. In your opinion, what characteristics of a cyberattack would constitute an “act of war”? Do you consider the recent breaches in telecommunications infrastructure involving Salt Typhoon to be an “act of war” or an espionage operation that falls within *de facto* norms? In your view, does the nature and scope of this intrusion operation merit a strong and tangible response? Please explain your answer.

A holistic and interagency response is vital to any provocation, including in the cyber domain. The following should be considered when examining the aspects of a cyberattack: Scale and Impact; Intention to Cause Physical Harm or Damage; Targeting of civilian populations; State Actor Involvement; and Military Objectives. If confirmed, I will review the classified details and provide my recommendations to the President and Secretary of Defense.

158. What do you conclude from cyber-attacks carried out by Volt Typhoon and Salt Typhoon about the state of our cyber defenses?

To the extent that cyber actors affiliated with the CCP can compromise U.S. networks, it is certainly a national security concern and suggest that the U.S. needs to invest in hardening its critical IT infrastructure. This should be a combination of private and public investment, and such investment should stand alongside public and private partnerships to identify and defend portions of infrastructure that the DOD deems critical to our national interest.

159. Based on your experience, what do you see as areas where the structure and training of the Cyber Mission Force should evolve to meet emerging cyber threats?

The CMF structure is largely unchanged since its inception over a decade ago. The

commander of US Cyber Command needs to have the latitude to structure and restructure the force to address rapidly evolving challenges, and to develop and promulgate training that will maximize the competence and capability of cyber operators both inside and outside the CMF. The Department is working rapidly toward those ends with the CYBERCOM 2.0 initiative, which emphasizes managing cyber talent and use of emerging technology like Artificial Intelligence. The CMF will benefit greatly from better access to, and assistance from, top technical talent at civilian technology companies, while continuing to leverage Reserve Component expertise.

160. In your view, are there elements missing from our current approach for offensive and defensive cyber operations that you would recommend we pursue?

If confirmed, I will review CYBERCOM 2.0 to ensure we are on an upward trajectory and will continue pursuing mastery at scale to counter maneuvering adversaries and a rapidly changing threat landscape.

161. How would you characterize our deterrent posture when it comes to cyber effects?

Through partnerships, information sharing, and persistent engagement, we may impose enough costs on our adversaries forcing them to relook their strategic calculus in creating cyber effects against key U.S. interests. To deter our adversaries from using cyber effects against the U.S., a whole of government approach is needed, incorporating all elements of national power.

U.S. Transportation Command (TRANSCOM)

162. In your view, what is the role of TRANSCOM in supporting implementation of the 2022 NDS?

The priorities outlined in the NDS, whether defending the Homeland, deterring attacks on the US and partners, or deterring aggression do not happen without USTRANSCOM providing strategic flexibility through globally integrated operations. The TRANSCOM infrastructure is an area of American exclusivity. No other nation in the world can do the things we do on a daily basis.

USTRANSCOM ensures rapid response anywhere in the world by conducting globally integrated mobility operations, leading the Unified Command Plan (UCP)-directed Joint Deployment and Distribution Enterprise, and providing the capabilities to project and sustain the Joint Force in support of National Objectives. Additionally, USTRANSCOM's role as the Single Manager for Global Bulk Fuel Management and Delivery drives synchronization across the Joint Petroleum Enterprise (JPE) for posture, planning, execution, and capabilities

in support of combatant command requirements and national security objectives.

With respect to the 2025 Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance, as the leader of the Joint Deployment and Distribution Enterprise, USTRANSCOM projects, maneuvers, and sustains military power at a time and place of choice. This gives the President and Secretary of Defense options that are lethal, resilient, sustainable, survivable, agile, and ready to defeat any adversary. This enterprise is critical to the re-alignment of Joint Force priorities and essential to deterring adversaries across the globe.

163. What is your understanding of how TRANSCOM balances both organic and privately owned sealift equities to support the NDS?

USTRANSCOM follows direction contained in the National Security Directive on Sealift (NSD 28) which states, “The U.S.-owned commercial ocean carrier industry, to the extent it is capable, will be relied upon to provide sealift in peace, crisis, and war. This capability will be augmented during crisis and war by reserve fleets comprised of ships with national defense features that are not available in sufficient numbers or types in the active U.S.-owned commercial industry.” For commercial sealift, USTRANSCOM relies on the authorities of the Department of Transportation (DoT) to expand civil transportation through voluntary programs under the Defense Production Act.

Two Emergency Preparedness Programs, the Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreement (VISA) and the Voluntary Tanker Agreement (VTA) provide DoD a coordinated, seamless transition from peacetime to wartime by providing assured access to U.S. commercial dry cargo and bulk fuel cargo sealift capacity. Within VISA, the Maritime Security Program (MSP) and within VTA, the Tanker Security Program (TSP) provide fleets of active, commercially viable, militarily useful, privately owned vessels to meet national defense and other security requirements and maintain a United States presence in international commercial shipping.

For organic sealift, USTRANSCOM relies on the Maritime Administration’s (MARAD) Ready Reserve Force (RRF), a subset of the National Defense Reserve Fleet (NDRF). The RRF consists of 52 vessels, including forty-six (46) Roll-on/Roll-off (RO/RO) vessels which provide DoD the ability to surge a sizeable land force from the continental United States to any point of need. The RRF also contains four (4) Auxiliary Crane Ships which provide in-stream and austere delivery capabilities and two (2) USMC Aviation Maintenance ships.

U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM)

164. In your view, what is the appropriate role of U.S. Special Operations Forces in supporting the implementation of the Joint Warfighting Concept, the Joint Concept for Competing, and the National Defense Strategy?

Special Operations Forces support the national security objectives of preserving strategic focus; preventing great power conflict; and preparing the environment for the Joint Force to prevail in conflict if deterrence fails. Special Operations Forces are the premier global

counterterrorism forces charged with defending the Homeland. Special Operations Forces also play a critical role in global crisis response and securing the safety of American citizens abroad when in extremis situations occur.

Beginning in FY 2017, successive NDAs have empowered the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (ASD(SOLIC)) to serve as a “service secretary-like” civilian official for special operations forces. Among other reforms, the law defines the administrative chain of command for SOCOM as running through the ASD(SOLIC) to the Secretary of Defense for issues impacting the readiness and organization of special operations forces.

165. What is your understanding of the Department’s progress in implementing the “service secretary-like” responsibilities of the ASD(SOLIC)?

The Department has been making excellent progress in implementing the service secretary-like responsibilities of ASD(SO/LIC) for issues impacting the readiness and organization of special operations forces, resources, equipment, and civilian personnel. The ASD(SO/LIC) fills a critical role in coordinating with Congress and in advocating on behalf of the Special Operations enterprise in areas related to budget, training, and modernization.

166. If confirmed, would you commit to fully implementing these reforms?

Yes.

Irregular Warfare

Section 1091 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 expresses the Sense of the Congress that the Secretary of Defense has the authority to conduct irregular warfare operations, including clandestine irregular warfare operations, to defend the United States, allies of the United States, and interests of the United States, when such operations have been appropriately authorized.

167. What is your understanding of the inherent authority of the Secretary of Defense to conduct irregular warfare operations?

Irregular warfare is a critical tool for the Department to campaign across the spectrum of conflict, enhance interoperability and access, and disrupt competitor warfighting advantages while enhancing our own. As the Department pivots to face the difficult realities of today’s strategic environment, it must elevate and expand its use of irregular warfare approaches and tools.

Specifically, with regard to the Secretary of Defense’s inherent authority to conduct irregular warfare, there are some very important tools at the Department’s disposal, such as USC 10 127d, 127e and 127f. However, given the complexity of the current operating environment, if confirmed, I will work to ensure the Departments Irregular Warfare authorities and supporting processes allow the scope, speed and agility required.

168. What is your understanding of the role of irregular warfare in supporting Department of Defense strategy and operations?

Irregular Warfare is a form of warfare where state and non-state actors campaign to assure or coerce states or other groups through indirect, non-attributable or asymmetric activities.

Irregular warfare offers a range of military activities that allow the U.S. to compete with adversaries below the threshold of armed conflict to maximize American influence abroad, illuminate malign activity, deter adversaries from actions most detrimental to our national security and disruptive to the international order, and shape the environment in ways necessary to prevail in conflict, should deterrence fail.

169. Is the Department of Defense appropriately organized and resourced to effectively operate in the irregular warfare domain? What changes, if any, would you recommend?

Absent an institutionalized approach to irregular warfare, the DOD will remain underprepared for the enduring requirements of irregular war, and not postured to employ irregular warfare capabilities proactively to compete, deter, and win across the spectrum of competition and conflict. The Joint Force continues to institutionalize irregular warfare as a core competency. However, irregular warfare campaigning against state adversaries requires a whole of government approach and the DOD has room to improve interagency planning, coordination, and synchronization in the irregular warfare space against peer and near peer adversaries. There are solid lessons to be learned from how the Department worked with the interagency in the counterterrorism space during the Global War on Terror.

Authorities

Section 127e of title 10, U.S. Code, authorizes U.S. special operations forces to provide support (including training, funding, and equipment) to regular forces, irregular forces, and individuals supporting or facilitating military operations for the purpose of combatting terrorism. Section 127d of title 10, U.S. Code, authorizes U.S. special operations forces to provide similar support to forces or individuals supporting or facilitating irregular warfare operations.

170. What is your assessment of the national security utility of each of these authorities in the current strategic environment?

Those authorities allow the Department to conduct counterterrorism or irregular warfare activities by, with, and through foreign forces, irregular forces, groups, or individuals since they often have access and placement to adversary operating areas that U.S. forces lack. DoD expends funds to support partner forces as they in turn lend their support to achieving

the objectives of the United States' military. By expending relatively small amounts of funding, combined with advice and assistance from U.S. military forces, the Department use these local forces to protect the U.S. Homeland and Americans abroad by maintaining continuous pressure on strategic competitors and terrorists.

171. If confirmed, what criteria would you apply to the evaluation of proposals for the use of each of these authorities, with a view to mitigating the risks associated with the conduct of counterterrorism and irregular warfare activities below the level of traditional armed conflict?

If confirmed, I would confirm partners are trustworthy and reliable, using SOCOMs proven screening and vetting standards and processes. Choosing the right partners is the best way to ensure compliance with Law of Armed Conflict principles, proper expenditure of funds, and accountability of defense articles.

U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM)

Nuclear Policy

United States nuclear forces are the bedrock of our nation's defense, underpin our most critical alliances, and have deterred nuclear aggression and great power conflict for more than 70 years. Unfortunately, long deferred investments have left us with systems nearing the end of their useful lives. These capabilities must be updated to maintain a viable nuclear deterrent.

172. Do you agree with Secretary Hegseth and past Secretaries of Defense that nuclear deterrence is DOD's highest priority mission and that modernizing our nation's nuclear forces is a critical national security priority?

Yes. The U.S. nuclear triad, consisting of land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), nuclear-capable bombers, and ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs), remains the backbone of the nation's strategic deterrent. It should remain DoD's top priority mission to ensure we retain a modern, capable, and effective nuclear deterrent.

173. What is your understanding of how Russia, China, and North Korea have expanded and/or modernized their nuclear force capabilities? In your view, do these capabilities pose an increasing threat to the United States and its allies?

Over the next decade, China likely will continue to rapidly modernize, diversify, and expand its nuclear forces. The PLA seeks a larger and more diverse nuclear force, comprised of systems ranging from low-yield precision strike missiles to ICBMs with multi-megaton yields to provide it options at every rung of the escalation ladder. DoD estimates China has surpassed 600 operational nuclear warheads in its stockpile as of 2024.

Russia is nearing the completion of the current round of modernization of its strategic nuclear forces, and has successfully introduced new ICBMs, ballistic missile submarines, and long-range ALCMs. Russia is adding new military capabilities to its large stockpile of nonstrategic

nuclear weapons (NSNWs), including those employable by ships, aircraft, and ground forces. Russia holds the largest foreign nuclear stockpile in the world and maintains approximately 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads on ICBMs, SLBMs, and long-range heavy bombers. Moscow also retains roughly 2,000 NSNW to include ASMs, SRBMs, gravity bombs, torpedoes, anti-ship, anti-submarine, and anti-aircraft missiles.

Under Kim Jong-Un, the DPRK has improved its ability to hold the U.S. and its allies at risk with its missile and nuclear capabilities. In 2021, KJU announced a five-year defense development plan, which included improving its ballistic missile capabilities and developing new nuclear warheads. Pyongyang has also vowed to “exponentially increase” Pyongyang’s nuclear weapons stockpile. The DPRK has made notable progress on missile-related goals, such as testing claimed solid-propellant ICBM and hypersonic systems and unveiling a new “tactical” nuclear warhead. During some of its missile testing, the DPRK has also claimed to simulate tactical nuclear exercises. Pyongyang’s cooperation with Moscow may also provide opportunities for the DPRK to advance its missile capabilities, as the DPRK has provided ballistic missiles to Russia that have been employed against Ukraine—the first time these DPRK systems have been used in combat.

174. Do you believe our current deterrence policy and force structure effectively accounts for two near peer nuclear competitors? If not, do you believe the U.S. will require additional capabilities, a numerically larger force than exists today, or a combination of both?

I am aware of the findings of the recent bipartisan Strategic Posture Commission that our nuclear forces are necessary, but not sufficient. The threat continues to grow while our weapons have remained largely static for decades. While I have confidence in the lethality of the Joint Force, it is incumbent on the Department to understand options, which includes potential for new capabilities and/or a larger force. If confirmed, I will assess the current deterrence policy and force posture and work with the professionals across the Department to ensure we can adequately deter two nuclear peers in the future.

175. What is your understanding of the role of nuclear weapons and the importance of nuclear deterrence to U.S. national security and the defense of allies?

Our nuclear forces undergird all our defense priorities, and it remains indispensable to our national security. In a dynamic security environment, a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent underpins our broader U.S. defense strategy and the extended deterrence commitments we have made to allies and partners.

176. What are your views on deterrence now that the United States is facing the prospect of simultaneously deterring two nuclear-armed peer competitors in Russia and China?

We are facing increasing nuclear competition with Russia and the pace and scope of China’s nuclear expansion will present new strategic dilemmas requiring increased focus on the

DoD's ability to modernize our strategic deterrence capability. This starts with maintaining credible and effective U.S. nuclear forces as the bedrock of our deterrence against potential aggression from both Russia and China. Not only must the United States aggressively modernize its nuclear capability, but we must pursue initiatives like the President's Golden Dome Executive Order to render any act of aggression against the United States Homeland ineffective.

177. What is your understanding of how Russia and China have expanded and modernized their nuclear force capabilities?

Over the next decade, China is likely to continue to rapidly modernize, diversify, and expand its nuclear forces. The PLA seeks a larger and more diverse nuclear force, comprised of systems ranging from low-yield precision strike missiles to ICBMs with multi-megaton yields to provide it options at every rung of the escalation ladder. DoD estimates China has surpassed 600 operational nuclear warheads in its stockpile as of 2024.

Russia is nearing the completion of the current round of modernization of its strategic nuclear forces, and has successfully introduced new ICBMs, ballistic missile submarines, and long-range ALCMs. Russia is adding new military capabilities to its large stockpile of nonstrategic nuclear weapons (NSNWs), including those employable by ships, aircraft, and ground forces. Russia holds the largest foreign nuclear stockpile in the world and maintains approximately 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads on ICBMs, SLBMs, and long-range heavy bombers. Moscow also retains roughly 2,000 NSNW to include ASMs, SRBMs, gravity bombs, torpedoes, anti-ship, anti-submarine, and anti-aircraft missiles.

178. In your view, do these capabilities pose an increasing threat to the United States and its allies?

China probably is developing advanced nuclear delivery systems, in part due to long-term concerns about U.S. missile defense capabilities. The PLA's expanding nuclear force will enable it to target more U.S. cities, military facilities, and leadership sites than ever before in a potential nuclear conflict. Additionally, the PLA's H-6N bomber, when armed with a nuclear-capable ALBM, likely can conduct nuclear precision strikes against targets in the Indo-Pacific theater.

Moscow will continue to emphasize nuclear weapons in its national strategy, while building new delivery systems and modernizing its nuclear stockpile, primarily by replacing Soviet-legacy non-strategic nuclear weapons with new weapons and new capabilities. The escalation of conflict with Ukraine and Russia's suspension of the New START Treaty represents two key areas of continuing risk.

179. Do you believe Russia has or is willing to employ nuclear coercion as a means of advancing its military and foreign policy goals?

I have no reason to doubt Moscow has employed nuclear coercion including nuclear exercises, senior leader statements on Russia's nuclear capabilities and use calculus, and participation in strategic arms control agreements to respond to perceived Western aggression and deter future Western activity Moscow assesses is counter to Russian interests. For example, since 2022, Russia has updated its public nuclear doctrine to expand nuclear use cases, deployed some non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) to Belarus, de-ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and conducted its first-ever NSNW exercise with Belarusian forces. During the same time, Moscow repeatedly warned the West about crossing Russian "red lines", for example by providing advanced weapons to Ukraine, and emphasized Russia retained the right and capability to use nuclear forces to defend against a Western attack.

180. Do you agree with DOD's assessment that China intends to double or triple the size of its nuclear arsenal over the next decade?

DoD estimates China has surpassed 600 operational nuclear warheads in its stockpile as of 2024 and will have over 1,000 operational nuclear warheads by 2030, much of which will be deployed at higher readiness levels. I expect China to continue growing its force through 2035 in line with its goal of ensuring PLA modernization is "basically complete" that year, an important milestone on the road to Xi's goal of a "world class" military by 2049.

181. Do you believe that as China completes its build out of a triad of delivery platforms it will adhere to the full meaning of "no first use"?

The PRC has long maintained a "no first use" policy. However, that it has we have repeatedly called on China to explain how its NFU nuclear doctrine is consistent with its non-transparent but well-documented, rapid nuclear arsenal build-up. China has refused to seriously engage on these questions bilaterally, through the P5, or in multilateral disarmament fora. Absent answers to these concrete questions, we must conclude that China's rhetorical, unverifiable NFU policy is not credible.

182. Do you believe U.S. extended nuclear deterrence assurances are effective in reassuring allies that they do not need to pursue their own nuclear arsenals to ensure their national security?

I recognize our allies' concerns about adversary nuclear threats and attempts to weaken our alliances for their own strategic advantages. I believe we should make every effort to reinforce our extended deterrence commitments, and that these commitments enhance the safety and security of the American people. Furthermore, our extended deterrence contributes to nuclear nonproliferation.

183. Do you believe that the risk of nuclear proliferation will increase if U.S. allies lose confidence in our extended nuclear deterrence assurances?

It is imperative that we maintain allied confidence in our nuclear umbrella both to assure our allies and to dissuade adversaries from attempting to coerce our partners around the globe.

184. What is your understanding of the state of U.S. nuclear forces, its global nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3) architecture, and the supporting weapons sustainment and production capabilities within the National Nuclear Security Administration?

Although our nuclear forces and existing NC3 architecture are safe, secure, and effective today, we have greatly exceeded their intended design life, and they are showing their age. Deferred modernization has removed margin and there is no longer room for delay. This is further challenged by atrophy in both the DoD industrial base for nuclear delivery platforms and National Nuclear Security Administration production capabilities and infrastructure.

185. Do you agree that modernizing each leg of the nuclear triad and the Department of Energy (DOE) nuclear weapons complex is a critical national security priority?

Yes. The three legs of the triad each serve an important and distinct purpose and offer unique but mutually reinforcing attributes. All three legs are needed to preserve deterrence in the face of growing adversarial threats.

186. Do you believe the current program of record is sufficient to support the full modernization of the nuclear triad, including delivery systems, warheads, and infrastructure?

The current US nuclear force was designed in a different security environment. I understand the Strategic Posture Commission concluded that the current program of record is necessary but not sufficient. If confirmed, I intend to consult with key Department stakeholders to assess the risks, implications, and benefits of pursuing additional capabilities to address any modernization insufficiency and ensure our nuclear deterrence remains credible and effective.

187. Senior Service leaders and several Combatant Commanders have stated that they support the continued development of a nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile as a means of addressing Russia's advantages in theater-range nuclear weapons, managing escalation in a potential conflict with China, and enhancing assurance to U.S. allies. Do you agree with these views?

Yes. A nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM-N) is one capability that will help address regional deterrence challenges in the face of China and Russia's rapid theater nuclear force modernization, while assuring allies and partners. Additionally, I believe it is important to work within the Joint Staff and Interagency to assess other supplemental theater nuclear options as suggested by the 2023 Strategic Posture Commission.

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

The Department must implement a risk-management strategy to identify, prioritize, and recommend actions across the portfolio of nuclear programs. This is essential for maintaining the overall health of the nuclear deterrent as the DOD sustains current capabilities and transition to modernized systems.

Successive Nuclear Posture Reviews have concluded that the adoption of a nuclear “No First Use” (NFU) or Sole policy by the United States is not advisable.

189. Do you believe a NFU policy would be appropriate for the United States, and what do you believe would be the implications of such a policy on the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence commitments to our allies?

I do not support a nuclear “No First Use” or “Sole Purpose” policy for the United States. I believe such a policy would result in an unacceptable level of risk.

The NNSA is responsible for maintaining the nation’s nuclear weapons stockpile and meeting military requirements for nuclear weapons, which are established through the interagency NWC. NNSA’s principal challenge over the next 20 years is to rebuild the Cold War-era U.S. nuclear weapons infrastructure into a responsive and resilient enterprise.

190. Do you support the recapitalization of the NNSA’s capabilities to design, manufacture, and sustain an effective nuclear weapons stockpile?

Yes. Recapitalization is necessary to ensure delivery of the program of record and sustain an effective force into the future.

191. Do you support continued collaboration with the United Kingdom in the maintenance of its independent nuclear deterrent?

Yes. Our collaboration with the UK is mutually beneficial and serves U.S. nuclear interests.

192. In your view, does the Stockpile Stewardship Program provide the tools necessary to ensure the safety and reliability of the nuclear weapons stockpile without testing? If not, what tools are needed?

Yes, the rigorous Stockpile Stewardship Program has developed the computational and experimental tools needed to certify the current stockpile without the need for full-scale nuclear weapons testing. Continued support for the National Laboratories is crucial for the viability of the Stockpile Stewardship mission.

193. Do you perceive utility in the work of the Council on Oversight of the National Leadership Command, Control, and Communications System? Please explain your answer.

Yes, there is utility in the work of the Council and its various governance forums. The establishment of the Council ensures oversight of a diverse and complicated system of systems. The utility lies in unifying efforts across the Department for sustaining and modernizing NC3, senior leader communications, nuclear command and control, and continuity of government communications.

Arms Control

194. What are your views of the New START Treaty, taking into account Russia's recent actions to suspend participation in the Treaty?

I understand that Russia remains in violation of its obligations under the New START Treaty as a result of its suspension. As a result, both sides have ceased implementation of the New START Treaty's verification mechanisms, and the United States is unable to confirm that Russia is abiding by all the Treaty's limits.

195. What do you see as the major challenges for negotiating future treaties with Russia and China, and would you support U.S. participation in such a negotiation?

I support diplomacy that contributes to national security, particularly any efforts toward an agreement capturing the full scope of Russia and China's nuclear capabilities. Most importantly, our national security depends on verifiable agreements.

196. What are your views on the asymmetry in the number of non-strategic weapons between Russia and the United States and should they be accounted for in any follow-on treaty?

I am concerned by Russia's approximately 2,000 non-strategic nuclear weapons that are not numerically constrained by any arms control treaty. Future arms control engagements with Moscow, if they are initiated, should take these forces into careful and serious account.

197. What are your views of missile defense and nuclear arms control with either Russia or China?

The increasing capabilities of peer and near-peer nuclear states demonstrates the importance of the President's Golden Dome initiative. As important and if not more so, the United States will continue to rely on strategic deterrence – underwritten by a safe, secure, and effective nuclear arsenal – to address and deter large intercontinental range, nuclear capable missile threats to the Homeland from Russia and China.

198. In your assessment, how would delaying or cancelling current nuclear modernization plans and programs affect our arms control negotiation leverage with near-peer and peer competitors?

Delaying or canceling current nuclear modernization plans and programs on a unilateral basis would reduce our strategic deterrence and arms control leverage with Russia and China.

199. What do you see as the major challenges for any nuclear risk reduction or arms control negotiations with China?

China continues to deny its nuclear build-up and reject calls for even modest nuclear risk reduction measures. China needs to be more transparent about its nuclear forces. Any agreement with China must first enhance U.S. national security and second be verifiable.

Missile Defense

The United States enjoys a measure of protection against ballistic missile threats from rogue nations like North Korea and Iran, but the threat from Russian and Chinese ballistic, cruise, and hypersonic missiles against U.S. forces, allies, and the U.S. Homeland continues to grow. However, in an executive order, the President has directed the development of a comprehensive national missile defense architecture to counter all types of missile threats.

200. What are your views on the relationship between missile defense and nuclear deterrence?

U.S. nuclear weapons undergird all defense priorities: deterring nuclear and non-nuclear strategic attack, assuring our allies and partners, and enabling achievement of Presidential objectives if deterrence fails. We rely on a whole-of-government effort to defeat missile technology of all adversaries while raising the threshold of escalation by maintaining a credible kinetic defense. A comprehensive missile defeat and the U.S. nuclear arsenal are complementary and mutually reinforcing, they are essential for deterring an attack against the U.S. or our Allies and partners.

201. If confirmed as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, what would be your priorities for U.S. missile defense capabilities for the Homeland?

If confirmed, my priorities would be aligned with those set by the President's Golden Dome Executive Order. My priority is to ensure the deployment of a next-generation missile shield to provide for the common defense of our citizens and the Nation. Protecting the Homeland from an adversary ICBM attack, the Ground-Based Midcourse-Defense system contributes directly to the U.S. deterrent strategies for rouge state ICBM threats to the Homeland and would defend against an ICBM attack. My second priority is to deter - and defend our citizens and critical infrastructure against - any foreign aerial attack on the Homeland leveraging modern and future missile defense technology combined with a robust proliferated space-based architecture that provides early warning and missile tracking.

202. Do you believe the U.S. ground-based interceptor fleet is appropriately sized to address potential ICBM threats from North Korea or other rogue nations?

I understand the current fleet of Ground-based Interceptors (GBIs) is adequate against the existing North Korean threat, and our planned upgrade to the Next Generation Interceptor and modest increase to the number of interceptors in the fleet is currently sufficient to defeat a limited attack. If confirmed, I will support continuing annual reviews to assess any required changes to U.S. Homeland missile defense systems.

203. In your view, do you believe missile defense policy should be limited to countering only rogue nations, such as North Korea and Iran?

I support the Administration's Golden Dome Executive Order which states that the United States will develop missile defenses against aerial attacks against the Homeland by peer, near-peer, and rogue adversaries.

204. If so, what role do you believe integrated air and missile defenses should play in defending limited areas and defeating smaller scale cruise or hypersonic glide missile attacks by larger threats, such as Russia and China?

Integrated air and missile defense of the Homeland is vital to our resiliency at home and to our ability to project power abroad. The Joint Staff, Office of the Secretary of Defense, and NORTHCOM have been working on a comprehensive plan to strengthen our Homeland defense against air and missile threats in the continental United States, Hawaii, Alaska, and Guam. If confirmed, I will support development of active and passive defenses against regional hypersonic missile threats and pursue a persistent and resilient sensor network to track all hypersonic threats, improve attribution, and enable engagement.

205. Do you support the Next Generation Interceptor?

I support improving the capability and reliability of the Ground-based Midcourse Defense system, which currently includes development of the Next Generation Interceptor to augment and potentially replace the existing Ground-Based Interceptors.

206. Do you support the Next Generation Interceptor eventually replacing the existing 44 ground based interceptors?

I support improving the capability and reliability of the Ground-based Midcourse Defense system, which currently includes development of the Next Generation Interceptor to augment and potentially replace the existing Ground-Based Interceptors.

207. What are your views on the advisability of building a second Homeland missile defense site on the eastern coast of the United States?

If confirmed, I commit to evaluating this requirement and providing my recommendations to the SecDef and POTUS.

208. What is your understanding of U.S. capabilities for defending against maneuvering hypersonic glide vehicles?

Maneuvering missiles, such as hypersonic glide vehicles (HGV), present a challenge to existing defensive systems because they can travel on unpredictable flight paths at low altitudes making them difficult to track using standard terrestrial radar systems. If confirmed, I will continue to seek out kinetic and non-kinetic solutions to defeat hypersonic threats that create cost imposition for adversaries.

209. The Missile Defense Agency has previously indicated that the Glide Phase Interceptor program for hypersonic defense would not reach initial operational capability until after 2035. Do you believe this timeline is sufficient to meet current and anticipated hypersonic threats?

No. If confirmed, I will evaluate this timeline and provide my recommendations to the SecDef and POTUS.

210. Do you support a space-based sensor layer for improved tracking and targeting of advanced threats such as hypersonic missiles?

Yes. Space-based sensor layer investments continue to improve our ability to monitor launch sites and detect launches from locations almost anywhere on the globe. Coupled with new technologies for data processing at the edge of the network, AI/ML, and mesh communications capabilities, space-based sensors provide unique insight required to identify and respond within the short timelines necessary to defeat advanced threats such as hypersonic missiles.

211. What are your views on the efficacy of boost-phase intercept and space-based intercept or directed energy programs?

I assess that the efficacy of boost-phase intercept, space-based intercept and directed energy programs is still an open question. While these concepts have great potential, if confirmed, I will explore how best resolve the challenges associated with developing and fielding these capabilities and provide my recommendations to the SecDef and POTUS.

212. In your opinion, has DOD developed and implemented operational concepts, plans, and policies appropriate to the governance and utilization of such programs? What would you do to address this issue, if confirmed?

If confirmed, I will remain involved in operational discussions with senior Department leadership to ensure a thorough examination of these operational concepts, plans and policies, and their governance processes.

213. The United States is currently developing a missile defense architecture to better support the protection of U.S. citizens and forces on Guam, however this effort has been plagued by uneven funding and an unclear management structure for aligning the various lines of effort. What is your understanding of the status of this effort, and its operational importance to the U.S. in the Western Pacific?

Guam is both an unequivocal part of the U.S. Homeland as well as a vital regional operational hub. The protection of this U.S. territory is critical to the U.S. National Defense Strategy. I am aware that the Department is focused on increasing its missile defense capabilities on the island as part of efforts to strengthen deterrence in the Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for unity of effort and progress on the Guam Defense System.

Electronic Warfare and Spectrum Operations

215. Has DOD adequately integrated electronic warfare into its joint concepts and operational plans?

If confirmed, I will review the Department's integration of electronic warfare into joint concepts and operational plans.

216. What major issues attend the United States' conduct of joint electronic warfare operations, especially at the relevant combatant commands?

The United States is facing a variety of challenges when considering joint EW operations, which begin with access to the spectrum itself. Additionally, the Department must balance investment in exquisite capabilities with investment in systems that are inexpensive and can be produced at scale. Other factors include leveraging artificial intelligence, deepening the Joint Force's knowledge through training and education on Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations, and working across the whole-of-government to evolve laws and regulations on the use of the EMSO internally and externally to the United States. DoD spectrum access is critical for EMSO to protect the Homeland and the military's ability to conduct its missions. Combatant commands need spectrum to increase lethality, restore deterrence, win wars, and achieve Presidential priorities, such as Golden Dome for America and Border Security.

217. Do you support a Joint Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations Center at U.S. Strategic Command?

Capability to maintain advantage in the electromagnetic spectrum across the entire Joint Force will be necessary to win future wars. The Joint Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations Center (JEMSOC) at USSTRATCOM has filled a key gap in Joint Force capabilities by preparing the U.S. military for the complexities of the electromagnetic spectrum. The JEMSOC facilitates realistic joint training, equipping warfighters with the skills and knowledge to dominate this increasingly contested domain by centralizing expertise and resources. This centralized approach ensures consistent implementation of national EMS strategy and fosters a force ready to achieve electromagnetic superiority.

218. Does the DOD adequately conduct joint Tier One exercises utilizing adversary level electronic warfare?

The Joint Force faces significant challenges in conducting effective Tier One exercises that accurately portray adversary electronic warfare capabilities. Current model and simulation

capabilities used in these exercises are inadequate, relying on human modelers to subjectively assess and apply the effects of friendly and enemy electronic warfare on units in the simulation. The Joint Force's ability to operate effectively in the electromagnetic spectrum is crucial to deterring and winning future engagements, and it is essential that Tier One joint exercises prioritize this task. A recent study by the Office of the Secretary of Defense found the Department of Defense lacks access to adequate live, virtual, constructive or synthetic advanced threat systems and environments that can be easily integrated into existing training programs. This shortfall poses a significant risk to Joint Force readiness and its ability to operate in future engagements, highlighting the need for improved modeling and simulation capabilities and increased attention to training on electronic warfare.

219. What is your opinion of training ranges for electronic warfare?

The current state of training ranges for electromagnetic warfare is inadequate. Despite some investments, these ranges have not kept pace with current technology or the threat environments in which we expect to fight. These ranges often fail to provide the necessary fidelity, capacity, and complexity required to prepare forces for modern electromagnetic warfare threats.

220. Do you believe our systems are adequately protected from adversary electronic attack?

No. Against the most advanced adversaries, the Joint Force would likely face challenges protecting itself from electromagnetic attack. Two factors contribute to these challenges: 1) Over the past few decades, the Joint Force has lost some muscle memory defending against electromagnetic attack by conducting operations within a permissive electromagnetic spectrum. 2) Over the same period, operations within this spectrum have changed significantly while the most advanced adversaries have done their best to rapidly evolve. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring that DOD continues to invest in training and additional capabilities in the electromagnetic spectrum.

221. Does DOD have adequate simulation capability to experiment with and test joint electronic warfare concepts, in your view?

No. The DOD's simulation capabilities for electromagnetic warfare are insufficient. Although facilities like the Air Force Electronic Warfare Evaluation Simulator (AFEWES) and the Joint Simulation Environment (JSE) exist, they are not fully integrated with other systems and lack sufficient capacity to fully develop new joint electromagnetic warfare concepts. These gaps hamper the Joint Force's ability to experiment with and refine concepts in this area, leaving us vulnerable to emerging threats.

222. Spectrum is a vital asset in the conduct of electronic warfare – what is your opinion on the DOD use of the S band for spectrum operations and potential impacts on its loss – please be specific in citing examples.

The S band (2-4 GHz) is a critical frequency range for various DoD systems, including radar,

electromagnetic warfare (EW) systems. The DOD's use of the S band for spectrum operations is essential for maintaining operational advantage, and its loss or disruption could have significant impacts on military effectiveness affecting the defense of the Homeland from strategic and missile attack.

For example, the loss of S band spectrum could impact the performance of the Navy's Aegis Combat System, which relies on S band radar to detect and engage airborne targets. Similarly, the loss of S band spectrum could disrupt the operation of the Army's Patriot air defense system, which uses S band radar to detect and track incoming missiles. Furthermore, the loss of S band spectrum could also impact the DOD's ability to conduct electronic warfare operations, as many EW systems, such as the Navy's SLQ-32 and the Air Force's ALQ-211, rely on S band spectrum to detect and disrupt enemy radar and communication systems.

Security Cooperation and Arms Transfers

223. If confirmed, what steps would you recommend, if any, to ensure that the Department of Defense is taking a strategic approach to its security cooperation with allies and partners?

Capable partners offer one of the strongest strategic offsets the U.S. can employ. Security cooperation – whether arms sales, training, or other forms of capacity building – enhance the partner's ability to handle security challenges before they reach the threshold of threatening U.S. vital interests. But a partner's ability is only part of the calculus; their willingness to handle those challenges is equally, if not more, important. Because of this, security cooperation initiatives must focus on partners with shared interests that can feasibly translate U.S. security cooperation activities into legitimate capabilities. If confirmed, I will ensure that security cooperation activities remain tightly tethered to U.S. national interests and focus on partners who meet those criteria. If confirmed and I re-enter active service, I intend to look at increased use of the National Guard State Partnership Program (SPP).

224. What is your understanding of DOD's role in the foreign military sales and arms transfer process? In your view, what are the greatest challenges for DOD in fulfilling this role in a timely and effective manner?

For Foreign Military Sales, the role of the Department of Defense (DoD) is to effectively execute programs in coordination with other government agencies while promoting stronger international defense relationships and greater military interoperability. The most significant challenges are timely deliveries to allies and partners. Both capacity limitations in the Defense Industrial Base as well as the bureaucratic processes and policies that govern FMS contribute to that timeliness. I understand, in 2024, the DoD implemented a Continuous Process Improvement Board for the FMS process. If confirmed as Chairman, I will work aggressively with the Department to improve processes and reduce administrative burdens to improve the timeliness of FMS implementation, along with relentless advocacy to strengthen the Defense Industrial Base to more rapidly respond to customer needs – both domestically and the nation's partners.

225. Is DOD appropriately organized, trained, and resourced to execute security cooperation and foreign military sales effectively? If not, and if confirmed, what changes to defense security assistance organizations, training, and processes would you recommend?

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense to review security cooperation organizations, training, and processes and make my recommendations.

Contested Logistics

226. Who do you believe acts as the lead for contested logistics in how both efficiencies are created and executed to support the NDS?

Currently, the Joint Staff works with the Combatant Commanders to define requirements and identify the risks associated with a contested logistics environment. Additionally, the Joint Staff works with the Services through the Joint Logistics Board to align their investments in infrastructure, force design, and posture to prepare the Joint Logistics Enterprise to deploy and sustain joint warfighters in a contested environment.

227. Do you believe the Department of Defense needs to identify a single service or entity to act as the global contested logistics manager?

The Joint Staff works with the Services to align their investments in infrastructure, force design, and posture, and supports the Combatant Commanders as they engage with allies and partners. If confirmed, I will continue to assess any changes in how global logistics is managed. If changes are required, I will advise the President, SecDef, and Congress on any authorities that may require change.

228. What is your current assessment for how the Department of Defense views contested logistics when it comes to both war games and operational planning?

The Joint Warfighting Concept and supporting concepts have focused the Department's attention on the contested logistics problem set. Logistics was once considered an enabling function. However, it has always been one of the six warfighting functions...and now it is clearly a pacing function. All analytic and experimentation efforts must be logistics-informed, since the ability to sustain the force underwrites everything else.

Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program

The CTR Program, which has focused historically on accounting for, securing, and eliminating Cold War era weapons of mass destruction and materials in the states of the former Soviet Union, has expanded its focus to other countries. In addition, the CTR Program is widening its focus to biological weapons and capabilities, including biological surveillance and early warning, and encouraging the development of capabilities to reduce proliferation threats as well as working with host nations to

secure stockpiles of dangerous pathogens at their high containment laboratories.

229. What are your views on the efficacy of the CTR Program?

Over the years, the CTR Program has detected, secured, and eliminated Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) at their source, before they can threaten the Homeland or the Joint Force. In line with the Secretary's priorities, the CTR Program protects Joint Force readiness and lethality by providing indicators and warnings of chemical, biological, and nuclear threats. It remains a vital tool in layered defense against WMD threats.

Notwithstanding the use and proliferation of chemical weapons documented recently in Libya and Syria, about 60% of CTR resources are allocated to biological programs.

230. Do you believe this shift in focus to biological programs accurately reflects the current threat?

Yes. The Department's Biodefense Posture Review documented that biological threats to the Joint Force have increased. The use of biological weapons by state or nonstate actors presents a significant challenge to national security. Emerging technologies could further enable potential adversaries to use biological weapons in new and novel ways. Eliminating biological threats is a key mission for the CTR program.

Biological threats could affect the readiness and lethality of the Joint Force and the security of the Homeland. Increasingly, adversaries seek to develop and use biological weapons that would evade existing capabilities for detection, attribution, or treatment. Eliminating these threats will continue to be an important mission for the CTR Program, but I support reviewing current prioritization to ensure the program addresses the most urgent WMD threats.

231. If confirmed, specifically what would you recommend to ensure the CTR program is capable of meeting its mission to roll back the threat of weapons of mass destruction?

If confirmed, I would advocate for a thorough review and cost-benefit analysis of the CTR Program to ensure activities fully support its Congressionally authorized countering WMD mission and contribute to a lethal and effective fighting force.

DOD Auditability

The Department of Defense has invested significant effort and dollars in preparing its financial information for annual audit reviews. However, the 2024 DOD-wide financial audit again resulted in a disclaimer of opinion.

232. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take or direct to improve DOD auditability?

If confirmed, I will demonstrate a consistent and informed commitment to achieving an unmodified audit opinion by setting the “tone from the top” by highlighting the importance of financial accountability and transparency within the Department. Setting expectations, holding senior leadership accountable, visibly messaging the importance of financial management and audit process adherence sends a clear message throughout the Department. I can emphasize financial integrity and accountability to encourage a culture where those values are prioritized across the Joint Force.

233. If confirmed, what steps would you take to instill responsibility for audit progress among command leadership, and not just default to a financial management community?

Maintaining transparency, accountability, and operational efficiency is key to improving auditability. These are cornerstones to successful military operations, and auditability of the Department’s accounts is a military mission. If confirmed, I will work with the Department to ensure that auditability is integrated in the overall command structure of the constituent services, establishing clear roles and responsibilities related to financial management, ensuring the emphasis on auditability is pervasive from the most senior roles and commands to the most junior.

Science, Technology, and Innovation

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

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

DOD must aggressively take steps to illustrate how these innovative technologies are conceptually employed. Through this analysis process, the Joint Staff and military departments can define future requirements. This will provide industry clear DOD demand signals.

The US commercial marketplace is teaming with innovative solutions for defending the United States. The most significant challenge is getting these innovative solutions into the

Force. The Department must work to exploit these solutions via rapid prototyping programs, defense innovation organizations, and congressionally granted authorities.

The Department must grow the capacity of the Defense Industrial Base (DIB) and expand the defense ecosystem through investments that promote resilient supply chains, workforce readiness, closer collaboration with commercial industry, flexible acquisition, and mutual support with Allies and partners. The Joint Force should re-evaluate its interactions with industry and fight for access to the commercial space, leveraging organizations like the Defense Innovation Unit. The Department can collaborate with the DIB to adopt a whole of nation approach to delivering capability and maximize economy of scale. The DIB will grow and evolve if it receives the proper demand signals from the Joint Force. The Department can do a better job at that.

The 14 critical technology areas cover a wide range of disciplines with inherent developmental challenges. A significant common challenge that affects all critical technology areas are the force development implications for the warfighters that will employ them. We must ensure that the organizations and people of the DOD are trained and ready to use capabilities in these 14 critical technology areas to their maximum potential and deliver peace through strength.

235. How well do you think DOD investments in these technologies are appropriately focused, integrated, and synchronized across all Military Departments and Agencies?

There continues to be room for improvement in this area. If confirmed, I'll work with Secretary Hegseth and his team as the Department continues to evaluate these technologies and other aspects of the defense budget in order to provide the Joint Force with the tools they need to defend the nation.

236. In addition to the technologies identified in the 2022 NDS, are there other technology areas in which you believe DOD must invest to ensure that the United States maintains its technological superiority in the long-term?

The 2022 NDS provides a suitable list of critical technology areas, but I believe the DOD must also invest in advanced manufacturing technology. Investments in advanced manufacturing will have impacts across the listed 14 critical technology areas and enable the United States to produce complex components and systems more quickly and cost effectively. If confirmed, I'll work with Secretary Hegseth to refine the development and acquisition of these technologies in order to enable rapid employment to meet the needs of the Joint Warfighter to fulfill the Administration's strategy.

237. What efforts is DOD making to identify new technologies developed commercially by the private sector and apply them to national security and warfighter purposes?

The Joint Staff has been heavily engaged in DoD Innovation programs such as Replicator, the Rapid Defense Experimentation Reserve (RDER), Warfighting Lab Incentive Fund (WLIF), etc... that focus on identifying commercial technologies and expediting them into the hands of the Warfighter.

Recently, the Joint Staff has revamped capability portfolio management, creating a new approach to drive strategic alignment across requirements, acquisition, and R&D. The Joint Staff has partnered with the offices of the undersecretaries for Acquisitions and Sustainment, and Research and Engineering to create a holistic portfolio view of capability development. This effort allows warfighters producing capability requirements to be fully informed of new technologies and commercially developed products that may fill requirements and capability gaps identified by the Joint Force.

One of the main objectives of the defense research enterprise is to develop advanced technologies that will be of benefit to the warfighter. In this regard, it is critical that technologies quickly transition from the development phase into testing and evaluation and ultimately into a program of record for the deployment of capability to the warfighter.

238. What are the challenges you perceive to effectively transitioning technologies from research programs into programs of record or deployed capabilities?

Effectively transitioning technologies from research programs into programs of record or deployed capabilities is challenging because of the time it takes to mature a technology into a viable prototype for experimentation and concepts of operation development. Over time, changing priorities within the DOD can shift focus away from early investments, losing sight of work done to date.

Funding to support the implementation of promising capabilities is not protected in budgets. Budgetary constraints and the impacts of Continuing Resolutions (CR) add challenges for transitioning programs. Some technologies may not mature in time to be integrated into programs, while others may mature more rapidly than the existing budget cycle can accommodate. DoD also must quickly become a better buyer. The DOD is frankly a poor buyer and must devote energy to this effort.

239. How can the operational experience of the warfighter better be integrated into the research and development process? Are there appropriate places to interject warfighters in the interaction between the DOD research and engineering community and the private sector?

Frequent vector checks with potential end-users are essential to ensuring that technology innovation meets warfighter needs. Additionally, creating opportunities for the research and development community to present potential solutions and exchange ideas with warfighters about innovative employment options enriches both communities. Using the Joint Warfighting Concept to inform the selection and prioritization of R&D projects facilitates stronger alignment with warfighting needs from the onset. Engagements to introduce concept

frameworks to the broader research and engineering community, to include industry, academia, labs, defense innovation entities, allies, and partners, has the potential to influence their respective internal investment strategies to help accelerate development of needed capabilities. Frequent vector checks with potential end-users to reinforce alignment to warfighting needs is essential if it is not distracting or oversaturating the units at the tactical edge. Additionally, creating opportunities for the R&D community to present potential solutions and exchange ideas with warfighters about innovative employment options enriches both communities.

240. If confirmed as Chairman, what specific steps would you take to ensure that the warfighter is benefitting more quickly and directly from research being performed across the defense research enterprise?

A lot of work has been done but the DOD must stop confusing work with results. The U.S. faces a rapidly evolving security environment; therefore, it is imperative that the DOD speed the transition of advanced technologies to benefit the warfighters more swiftly and effectively. If confirmed, I will prioritize efforts to ensure that defense research translates into operational capabilities for the forces to meet warfighter needs.

I will enhance focus on programs that involve warfighters in the research process to ensure their operational experience informs decision-making and technology development. This approach helps keep solutions grounded in the real-world challenges faced by troops and fosters a culture of collaboration among warfighters and technologists.

I will ensure full support for efforts to close capability gaps in joint warfighting concepts and share data across the DOD, such as the recent Joint Experimentation Forum (JEF). Events like these gather personnel from combatant commands, military services, federally funded research centers, industry partners, and university-affiliated research centers for collaborative discussions to share valuable insights that will inform experimentation guidance across the defense enterprise. Continued engagement with key innovators such as the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) will be the key to success.

By actively engaging warfighters in the research process, leveraging collaborative forums, and fostering relationships with key defense agencies, I am committed to breaking down barriers and facilitating open dialogue among stakeholders. This approach will enable the timely transition of critical capabilities into the hands of the Joint Force, ensuring that the military remains at the forefront of innovation and prepared to outpace evolving threats.

241. If confirmed, what would you do to increase the interaction between DOD labs and the private sector, and between DOD labs and the rest of the DOD innovation enterprise to include the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, the Strategic Capabilities Office, the Defense Innovation Unit, and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency?

There is a lot of good work going on, but I do have some concerns that innovation entities are actually colliding with each other in the incubation process. The DOD must have a greater

level of collaboration between entities in order to maximize the return on the USG's invested capital. If confirmed, I would continue to build on the integration of the DoD labs with OSD R&E, SCO, DIU, and DARPA through Innovation programs like Replicator, WLIF, and RDER. The Department also has the opportunity to increase integration through Joint Experimentation events.

In the past, for example in the Manhattan Project and the Space Race, the United States made great use of foreign technical talent to achieve national goals. Today, there is growing concern that China is making great progress in recruiting technical talent that has been trained at U.S. universities. The Chinese are also investing significant resources to provide funding and facilities to technical experts in critical fields to attract them to work in China.

242. In your view, what steps should the Department take to ensure that the foreign technical talent that we educate and support remains in here in the United States and commits to working on our high-priority national missions to maintain our technological superiority?

I have not been read into the specifics on this topic, but if confirmed, I look forward to learning how the Department can secure the appropriate technical talent required to empower the joint warfighter. Ultimately, attracting and retaining the right talent in any organization hinges on the ability to establish and maintain a positive work environment that encourages innovation and values the talent of its people. If confirmed and I re-enter the military I am keen to get up to speed on this matter. We must have a better way to inspire and retain STEM talent here in the United States.

243. How could we leverage our defense labs and DOD research funding programs to overmatch Chinese efforts by providing resources and facilities to attract technical talent to stay and work in the United States?

The United States offers many advantages over China for talented researchers and engineers to work and provide for national security. Technological prowess, state-of-the-art facilities, and American way of life can all be used to draw top talent from around the world and away from China. Embedding young scientists and engineers in defense-oriented labs early and often to incentivize a unique form of service, ways they can harness their skill set to advance national interests. Defense labs and DOD research funding programs can be used to invest in facilities and maintain technological prowess where we lead the world, regain where we have slipped, and pioneer new fields.

Joint Acquisition

244. What are your views regarding the effectiveness of joint acquisition programs, especially in delivering integrated and interoperable solutions for the Department and which programs would you consider to be candidates for joint development and acquisition?

Joint acquisition programs have been effective at delivering integrated and interoperable solutions for the Department. One example is the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle program, which has been balancing performance and cost to provide the Joint Force with a tactical vehicle fleet that is more lethal and sustainable. The Golden Dome for America will require a level of coordination across the Services that makes it a natural candidate for joint acquisition. Additionally, the Future Vertical Lift family of systems is a good candidate for joint development. It implements a Modular Open Systems Approach that improves affordability, enhances capability, and reduces supply chain risk across the Services.

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

In the current global security environment, the United States military faces agile adversaries who increasingly seek to undermine the nation's strategic and operational strengths by impeding, and where possible, denying command and control (C2) capabilities. The ability of the U.S. military to regain and maintain information and decision advantage through non acquisition programs, considered in the CJADC2 continuous modernization efforts, must remain a top priority for the Department. The capabilities developed by Services, Agencies, and partners across the DOTMLPF-P spectrum are programs of record by exception, not by rule. CJCS has full authority to advocate for Combatant Command and Services' capabilities and, if confirmed, I will use the granted authorities and assess whether additional authorities are required to assist the Combatant Commands and Services with planning to foster joint capability and manage Joint Force development. If confirmed, I will continue to partner with OUSD (A&S) [Acquisition], OUSD (R&E), and CAPE/Comptroller [PPBE] to strengthen planning and execution to enable integrated, end-to-end mission capability.

246. If confirmed, what role would you assign to yourself in ensuring that joint acquisition priorities are given full and fair consideration in Military Service budget processes?

If confirmed, part of my responsibility through the Vice Chairman is the Joint Requirements Oversight Council which represents the voice of the joint force and the joint warfighter. If confirmed, I will give my best military advice to the Secretary of Defense on all matters, including the budget. The Chairman's Program Recommendation (CPR) provides the Chairman with a formal mechanism to communicate statutory military advice on programs and budget issues, to include joint acquisition priorities.

247. Do you believe that the combatant command's role in the acquisition process is sufficient to ensure that they can get needed capabilities fielded to them in a timelier manner? If not, are there other tools or authorities needed?

If confirmed, I will ensure the Defense Acquisition System (DAS) continues to seek and consider input from the Combatant Commanders through the JROC process. This ensures that the voices of the Combatant Commanders are globally integrated and carefully

considered holistically. I understand the importance of maintaining and continuing to evolve the Department's Adaptive Acquisition Framework (AAF) comprised of several acquisition pathways, each tailored for the unique characteristics and risk profile of the capability being acquired. If confirmed, I will seek opportunities for increased Combatant Command involvement in the AAF, particularly in the development of software, where operator input to the developer can create more useful capability in a shorter timeline.

Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC)

The JROC is vested with the responsibility to assess joint military capabilities; establish and approve joint performance requirements that ensure interoperability between military capabilities; and identify new joint military capabilities based on advances in technology and concepts of operation.

248. How would you assess the effectiveness of the JROC in establishing joint requirements for submission to the DOD acquisition process?

Within the Joint Force, no other entity is more responsible for Joint Force Design and balancing the current needs of the Joint Force with the future needs of the Joint Force than the JROC. The JROC provides a critical forum for the Service Vice Chiefs to assess joint military capabilities, identify, approve, and prioritize capabilities to ensure the Joint Force can implement the National Defense Strategy. One of the JROC's key strengths is its ability to provide a high-level, strategic perspective on capability development, ensuring that major acquisition programs align with Joint Warfighting Concepts and multi-domain operational needs. It has also improved cross-Service coordination, particularly through initiatives like Capability Portfolio Management Reviews, which help identify capability gaps, solutions, redundancies and promote integration. Authorities of the JROC have changed over time. While the JROC is effective, it could be improved by ensuring that its authorities match its responsibilities.

249. If confirmed, how would you ensure that the JROC focuses on joint performance requirements without overprescribing key performance parameters and key system attributes that overly constricts system design space?

The JROC should be in the business of providing top-down, strategic-level direction to the Services to promote Joint Force design instead of micro-managing Service acquisition decisions. The JROC currently delegates key performance parameters and system attributes to the Services unless they are deemed Joint Performance Requirements, meaning they are critical to ensure interoperability or integration of the Joint Force.

Through recent changes such as expanding the use of the Middle Tier of Acquisitions (MTA) pathway, even more authority is being delegated to the Services. While use of rapid acquisitions pathways such as MTA are designed to improve speed and efficiency, that must be balanced with strong joint oversight to prevent fragmentation of the future force. The JROC's ability to assess and enforce joint performance requirements remains critical in

ensuring that the warfighters receive interoperable, integrated, and effective capabilities for future conflicts.

250. What is your view on the Capability Management Portfolio Review process for the JROC to issue requirements from the top-down?

Recently, the Joint Staff revamped capability portfolio management, creating a new approach to drive strategic alignment across requirements, acquisition, and R&D. I believe this approach has been successful at holistically evaluating gaps from a portfolio perspective as well as promoting top-down, concept-driven, future-facing requirements.

Additionally, the Joint Staff has partnered with the offices of the undersecretaries for Acquisitions and Sustainment, and Research and Engineering to create a holistic portfolio view of capability development. This effort allows warfighters producing capability requirements to be fully informed of new technologies and commercially developed products that may fill requirements and capability gaps identified in support of the Joint Force.

The Joint Capabilities Integration and Development Systems (JCIDS)

Section 811 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 required the Joint Staff to review and propose a clean-sheet approach to the JCIDS process focused on streamlining approvals, integration of commercial technologies, and taking advantage of iterative development processes.

251. Is the JCIDS process effective in providing the information the JROC requires to anticipate both the current and the future needs of the joint force?

The intent of JCIDS is to ensure jointness, interoperability, joint warfighter voice, and strategic alignment and prioritization of future capability development. While JCIDS has been effective in reducing redundancy and improving coordination across the services, it needs reform in order to keep pace with rapidly emerging threats and technological advancements. As part of FY24 Section 811 Report to Congress, the Joint Staff is currently developing evolutionary and revolutionary reforms to the joint requirements process, including a clean-sheet rewrite of JCIDS, in order to deliver the right capability to the warfighter at speed and at capacity.

252. How effective has JCIDS been in delivering capabilities that meet the evolving needs of the joint force, particularly in the face of rapidly advancing threats?

The JCIDS process was developed to ensure due diligence and accountability for the development of large, legacy platforms that cost billions of dollars of taxpayer money. Today, given rapid technological change and the rapid modernization of the nation's adversaries, this system no longer fully meets the Department's needs. The Department has made a number of changes, through the Middle Tier of Acquisition and Software Acquisition Pathway, to respond to the evolving needs of the Joint Force amidst a rapidly changing technology environment.

However, an overreliance on rapid acquisition increases the risk of service-centric solutions that may not align with broader joint operational concepts. Additionally, without appropriate joint oversight, programs leveraging the rapid acquisition pathways may move quickly at the expense of joint integration and interoperability. Furthermore, increased use of these pathways increases the risk of overall inefficiency as Services may be unaware of the similar efforts by their sister Services and unnecessarily duplicate their efforts. If confirmed, I will continue to work with the Joint Chiefs and JROC to ensure that Service controlled initiatives are not stove-piped or unnecessarily redundant and that all strive to present joint integrated solutions.

253. What do you see as the most significant gaps in the current JCIDS process that prevent it from ensuring interoperability and channeling investments toward warfighters' priorities?

The 2021 General Accountability Report "Weapon Systems Requirements" found that staffing documents through JCIDS took an average of 800 days compared to a notional timeline of 103 days.

While the JROC and JCIDS processes provide a structured framework for identifying opportunities for multi-Service collaboration, there is still room for improvement in fully leveraging joint synergies and aligning related acquisition programs. The JROC has made progress in fostering cross-Service coordination, particularly through initiatives like Joint Warfighting Concept and Capability Portfolio Management Reviews. JCIDS has been effective in reducing redundancy and improving coordination across the services, but it must continue to evolve to keep pace with rapidly emerging threats and technological advancements.

However, the JROC lacks directive acquisition and budget authority, which prevents it from filling the high-priority gaps identified by the Combatant Commands. Additionally, the JCIDS process and documentation is antiquated and cumbersome, which is why the Joint Staff is working to streamline it to ensure outcomes over process. Lastly, continued modernization of KMDS, the joint requirements database, is critical to ensure real-time visibility of joint and Service requirements. DOD must smartly go faster and pick up the pace.

254. In your view, what is the appropriate role of Combatant Commanders in the JCIDS process?

Combatant Commanders play a critical role in the JCIDS process, as they are uniquely positioned to articulate both near-term operational needs and long-term capability gaps based on real-world threats and evolving mission requirements. Their direct input ensures that joint requirements are not just service-driven but are aligned with the operational realities of multi-domain conflict and regional security challenges. The Combatant Commanders submit their Integrated Priority Lists (IPLs) annually, which are prioritized by the JROC and

submitted to Congress, and the Urgent Acquisition pathway allows for the Combatant Commander to raise issues for acceleration. If confirmed, I will ensure the JROC continues to seek and consider input from the Combatant Commanders.

255. If confirmed, how would you improve the effectiveness of the process in identifying both the near-term and long-term needs of the Combatant Commander?

The needs of the Combatant Commanders are currently addressed through the Capability Gap Assessment process, where the JROC evaluates and prioritizes CCMD IPLs, as well as executes the Joint and Emergent Operational Need (JUON/JEON) processes, whereby urgent CCMD requirements are rapidly triaged and sent to OSD(A&S) for immediate funding, if validated. While the CGA/IPL process is successful at identifying gaps, these gaps often remain unfilled because of the JROC's limited acquisition and budget authorities. In contrast, a validated JUON/JEON can result in funding direction from OSD(A&S), however, this approach still requires hard to come by Service offsets. A funding set aside for JUONs/JEONs may be able to address this problem.

256. Do you have any recommendations for changes to the structure, authority, or processes of the JROC or the JCIDS?

The Joint Staff is currently developing recommendations to the structure, authorities, and process of the JROC and JCIDS. The recommendations will be included in the response to Section 811 tasking and will align with the following principles:

- Accelerate the right capability to the warfighter at capacity
- Empower the Joint warfighter voice while balancing speed and operational risk
- Reduce bureaucracy while ensuring Joint interoperability and integration
- Optimize alignment and agility between requirements, acquisition, and budgeting
- Ensure authorities match responsibilities across DoD, Congress, and DIB

Test and Evaluation

Test and evaluation is critical to ensuring that the systems warfighters rely on in combat are proven to work effectively, reliably, and safely.

257. How do you assess the current separation of developmental testing (DT) and operational testing (OT) in terms of its impact on delivering combat-ready systems to the joint force? Does maintaining these silos delay the identification of critical issues that affect warfighter effectiveness?

The Department of Defense must better integrate developmental testing and operational testing. As Chairman, if confirmed, I will work closely with the Office of Secretary of Defense, the Services, and other Defense organizations to ensure the Department balances the need for robust testing to verify that capabilities provided to the warfighter operate as intended with the need to move faster in fielding new technologies. Throughout, if

confirmed, I will be an advocate for developing, operating, and testing in a joint manner to the maximum extent possible.

258. How effective do you find the DoD's reliance on discrete, milestone-driven test events—such as Initial Operational Test & Evaluation—in meeting the rapid pace of modern threats and technological change? Are these singular evaluations keeping pace with warfighter needs?

In my experience, there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to developmental and operational testing across the wide spectrum of military capabilities the Joint Force develops and operates. Operational Test and Evaluation is not a Joint Staff function. Across the board, though, we must go faster. We must allow greater iteration and more rapid cycles of feedback as we experiment with and test emerging capabilities. As Chairman, if confirmed, I will work closely with the Office of Secretary of Defense, the Services, and other Defense organizations to inform testing practices with input from the warfighter, focusing on balancing the need for robust testing to ensure that the capabilities provided to the warfighter operate as intended with the need to move faster in fielding new technologies.

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

No. From my experience with private sector investment, I know that acquisition processes and procedures slow the adoption of commercial technologies by the Department of Defense at many steps in the process. If confirmed, as Chairman, I will be an advocate for moving faster and increasing flexibility in processes, so path-breaking capabilities are delivered to the warfighter more quickly. At the same time, effective operational test and evaluation must be fundamental aspects of any faster capability development effort, as it is essential that any capabilities delivered to the warfighter perform as intended.

260. Are you satisfied with DOD's test and evaluation capabilities, including the test and evaluation workforce and infrastructure of the Military Services? In which areas, if any, do you feel the Department should be developing new test and evaluation capabilities?

No. The Department's current mix of development test and operational test range infrastructure is unsatisfactory for today's modern threat environment. One area in which the Joint Force should enhance the ability to test, and train is in the Electromagnetic Operational Environment. Investment in joint live virtual constructive training is essential. The Joint Staff is also currently working to write a report to Congress on the feasibility and advisability of establishing a regional joint multi-domain non-kinetic training and experimentation environment. The development of a regionally aligned multi-domain non-kinetic training, testing, and experimentation environment is critical to provide the Joint Force and the United States' Allies and partners an immersive and realistic operational environment to train across

all domains against emerging technologies and peer threats. This environment needs to replicate a contested, congested, and constrained Electromagnetic Operational Environment with an accurate threat representation to facilitate quality training and testing at scale to support throughput and readiness of the nation's warfighters.

DOD Readiness

261. How would you assess the current readiness of the DOD Components—across the domains of materiel and equipment, personnel, and training—to execute the 2022 NDS and Combatant Commanders' associated plans?

Based on my own experience, as well as public reporting on the status of the Joint Force, I am confident that the Joint Force—including materiel, equipment, training, and personnel—is ready to meet its current challenges. This includes protecting the Homeland, meeting alliance commitments, and maintaining advantage over any potential adversary. If confirmed, I commit to continued assessment and providing my recommendations to the SecDef and POTUS.

262. What is your assessment of the risk the Combatant Commands and the Combat Support Agencies have accepted in regard to their readiness to execute the operational plans associated with the 2022 NDS?

Based on my own experience, as well as public reporting on the status of the Joint Force, I recognize that operational tempo over the last two-plus decades has had impacts. If confirmed, I commit to assessing the extent of that risk and providing my recommendations to the SecDef and POTUS. I also look forward to working alongside Congress, specifically on the acquisition of new platforms, strengthening of the Defense Industrial Base, and taking care of personnel, to ensure the Joint Forces is ready to meet global operational requirements. Additionally, with sustained, predictable, adequate, and timely funding from Congress and the Secretary-directed reprioritization, we can improve readiness, build the future force that maintains the competitive advantage, and decrease risk.

263. If confirmed, specifically what actions would you recommend to restore full spectrum readiness in all DOD Components—across the domains of materiel and equipment, personnel, and training—and on what timelines?

If confirmed, I will evaluate and discuss readiness with Service Chiefs and Combatant Commands and make recommendations to the SecDef and POTUS. We also must be clear eyed and explicit about what things we cannot do.

Operational Energy and Energy Resilience

The Department defines operational energy as the energy required for training, moving, and sustaining military forces and weapons platforms for military operations, including the energy used by tactical power systems, generators, and weapons platforms. On the battlefield of the future, warfighters will need exponentially more energy with rapid recharge and resupply over longer operating distances. The quality

of electricity will matter too—the DOD’s vehicles, sensors, robots, cyber forces, directed energy weapons, and artificial intelligence will be controlled by systems sensitive to fluctuations in voltage or frequency.

264. If confirmed, are there actions you can take to harness innovations in operational energy and link them with emerging joint operational concepts?

The need for large volumes of Operational Energy remains one of the Department’s greatest logistical burdens and largest vulnerabilities, especially in a contested environment. If confirmed, I will work with the Military Departments to prioritize energy demand reduction and the adoption of technologies that reduce logistics requirements in contested or austere environments. Through the implementation of the Joint Warfighting Concept, the Joint Staff is seeking innovative capabilities to address key operational problems. Operational energy innovations contribute to offsetting those problems and are being examined in wargames, tested in field experiments, and integrated into joint exercises.

265. In what specific areas, if any, do you believe DOD needs to improve the incorporation of energy considerations in strategic planning processes?

In my view, DoD can improve the incorporation of energy considerations in the following specific areas:

- Continue to assess Combatant Command posture and readiness annually through the Chairman’s Risk Assessment. These reviews can highlight where energy considerations may be overlooked within the strategic planning process.
- Ensure that Joint concepts and operational plans are fully informed of risks associated with contested logistics and threats to the assured delivery of energy.
- Align force development and design efforts with appropriate risks to energy supportability and required posture.

If confirmed, I will work with the Joint Staff to include requirements for joint force energy supportability and demand reduction in recurring strategic guidance.

266. How can DOD acquisition systems better address requirements related to a military platform’s use of energy?

The Joint Staff conducts an energy analysis for all JROC requirements and energy is one of the four mandatory KPPs. If confirmed, I will expect to focus the analysis of a systems energy consumption in terms of how it contributes to the warfighting capability by adding to lethality and/or reducing the logistics support needed.

267. If confirmed, are there actions you can take to prioritize energy resilience and mission assurance for DOD, including acquiring and deploying sustainable and renewable energy assets to support mission critical functions, and address known vulnerabilities?

Energy resilience is part of every assessment performed on existing critical infrastructure. If confirmed, I will ensure that identification, vulnerability assessment, and risk mitigation of mission critical assets remain a Joint Staff priority.

Defense Department and Intelligence Community Collaboration

Since September 11, 2001, collaboration—both analytical and operational—between DOD and the Intelligence Community has grown increasingly close. On one hand, seamless collaboration is vital to an effective and rapid response to non-traditional threats and bringing together the strengths of the full spectrum of defense and intelligence capabilities can generate more effective solutions to complex problems. On the other hand, without effective management and oversight, such collaboration risks blurring distinct agency missions, authorities, and funding, as well as creating redundant lines of effort.

268. In your view, are there aspects of the current relationship between the Department and the Intelligence Community that should be re-examined or modified?

Risk Management, Prioritization, and Warning. Intelligence analysis (likelihood) remains a key part of informing risk analysis, while intelligence gaps/shortfalls are increasingly a driver of the risk assessment process. As the Intelligence Community (IC) refines its risk processes, efforts to improve DOD and IC integration on risk assessment and mitigation should be enhanced. Recommendation: DIE and IC seniors re-examine strategic processes associated with risk and processes that set overall IC-DIE priorities.

Capability Development and Programming Recommendation. NIPF and DoD priorities bring with them separate funding streams (National Intelligence Program (NIP) under Title 50 and Military Intelligence Program (MIP) under Title 10). These competing priorities can limit the DIE's ability to appropriately posture for emerging Joint Force concerns and significantly slow the Joint Force's response time to the changed environment. Recommendation: The Joint Capability Integration and Development System (JCIDS) or a successor process should re-examine and consider adopting streamlined procedures for capability requirements principally developed by Defense Intelligence Enterprise (DIE) elements with Combat Support Agency status and/or responsibilities. Codify the Joint Intelligence Program Recommendation (JIPR), issued for the first time on a pilot basis in FY 2024, and spanning both DoD- and IC-resourced intelligence capabilities, as part of my Joint Strategic Planning System to cement gains for warfighter intelligence support.

Crisis Response. On the topic of DoD and IC synchronization across the competition-conflict continuum, DoD and IC employ distinct processes that may challenge efforts to synchronization when responding to contingencies and crises. Recommendation: Creation of a DoD-IC Crisis Response framework will enable development of agile, coherent models to test and evaluate Joint Concepts and improve Joint Force readiness. Currently, DoD and IC lessons learned elements are examining potential improvements to their pre-crisis coordination.

We cannot afford to miss any opportunities to integrate the Title 10 and Title 50 community. We must integrate early and always with each other. This was a foundational core tenet of mine while serving at CIA and if confirmed, will be as the Chairman

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) Capabilities

Demand for ISR of every kind has grown exponentially in recent years, largely due to the enhanced situational awareness and targeting capabilities they afford commanders. Almost all of the geographic Combatant Commands have validated ISR requirements that are not being met.

269. What is your assessment of DOD's current disposition of ISR assets across the Combatant Commands?

If confirmed, I will review ISR asset allocation to Combatant Commands to ensure it is aligned with National Defense Strategy priorities and provide my recommendations to the SecDef and POTUS.

270. What do you perceive as the most concerning shortfalls in both the capability and availability of ISR assets?

Demand for ISR has and will likely always outpace supply. Evolving adversary capabilities are driving a deliberate move toward higher capacity modernized ISR systems. To keep pace, if confirmed, I will advocate for developing tools to take advantage of space-based ISR and publicly available information.

271. What is your assessment of current service efforts to develop increased capabilities, as well as the processing, exploitation, and dissemination capabilities and capacity to support increased collection?

If confirmed, I will assess the recently completed Space-Derived Exploitation Capability Portfolio Management Review and encourage the Services, NGA, and NRO to invest in artificial intelligence/machine learning solutions which are at various stages of technical maturity and confidence levels.

272. How does increased demand square with Services' plans to divest many of the platforms providing ISR to the Combatant Commanders?

If confirmed, I will review the Service's capabilities against the Combatant Commands requirements and provide my recommendations to the SecDef and POTUS.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

Despite significant efforts by the Military Services to enhance their response to sexual assaults, including measures to care for victims and hold assailants accountable, the prevalence of sexual assault and unwanted sexual conduct, primarily for female servicemembers aged 17 to 24, remains high.

273. Given your experience as a military officer, do you believe the policies, programs, and resources, including the DOD Restricted (Confidential) Reporting Policy, that DOD and the Military Services have put in place to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct, and to protect service members who report sexual misconduct from retaliation, are working? If not, what else must be done?

Congress and the Department have collaborated on many helpful actions to counter sexual assault in the military. Indications are that these are starting to have an impact: prevalence of sexual assault and sexual harassment decreased in 2023 in the Armed Forces for the first time in several years. However, more must be done to sustain these changes. If confirmed, I will continue to vigorously support policies and programs implemented to prevent sexual assault, improve support to victims, and hold offenders appropriately accountable. I will stress that Joint Force readiness hinges on the preparedness of the warfighters, which is most effectively achieved within cohesive units led by empowered chains of command. It is imperative to foster healthy command climates and prevent harmful behaviors. To this end I support applying the resources provided to us for this purpose, which include the prevention and response workforces and regular assessments of military unit health worldwide. I anticipate leading the other Service Chiefs in continued focus on this issue, and support having a high-level official dedicated to sexual assault prevention and response in the military. [Note: Such an official already exists: The Director of the DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office is an SES, a position already required by FY11 NDAA Section 1611 and FY12 NDAA Section 583.] Sexual assault and sexual harassment destroy unit cohesion, degrade readiness, and deter both men and women from serving. There is no place for these crimes in the US Armed Forces.

Active and Reserve Component End Strength

In the face of historic recruiting challenges, active force end strength continues to shrink across all military services except the Space Force.

274. What aggregate Active end strength do you believe is necessary to meet the demands placed on the Military Services by the 2022 NDS and associated operational plans?

The requested end strength in the administration's budget submission aligns with manpower needs across the services, and the evolution of the force planning construct within the 2022 National Defense Strategy. This budget aims to balance readiness and modernization challenges today, tomorrow, and into the future with necessary resources. If confirmed, as the administration provides any updates to strategic guidance, I will be prepared to assist the Secretary of Defense in evaluating appropriate end strength to meet the national security priorities.

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

The Reserve Component plays a vital role in the total force, serving as both an operational and strategic reserve. To effectively execute their key responsibilities, they deserve access to the best equipment and training, with the same standards of the active component. This ensures that the Reserve Component is fully prepared and equipped to support national defense objectives.

Role of the Reserve Component

Historically, the reserve components have been used as a strategic reserve in the event of significant armed conflict involving the United States. Post-9/11, reserve forces have been used more extensively to support both contingency operations and ongoing military requirements in a garrison environment. Today, in addition to being an operational reserve, members of the reserve component are used continuously as a part-time workforce for the Department of Defense to perform its ongoing training and readiness requirements.

276. In your view, should the reserve components serve as a part-time workforce, an operational reserve, a strategic reserve, or some combination of those?

The Reserve Component serves a vital and multifaceted role within the Total Force, offering strategic depth and operational flexibility. It is not simply a part-time workforce, an operational reserve, or a strategic reserve, but rather a powerful combination of all three. Reserve units provide essential warfighting capabilities and expertise, strategically aligned with mission requirements. The Reserve Component provides scalable readiness to ensure the DOD can respond effectively to both ongoing operations and large-scale crises. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, reservists provide the strategic depth and endurance as part of the Total Force necessary to sustain operations in a prolonged conflict if deterrence fails. They are, in essence, a force multiplier, ensuring the military remains ready and capable of meeting any challenge to national security. Finally, to echo the Secretary's previous comments, as the Department continues to adapt its Total Force to meet the demands of the dynamic strategic environment, the Joint Staff continues to carefully consider and balance the multitude of roles the Reserve Component plays in support of the National Defense Strategy."

277. Do the reserve components require increased levels of full-time support and oversight by the active component, including improved equipment, increased training, adequate compensation and reimbursement, effective career management, balanced Professional Military Education requirements, and higher levels of overall resourcing for readiness going forward?

The Department continuously assesses the readiness of the reserve components, to include levels of full-time support, resourcing, training, and equipment modernization, to ensure seamless Total Force integration. The DOD also ensures all reserve component units that deploy in support of global operations have achieved required readiness levels prior to deployment. Regarding reserve component compensation and reimbursement, the Department has been engaged in a long-term effort to develop duty status reform recommendations for Congress to streamline these issues. Finally, the Services continuously manage reserve members' careers and ensure reserve component members are also afforded every opportunity to complete Professional Military Education, attend required schools, and complete formal education requirements to achieve advancement.

278. In your view, what reforms, if any, should be made in order to facilitate easier transitions for members of all components between active and reserve status?

The Department has been engaged in a long-term effort to develop duty status reform recommendations for Congress to streamline these issues. The need for RC duty status reform (DSR) cannot be overstated and is long overdue. Today's complex system is overly burdensome and results in pay/benefits inequities. Working collaboratively across the Department and the whole of government, DoD has developed an RC duty status reform proposal that is a fundamental redesign of the current system — it streamlines and consolidates the current system and addresses many of its long-standing problems. An integrated, cohesive legislative proposal designed to comprehensively address the long-standing problems with the current duty status system will ensure that we take care of people and actively take steps to rebuild the military. In addition, ongoing efforts to reform current Separation History and Physical Examination Status policy should continue, with the intent of maximizing the retention of personnel leaving active component service who wish to continue service in the reserve component. Finally, continued modernization of Service pay and personnel systems is essential to ensuring timely and efficient transitions of personnel between active and reserve status.

Military Quality of Life and Family Readiness

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

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

The Department of Defense has a sacred obligation to take care of service members and their families. Quality of Life is fundamental to recruiting and retaining the all-volunteer force today and in the future.

If confirmed, I will collaborate with the Service Chiefs to strengthen quality of life programs that support service members and their families. I will also review existing programs to

identify and prioritize those most critical to military communities and overall force readiness.

I will continue to encourage the advancement of MWR programs and community partnerships that both promote well-being while also adapting to the current demands of service members. These programs include outdoor recreation, sports and fitness, and child development and youth programs.

280. What factors would you consider in assessing which MWR programs are ineffective or outmoded and thus potentially suitable for elimination or reduction in scope?

The maintenance and the development of effective quality of life programs is a priority for Service members and their families. If confirmed, I would work with the Service Chiefs and look primarily at usage metrics, benefit, cost, and Service member and family feedback. These programs are critical recruiting and retention tools and must be adequately resourced to ensure a resilient force.

The military services continue to operate at an historically high OPTEMPO, which senior civilian and military leaders in the Department of Defense have deemed unsustainable.

281. What recommendations do you have to adjust OPTEMPO in the Armed Forces to ensure that servicemembers and their families are healthy, fit, adequately rested, and have a sustainable lifestyle so that they are prepared for our next major conflict?

We continuously monitor and assess the global deployment of forces to ensure they are committed in line with National Defense and National Military Strategies. In addition, the Secretary has established Deployment-to-Dwell and Mobilization-to-Dwell standards, that are monitored by the Services, to ensure service-members are not overutilized. Through these measures, the aim is to ensure the All-Volunteer Force is optimized for global commitments while ensuring the needs of service-members and their families.

Military Health System Reform

Section 702 of the Fiscal Year 2017 NDAA, as modified by Sections 711 and 712 of the Fiscal Year 2019 NDAA, transferred the administration and management of military hospitals and clinics from the Military Departments to the Defense Health Agency (DHA), a Combat Support Agency. Additionally, Section 732 of the FY 2019 NDAA required the development of joint force medical capabilities that meet the operation planning requirements of the combatant commands.

282. In your view, in the aggregate, how many military medical providers and what medical capabilities, are required to support the Combatant Commanders' operational plans associated with the 2022 NDS?

The National Defense Strategy contains globally integrated medical requirements of rapidly aggregating medical capabilities during conflict, moving casualties in a contested environment, and expanding military trauma centers in the Homeland to care for casualties. The medical force of roughly 180,000 will be close to fully employed to execute and sustain operational plans for a large-scale overseas conflict. The medical force does require additional surge medical capacity within medical centers of the Department, as well as leveraging partnerships with Veterans Health Administration and National Disaster Medical System to execute Homeland contingency plan requirements. As DOD designs a future medical force, the Military Health System needs to prioritize efforts to meet these globally integrated requirements and enable air, land, and sea platforms to deploy agile medical capabilities worldwide. If confirmed, I will work across DoD and with Congress on these efforts.

283. In your view, do military medical providers across the Military Departments possess today the critical wartime medical competencies required to save the lives of service members injured in combat or contingency operations?

Yes. I believe the joint medical force possesses the competencies necessary to save lives in a kinetic environment, as evidenced by their performance in overseas contingency operations over the last 20 years. As DOD continues to lose personnel with combat casualty care experience, it is imperative that DOD invests in the workforce to generate critical wartime medical professionals in military medical centers and hospitals. The Department must also leverage partnerships with Veterans Health Administration, Health & Human Services, and National Disaster Medical System, and in private sector partnerships to treat complex care patients in peacetime and sustain the competency and capacity to recover combat casualties in wartime. Additionally, DOD must embed medical capabilities far forward to increase survivability in a contested, degraded, and contaminated wartime environment of the future.

284. In your view, are the Services adequately supporting DHA by assigning to MTFs the appropriate number of military medical providers in the specialties needed at the MTFs?

The Department is working to invest in the healthcare workforce that includes the Services' military medical providers and Defense Health Agency civilian medical providers to improve primary and specialty care access in MTFs. The DOD continues to assess the adequacy of military medical providers in the MTFs and their overall readiness. Additional military and civilian workforce in the MTFs improve access to care for 9.6 million beneficiaries, improves readiness and maximizes education programs for medical professionals, and mitigates the rising costs to provide care in the civilian network. If confirmed, I will work across DoD and with Congress on these efforts.

Suicide Prevention

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

I recognize that physically and mentally fit servicemembers are a critical component of Total Force readiness. If confirmed, I would strongly recommend prioritizing mental health resources for all servicemembers and their families by enhancing the access to mental health professionals by advocating for the expansion of telehealth services and embedded mental health professionals at the unit level. I would work closely with policymakers in the Office of the Secretary of Defense to ensure that adequate resources are made available for evidence-based suicide prevention programs and regularly monitor all programs for effectiveness to ensure and enhance Service member readiness. Additionally, I will promote leadership involvement in recognizing warning signs and strengthening family support initiatives that promote resilience and open discussion around mental health. My commitment is to ensure every servicemember and their family has access to the mental health resources they need.

Mental Health

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

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

Yes, I believe DoD has made significant changes to bridge the gap between Service Members' desires and the chain of command's legitimate need to know. The DOD continues to assess how it can help those who struggle with complex issues, while still ensuring the readiness and lethality of the force. Mental health is an element of total health, and the DOD needs to optimize every aspect of the Warfighter and their families. I fully support Service Members and their families seeking mental health care.

Congressional Oversight

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

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes