

**Senate Armed Services Committee**  
**Advance Policy Questions for Stephen Feinberg**  
**Nominee for Appointment to be Deputy Secretary of Defense**

**Duties and Qualifications**

**Section 132 of title 10, U.S. Code emphasizes that the Deputy Secretary must be “highly qualified for the position by reason of background and experience, including appropriate management experience.”**

**What background, expertise, and experience do you possess that qualify you to serve as Deputy Secretary of Defense?**

For the last 33 years, I have built my firm, Cerberus Capital Management. Our main focus is buying underperforming assets and companies and then working to drive operational and financial improvements. We take on hard complex problems that require significant operational and financial expertise. We have a large portfolio of over \$65 billion and have employed our turnaround strategies in hundreds of investments. Taking on these types of tough challenges is difficult, has significant risks, and is not a perfect science. So, people in our business will have some failures, as we have had, but overall, our track record has been very good over a long period of time.

I believe this operational background gives me valuable experience necessary as Deputy Secretary of Defense. Our Department of Defense faces very significant operational problems, delays, and cost overruns in building ships, submarines, and aircraft, modernizing our nuclear infrastructure, and developing a wide variety of military capabilities. I have spent a career attacking these types of problems in the companies and assets we have managed. Additionally, the Department of Defense has very significant financial problems. It has poor financial systems, struggles with understanding its cost structure, is unable to achieve transparent and consistent financial reporting, and has great difficulty in making accurate forward financial projections. These are exactly the types of financial problems that I have attacked in the companies and assets we have operated.

I served as Chair of the President’s Intelligence Advisory Board in the first Trump Administration. This board was effectively an analytical organization that studied in great depth both intelligence and U.S. national security shortages and problems and then provided advice to the White House on potential remedies. The board had a very strong team, including General Mike Hagee, former Commandant of the Marine Corps, and Charles Allen, a legendary 50-year veteran of the CIA. I took over 3,000 briefs during my chairmanship from all of the intelligence agencies, most parts of DoD, Homeland Security, Commerce, FBI, and most other parts of the U.S. Government that play a role in national security. This very broad exposure to our national security problems gives me a good sense of mission weaknesses and priorities in DoD. That knowledge is essential for the Deputy Secretary of Defense.

At Cerberus, we have bought dozens of companies involved in national security, many of which worked for DoD. So, I have significant experience with the Pentagon as a contractor and understand how it functions and is organized. This practical, hands-on knowledge helps me understand both the strengths and weaknesses of DoD and is invaluable for the Deputy Secretary of Defense.

**Specifically, what is your experience in the management of large, complex organizations?**

At Cerberus, we currently own and have owned in the past over three decades, in whole or in part, large complex companies and assets in large complex structures. For example, today, one of our holdings is Albertsons supermarkets, which is a national chain with over 2,200 stores, 275,000 employees, and over \$70 billion in revenue. Today, we are one of the largest holders of non-performing loans in the world, with a portfolio containing hundreds of thousands of assets and a large complex multinational servicing operator managing the loans.

There are countless examples, past and present, that demonstrate one of our core skill sets at Cerberus is managing large complex organizations. A key to Cerberus's success over many decades has always been our large multifaceted operational teams who drive the day-to-day management of our companies and assets.

**If confirmed, and given your observations and experience, what innovative ideas would you consider implementing with regard to the structure and operations of the DoD?**

As a DoD contractor over the past two decades, I have developed numerous ideas that should be considered. If confirmed, I will go very deep in due diligence to ensure these ideas are sound and determine if they should be pursued. Of course, the Secretary of Defense would have to support any implementation of these new concepts.

One idea would be to change how our DoD program requirements are structured, working with the JROC. I believe our program requirements need to be far less rigid, far less gold-plated, much easier to achieve, less costly, and much quicker to meet. We also need to stop changing the requirements once we set them. This is essential to be able to not only meet our program demands but also to meet them on time. This also enables us to have a much more nimble and agile acquisition capability that would also attract new entrants and promote more competition. This is not easy to achieve, but it can be done effectively.

Another idea would be to effectively sponsor some of our best private sector manufacturing companies to help them get into DoD. As we know, we have too few fully capable product providers at DoD as there has been way too much consolidation and too much concentration among the big major defense players. This reliance on a few companies leaves DoD very exposed. We have great manufacturing companies in the United States who are excellent in developing and scaling capabilities who aren't working

with DoD today. There are creative ways under the FAR to provide sole-source non-competitive opportunities for these large companies to motivate them and make it possible for them to enter the defense industry. Often these types of companies, despite their great capabilities, are not conversant in DoD process or practices and requirements and competing with our big defense majors is very difficult. Being creative to give them help and a big jumpstart in non-traditional ways may be frowned upon because this is a departure from traditional competition-based acquisition policy. But it can be done legally and is very necessary to bring a much bigger part of our large industrial base into the defense industry. We have seen this in the past during wartime, and this is so important today due to a dearth of large manufacturing companies who know how to scale who are currently servicing DoD.

These are a couple of the dozens of ideas I have developed that need to be carefully looked at and determined if they are possible.

**What do you consider to be the most significant challenges you will face if confirmed as the Deputy Secretary of Defense and what are your plans to address each challenge?**

The biggest and most urgent challenge is to find a way to meet our mission needs within a finite budget. We have so many gaps in our national security capabilities and shortages in essential areas today that put our Nation in a troublesome, risky position. We must urgently prioritize the most important gaps and shortages and fix this problem. We can achieve that, but it starts with leadership. We must be realistic and transparent about these issues and, with great urgency, put the necessary plans in place and execute them.

What makes this more difficult is the fact that our most capable and toughest competition is the Chinese, who get funded not only by their budget but also by their private sector, which often effectively works for the government. So, the Chinese have better funding and an all-in national commitment to becoming the most powerful and dominant nation in the world. Closing all our gaps is very difficult because China will keep moving the goalposts on us.

On top of all that, the United States has significant budget constraints and currently doesn't have the necessary money to fix our current weaknesses and compete effectively with China.

This is a very tough problem, but there are ways to attack it. We must manage our own finances at DoD better to ensure we are getting the maximum out of the dollars we have. We have to run the department much more efficiently by cutting significant costs from unnecessary departments inside DoD and from legacy programs still funded by DoD. We have to develop much better systems and financial metrics to attack our efficiency problems. There are significant dollars to be found through better operations and decision-making.

Another big piece of the solution is getting far more help from our private sector. We have the greatest private sector in the world, and they can help us close the funding gap and the capability shortages. To get the private sector more involved, we must focus on how to approach the relationship. We need private sector people in government who fully understand how our best private companies operate, what their legal and regulatory issues are, what their shareholder issues are, how their Board of Directors will respond to the government, and what it takes to get their help and partnership. Finally, we need to understand what issues and impediments the general counsels will bring and how we can solve them. Yes, our private sector companies should be more patriotic and easier to work with all the time. But that's not reality, and through significant private sector expertise inside DoD, we can really start driving great partnerships with the private sector.

Of course, there are so many other big challenges for the deputy to involve themselves with, but progress in the above areas will go a long way.

**Section 132 of title 10, U.S. Code, provides that the Deputy Secretary of Defense shall perform such duties and exercise such powers as the Secretary of Defense may prescribe. Except as expressly proscribed by law or order of the President or Secretary of Defense, the Deputy Secretary has full power and authority to act for the Secretary of Defense on any and all matters.**

**What do you perceive to be the duties and powers of the Deputy Secretary most critical to the national defense?**

The Deputy Secretary will perform duties and exercise powers as prescribed by the Secretary of Defense. Historically the Deputy Secretary has the primary responsibility of managing the day-to-day activities and management of the Pentagon, to include decision-making related to budget and resourcing, acquisition, and research and engineering. Additionally, the Deputy Secretary assumes the duties of the Secretary of Defense when the Secretary is unable to do so.

**What other duties and/or powers would you expect the Secretary of Defense to prescribe for you, if confirmed?**

In his hearing, Secretary Hegseth stated his intent to designate the Deputy Secretary to manage the day-to-day activities regarding budget and resourcing, acquisition, research and engineering, and overall management of the Pentagon. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department prioritizes fiscal accountability, efficiency and lethality in accordance with President Trump's direction to achieve Peace through Strength, and Secretary Hegseth's priorities of reviving the warrior ethos; rebuilding our military by matching threats to capabilities; and reestablishing deterrence by defending our homeland.

## **Conflicts of Interest**

**Federal ethics laws, to include 10 U.S.C. §208, prohibit government employees from participating in matters where they, or certain family members or organizations with which they have certain relationships, have a financial interest.**

**Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to disclose any potential conflicts of interest, including investments, business ties, family relationships, or other connections that could be perceived as influencing your decision making?**

Yes

**Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, that if a conflict of interest arises, you will recuse yourself from participating in any relevant decisions regarding that specific matter?**

Yes

**Do you commit, without qualification, if confirmed, to decision-making on the merits and exclusively in the public interest, without regard to private gain or personal benefit?**

Yes

### **Civilian Control of the Military**

**What are your personal views on the principle of civilian control of the military?**

Civilian control of the military is a foundational principle in democratic governance, ensuring elected officials maintain control and authority over armed forces. This principle prevents military leaders from exerting undue influence on political decisions, which in turn safeguards democratic institutions and civil liberties.

I also believe that civilian oversight is meant to foster transparency and public trust. It emphasizes accountability, because military actions must align with the elected government's policies and priorities. By maintaining a clear separation between military and political realms, this principle promotes stability, and ultimately it ensures that military power is used responsibly.

**If confirmed, specifically what would you do to ensure that your tenure as the Deputy Secretary of Defense epitomizes the fundamental requirement for civilian control of the Armed Forces embedded in the U.S. Constitution and other laws?**

If confirmed, I will ensure that decision-making in the Department of Defense is in accordance with the U.S. Constitution and applicable laws and aligned with elected officials' policies and national interests. The Deputy Secretary reinforces the principle of

civilian control by integrating civilian perspectives into budgetary and acquisition processes and ultimately ensuring that military capabilities are developed and funded in a way that reflects democratic governance and public accountability.

## **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.**

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

Both the 2018 and 2022 National Defense Strategies pinpoint the People’s Republic of China as posing the most significant challenge for the U.S. Department of Defense. The most threatening scenario facing the Department is a sudden PRC attempt to seize Taiwan by force. A successful invasion of Taiwan could severely damage U.S. trade, alliances, and global influence.

Xi Jinping's stated goal of annexing Taiwan, his directive to the Chinese military to be ready for such an operation by 2027, and China's significant and ongoing buildup of capabilities designed to hold the Joint Force at risk suggest that China poses a significant and growing threat across the near, medium, and long term.

### **What is your assessment of the military threat posed by Russia?**

The 2018 and 2022 National Defense Strategies both recognize Russia as a threat to the United States and Europe, and Russia also destabilizes several other regions around the world. Despite facing international sanctions since 2014, which were further strengthened during the first Trump Administration, Russia has maintained a capable military, developed strategic capabilities, and increased production of crucial military equipment.

Of particular concern is Russia's expansion of its nuclear arsenal, posing a threat to the U.S. homeland, as well as its tactical nuclear weapons, which threaten its European and Asian neighbors. Russia also presents challenges in cyberspace, information warfare, undersea warfare, space, and the Arctic.

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

China, Russia, Iran, and North Korean cooperation in Ukraine, and in other regions of the world, suggest a common interest in weakening U.S. influence and alliances globally.

These countries share technology and sell military equipment amongst themselves, circumventing or muting the impact of sanctions. This collaboration allows them to develop their military capabilities, fund operations, and challenge U.S. interests. Examples include the transfer of drones between Iran and Russia, Chinese purchases of Iranian oil, and North Korean special forces fighting alongside Russian troops in Ukraine.

**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?**

It is my understanding that the Department of Defense has not fully utilized the potential of our industrial and innovation bases to deliver necessary military capabilities efficiently and at the required pace. While there have been efforts to develop numerous, dispersed, and expendable capabilities quickly, a shift in mindset is crucial.

The DoD's focus needs to move away from expensive, overly sophisticated platforms that take years to develop and are difficult to replace, towards embracing rapid innovation and scalable production. If confirmed, I will prioritize working to streamline the requirements and acquisition process.

**In mandating changes to the process and form of the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, and the National Military Strategy, Congress intended that these documents, through the Defense Planning Guidance, would more rigorously drive program planning of the Military Departments, Defense Agencies, and Combatant Commands.**

**If confirmed, how would you ensure consistency between the guiding strategies of the Department and its allocation of resources?**

Timely issuance of the Secretary's strategic guidance to the Department, including through the National Defense Strategy and the Defense Planning Guidance, ensures that strategy is the driving force behind all of the Department's resourcing decisions, and that U.S. strategic priorities are infused throughout the Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution cycle. If confirmed, I will support the Secretary in the development of this guidance and in overseeing its implementation across the Department.

### **DoD Readiness**

**The United States now faces two near-peer competitors in an aggressively militaristic China and revanchist Russia.**

**In your view, how do the readiness challenges facing the DoD today and over the next 10 years impact the Department's requirements for force structure investments?**

Readiness is a multi-dimensional challenge that involves trade-offs between near-term and long-term priorities. Certain readiness spending can increase our ability to maintain current operations but spending to maintain high readiness in the present has a high depreciation rate. If we do not expect to “fight tonight,” readiness dollars might better be spent on long-term force structure and modernization investments to ensure that we are ready for the advanced challenges we may face in 5-7 years.

If confirmed, I will ensure that short-term readiness investments are tailored to maintain a ready, deterrent force, but ensure that we do not cannibalize our ability to modernize the joint force for the future fight. I would direct the Military Departments and Services to do a line-by-line review investments in mobility, logistics, maintenance, and sustainment capabilities, as well as to understand where increased ally and partner cooperation can enable us to optimize our forward posture.

**If confirmed, how would you balance force structure and readiness demands, particularly with respect to rotational forces in the U.S. Indo-Pacific and Central Command areas of responsibility (AOR), against the imperative to modernize or restructure current forces to meet NDS requirements?**

Continuous rotation of troops into AORs ensures that forward forces are always at a high level of readiness. However, constant rotation also imposes costs upon the Services as they balance spending on readiness against spending on modernization. Given the strategic environment, we must maintain high readiness in the Indo-Pacific, and, if confirmed, I intend to carefully review which forces are deployed forward.

Additionally, arrangements with Allies and partners can reduce the readiness impact on forward forces. If confirmed, I will review the force posture in CENTCOM to ensure that we have the right force mix available and ready both in the AOR and over the horizon for the dynamic situation in the region.

**If confirmed as Deputy Secretary of Defense, how would you prioritize the needs for continued readiness, force structure, and modernization?**

Balancing readiness, force structure, and modernization is a constant challenge for the Department of Defense. If confirmed, I would work to ensure first that investments in these three categories are focused on warfighting and lethality to enhance the credibility of our deterrent. We should be prioritizing resource allocation against the most significant threats and particularly directed towards the Department’s plans to deal with those threats.

**How would you assess the current readiness of the DoD components across the domains of materiel and equipment, personnel, and training to execute operational plans in support of the 2022 NDS?**



I do not have access to classified briefs on operational plans and cannot accurately assess current readiness levels, but I understand that the Joint Force is organized, trained, and equipped to execute operational plans and achieve our national objectives.

If confirmed, I will work with my staff, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the combatant commanders to review our operational plans and our current states of readiness across these domains to ensure that our forces can credibly fight and win our Nation's wars. I believe it is critically important that our joint force maintains its position as the most capable, lethal force in the world.

### **National Security Budget**

**In its July 2024 report, the Commission on the National Defense Strategy recommended that Congress provide real growth for defense spending, at an annual average rate of three to five percent above inflation.**

**Do you agree that sustained real growth in the defense budget is necessary to achieve the aims of the current NDS without incurring significant additional risk?**

Achieving peace through strength requires investment and sacrifice as a Nation. We must make the right investments to rebuild our military, ensuring it remains the strongest and most lethal in the world to deter adversaries considering actions that would be detrimental to American interests.

**Many observers assert that the only way to force DoD leaders to make the "hard choices" to divest of lower priority or underperforming programs, is to constrain the Department fiscally.**

**If confirmed, by what standards would you measure the adequacy of the defense budget?**

I will measure the adequacy of our budget by its ability to match threats to capabilities and reestablish deterrence by defending the homeland. If confirmed, I expect to lead a thorough review of Defense Department spending, incorporating bottom-up and top-down reviews to ensure that the President's priorities are funded within the guidance provided by the Office of Management and Budget.

If confirmed, I welcome the opportunity to work with Congress to improve efficiency and increase readiness by rapidly fielding innovative technologies, reviving our defense industrial base, reforming our acquisitions process, and passing a financial audit.

**Do you believe that this approach leads to more effective and efficient decision-making by DoD leaders?**

If confirmed, I will ensure that the Secretary of Defense is presented with the most robust and accurate data to support the President's Budget Request. The Department must operate within the constraints set by Congress, but will actively seek areas for lawful reduction and realignment to meet the Secretary's priorities for force readiness and lethality. If confirmed, I will embrace fiscal restraint as an opportunity to reduce wasteful spending and prioritize the most effective programs and systems.

**The Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE) process has remained fundamentally unchanged since its inception more than half a century ago.**

**Do you believe the PPBE process results in the proper allocation of resources according to the strategic priorities at the Department of Defense?**

The current geopolitical landscape demands speed and agility. The current PPBE process was designed for a postindustrial age. Today, we are in an age of rapidly changing technology where technology is obsolete almost as soon as it is developed.

Not having yet been a part of the PPBE process inside the Department, I looked through the Commission on PPBE Reform's Final Report from March 2024 and the Department's PPBE Reform Implementation Plan that was released recently in January by the former Administration so that I could learn more about the process of PPBE, how that unfolds inside DoD, and what reform efforts are currently underway. If confirmed, I look forward to implementing applicable recommendations.

If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring that allocation processes align resources to President's Trump strategic priorities, delivering capabilities that advance the goals of the Department, and closing gaps through the rapid fielding of emerging technologies.

**What changes would you make, if any, to the PPBE process to improve both resourcing decisions within DoD and information flow about those decisions to the Congress?**

If confirmed, I look forward to working with OSD staff principals to determine needed changes to the process to ensure we have the strongest tie between strategy and resources to support the Administration's priorities, while ensuring open communication between the Department and Congress.

**The congressionally appointed Commission on PPBE Reform released its final report in March 2024, and Congress has directed the DoD to establish a cross-functional team to oversee the implementation of the Commission's recommendations.**

**If confirmed, what would you do to implement the recommendations of the Commission, and how would you work with Congress to ensure success?**

I understand that the former Deputy Secretary of Defense signed a PPBE Reform Implementation Report that was made publicly available in January 2025, which provides

an overview of the Commission's recommendations the previous Administration wanted to support.

I have read that as well as the PPBE Reform Commission's Final Report from March 2024 and concur with many of its ideas to streamline the PPBE process and provide additional flexibilities to the Department of Defense while maintaining the appropriate level of Congressional involvement.

If confirmed, I look forward to understanding the efforts underway in the Department, and working with my staff principals and Congress to determine how those proposed reforms could improve the process, while also pursuing other improvements to ensure DoD maximizes its allocated resources to support our Defense priorities.

**Former Secretary of Defense Mattis stated, "If you don't fund the State Department fully, then I need to buy more ammunition."**

**What are your views on the role of the State Department and other non-DoD departments and agencies in achieving U.S. national security objectives?**

DoD will need to work with multiple U.S. government departments and agencies to advance national security priorities. Diplomacy and economic and trade policy play important roles in achieving our objectives. If confirmed, I would coordinate with my colleagues across the government to ensure resources collectively support the national security objectives outlined by the President and Secretary of Defense.

**Do you believe non-DoD departments and agencies have been sufficiently resourced to appropriately contribute to U.S. national security objectives?**

If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to work with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to review other agencies resourcing and provide recommendations to OMB.

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

**The Deputy Secretary of Defense and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff often partner to lead the Department in addressing emergent issues and policy challenges that require the integration of civilian and military expertise and perspective.**

**If confirmed, how would you structure your relationship with the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?**

A strong, productive relationship between the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff is critical to ensure we bring the most lethal capabilities into the hands of our warfighters. If confirmed, I will count on the Vice Chairman to provide me the best military advice and faithfully represent the independent voice of the warfighter.

**If confirmed, how would you allocate particular responsibilities to the Vice Chairman and yourself as co-chairs of the Deputy's Management Action Group?**

My understanding is the Deputy's Management Action Group [DMAG] is the key forum for making the difficult but necessary resourcing recommendations and associated risk calculations that enable the Secretary to realize the President's vision of Peace through Strength.

If confirmed, I will use this body to provide the Administration's guidance in our national defense and security and solicit from the pertinent Department leadership how they will enact that guidance and hear their concerns. As the body's co-chair, the Vice Chairman provides an indispensable, independent warfighter's perspective within DMAG deliberations.

**In your view, how could the Deputy's Management Action Group be more effective in ensuring that DoD issues with resource, management, and broad strategic and/or policy implications are addressed in a manner that aligns with the Secretary of Defense's priorities, planning and programming schedule? Please explain your answer.**

As the Department's principal governance forum for management actions including planning, programming, budgeting, and execution (PPBE), and strategic and policy guidance, the DMAG is critically important. If confirmed, I will consult with the DMAG's co-chair, the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Secretary's Principal Staff Assistants to drive and assess compliance with the President's and Secretary's priorities, foster alignment on cross-cutting issues, threat assessments and trends, vulnerabilities, and strategic matters and evaluate resource and policy implications.

**If confirmed, what, if any, recommendations would you make to revise or refine the Joint Requirements Oversight Council process?**

If confirmed, modernizing and preparing the Department for future contingencies will rank among my top priorities. The warfighter's independent role in developing effective and interoperable capabilities is vital. I am also aware of the multifaceted approach to requirements, acquisition, and programming reform being championed by Chairman Wicker and Secretary Hegseth to accelerate delivery of capabilities to the warfighter.

If confirmed, I pledge to expeditiously reform how the Department attains capability through the entire Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE), Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS) which includes many elements, including the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC), and Defense Acquisition System (DAS) processes.

## **Alliances and Partnerships**

**The 2022 NDS stresses that mutually beneficial alliances and partnerships are crucial to U.S. success in competition with, deterrence of, and potential conflict against long term strategic competitors.**

**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?**

The United States boasts a formidable network of alliances and partnerships, providing an unparalleled strategic edge through collective defense with our Allies and partners. We must remain committed to fostering balanced relationships, recognizing that strong alliances require mutual contributions to thrive. Encouraging increased defense spending and shared responsibility from our Allies and partners is crucial to ensure fairness and sustainability. By fostering long-term cooperation and consistent support, we can empower our Allies and partners, bolster their capabilities, and strengthen the foundation of mutual trust.

**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?**

I have not been briefed on classified material, but I understand the challenge we face is not confined to one region or one area of expertise. Every Combatant Command, whether focused on a specific geographic area or a specialized military function, plays a crucial role in maintaining our advantage. This will be achieved through ongoing strategic planning, security cooperation, military diplomacy, and other initiatives. If confirmed, I welcome the opportunity to dive into the details and my focus will be on achieving the objectives laid out in the National Defense Strategy.

**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.**

**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?**

I have not been briefed on specific details, but I understand DoD has taken steps to allow for more seamless integration and interoperability with allied technology. Leveraging Foreign Military Sales (FMS) to enable our Allies and partners to procure interoperable and complementary capabilities improves our ability to fight by, with, and through our Allies and partners. This interoperability is enhanced through joint training and exercises. Additionally, FMS can support our broader acquisition strategy by driving

down unit costs for both the United States and our Allies and partners, enabling us to collectively deliver more advanced capabilities than if a program was not designed for export. Industrial base integration can also improve military systems and the production of platforms and materiel, enabling us to bring in allied technology and expertise as well as allied production capacity.

If confirmed, I will collaborate closely with the Under Secretaries of Defense for Acquisition & Sustainment and Policy to identify and investigate opportunities to craft acquisition and allied and partner force development strategies to leverage their expertise and capitalize on economies of scale.

### **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.**

**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?**

It is my understanding that USAFRICOM has fewer allocated and assigned forces than most other Combatant Commands and competes for capabilities when it faces an emerging requirement. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting review of our global force posture to reassess whether existing missions and forces assigned to USAFRICOM are sufficient to achieve our goals given the competitive geostrategic environment.

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

If confirmed, I look forward to supporting review of our global posture to assess whether existing missions and forces assigned to USAFRICOM are sufficient to achieve our national defense strategy goals given the competitive geostrategic environment.

**What should be the primary objectives of the DoD specifically, and the United States more broadly, in the AFRICOM AOR?**

It is my understanding that the Department has two primary objectives in the USAFRICOM AOR. The first is to degrade terrorist groups' ability to strike the United States. The second objective is to counter China's attempts to co-opt African governments in ways that undermine U.S. strategic interests. There is not a military-only solution to these major challenges. I recognize that to achieve progress toward those two main objectives we must devise whole-of-government strategies, coordinating DoD resources with the entire interagency and Allies to address a variety of issues affecting Africa. Additionally, the Department must increase its work with Allies in the AOR to

build operational independence so that our regional partners can undertake missions on their own.

**What is your assessment of U.S. counterterrorism strategies in the AFRICOM AOR? If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you propose to these strategies?**

My understanding is that the current U.S. counterterrorism strategy in the USAFRICOM AOR is to disrupt violent terrorist organizations, with continued focus on ISIS and Al-Qaeda affiliate groups, especially those with the intent and capability of posing a direct threat to the U.S. homeland, U.S. personnel and facilities, or vital U.S. national interests. I understand the Department prioritizes working by, with, and through Allies and regional partners to disrupt and degrade terrorist threats. If confirmed, I will look for ways to further improve on our efforts to cooperate with and strengthen Allies and regional partners as we pursue our shared counterterrorism interests.

**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?**

The People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russia have both deepened their engagement in Africa. The PRC has sought to bolster relationships with African countries and their militaries and increase investment in Africa, and where possible create dependencies. The PRC has looked to gain African countries' support for its global policy objectives. Conversely, Russia uses irregular means to assert influence in Africa, including through paramilitary deployments, seeking to create dependencies on Russian military assets. My understanding is that many of these activities are not in line with U.S. and partners' shared objectives for stability and security. For example, the PRC's lending practices create economic risk for African countries. Russian private military companies and paramilitary forces have contributed to instability within Africa. Both use engagement in Africa in ways that prioritize their own gain.

**U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM)**

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

In my opinion, the key U.S. national security interests in the Middle East are: 1) preventing, deterring, and disrupting credible terrorist threats to the U.S. homeland, 2) ensuring the free flow of goods and trade 3) acting as a security enabler and integrator for our partners and Allies, 4) preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, and 5) ensuring the defense of Israel.

It is my understanding that counterterrorism remains a high priority national security interest in the CENTCOM AOR. Many of the terrorist groups that have either the intent or capability to strike the U.S. homeland or U.S. personnel have their ideological, financial, or operational base originating in the Middle East, as we have seen in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Yemen.

The United States has strong partners in the Middle East with whom we have shared interests, long-standing cooperation, and substantial economic and technological trade ties. The Department has a number of mechanisms through which we can provide security cooperation, Foreign Military Financing, Foreign Military Sales, joint training and exercises, and forward presence to strengthen the ability to disrupt and defeat shared threats.

If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department of Defense stands ready to support the President's National Security Presidential Memorandum on Iran.

**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.**

It is my understanding that the Department maintains the capability to surge forces anywhere in the world if needed during a crisis. As a result, U.S. forces are able to execute multiple missions in the Middle East—to include deterring Iran and its proxies.

If confirmed, I will work with OSD components, the Joint Staff, and the combatant commanders to review the global U.S. force posture and reassess the optimal level of forces assigned to CENTCOM in order to achieve our regional and national defense strategy goals, given the evolving geostrategic environment.

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

The United States collaborates effectively with multiple Allies and partners in the region as well as European Allies to counter threats emanating from within the CENTCOM AOR. If confirmed, I would seek increased opportunities to enable regional partners to counter terrorist groups and defend their sovereign territories. Our partners can, and must, do their part.

If confirmed, I would also look to increase cooperation with regional and European partners in countering the Iranian Threat Network and the Iranian missile and UAV threat. Joint missions, security cooperation, missile defense integration, and capacity building are effective mechanisms for strengthening the ability of our Allies and partners to counter threats within the AOR.

**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?**

China is working to expand its influence and presence in the Middle East, increase PRC-origin defense sales, and put its thumb on the scales of the global energy markets. China's efforts to expand their technological and defense cooperation in the region have



the potential to put at risk sensitive U.S. technology and our national security. The Department must be vigilant to ensure these activities neither pose a counterintelligence risk to U.S. forces or operations nor undermine U.S. security partnerships.

Russian involvement in the region has had negative implications for U.S. interests in the region, two examples being Russia's strategic partnership with Iran and previous support for the Assad regime. Russia is on its back foot in the region after the fall of the Assad regime, but we must remain vigilant on this front.

The United States can counter negative PRC and Russian involvement in the region through strong partnerships and empowerment of our Allies and partners across a full spectrum of activities, to include security assistance, regional integration efforts, and military cooperation through training, exercises and other activities.

## *Iran*

**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?**

The Department of Defense must stand ready to support the President's National Security Presidential Memorandum on Iran, which establishes that: 1) Iran should be denied a nuclear weapon and intercontinental ballistic missiles; 2) Iran's terrorist network should be neutralized; and 3) Iran's aggressive development of missiles, as well as other asymmetric and conventional weapons capabilities, should be countered.

**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 poses a significant threat to the security of the United States and its Allies and partners. Last year, Iran launched two major missile and drone strikes against Israel from Iranian territory. In addition to Iran's conventional military, Tehran also leverages proxy forces to launch kinetic attacks and advance their interests across the Middle East. These forces threaten both U.S. forces, as well as those of our partners. Iran also continues to inch closer to gaining a nuclear weapons capability, which is unacceptable. Iranian acquisition of a nuclear weapon would threaten U.S. interests and partner security, provide Iran a shield behind which they could engage in more aggressive proxy activities, and increase the risk of nuclear accidents or miscalculation.

**In your view, are U.S. military forces and capabilities currently deployed to the CENTCOM AOR adequate to deter and, if necessary, respond to threats posed by Iran?**

It is my understanding that the Department maintains the capability to surge forces anywhere in the world if needed during a crisis. As a result, U.S. forces are able to execute multiple missions in the Middle East—to include deterring Iran and its proxies.

It is my understanding that the Department is in the process of reviewing the global U.S. force posture to reassess the optimal force posture for CENTCOM to achieve our national defense strategy goals, given the evolving geostrategic environment.

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

I believe the Department must continue to support the President's stated intent to address Iran's malign activity through non-military tools, including economic pressure and diplomacy. At the same time, it is the Department of Defense's role to ensure the President is armed with the best possible military options. The Department must remain prepared to present the President with options to deter Iran's malign activity and respond militarily if directed.

### *Israel*

**In your opinion, what are U.S. national security objectives in Israel?**

Strongly supporting Israel's ability to defend itself is a key U.S. national security objective. It is my understanding that the Department of Defense supports Israel's security by helping facilitate security assistance to Israel, extensive military cooperation through CENTCOM channels, and through coordination with the Israelis to help secure the release of hostages held by Hamas, to include American citizens.

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

Hamas's horrific and unprovoked attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, killed over 1,200 innocent people, including 46 Americans. The United States should support Israel by providing the security equipment and munitions that Israel needs to defeat Hamas and never again allow a Hamas-style attack on Israel.

### *Syria and Iraq*

**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?**

It is my understanding that the Department's primary objective in Syria is to support the enduring defeat of ISIS. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary to review our objectives in the region in light of the fall of the Assad regime.

**What role, if any, should DoD play in supporting a peaceful democratic transition in Syria? Please explain your answer.**

The President has stated his position that the United States should not get involved in the political affairs of Syria. If confirmed, I will support the orders from the Commander-in-Chief. The U.S. military remains focused on the defeat of ISIS and other threats to the Homeland. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department continues to work with interagency partners to ensure alignment and support on goals outside of the Department's direct jurisdiction.

**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?**

Ensuring the enduring defeat of ISIS requires a whole of government effort. The U.S. military's role in the region supports whole-of-government counterproliferation strategies, defense of U.S. personnel and bases in the region, defense of Israel, deterrence of regional conflict, and counterterrorism operations. U.S. military counterterrorism operations rely on the intelligence community to maintain awareness of ISIS' goals and activities as they adapt to the current environment. Diplomatic efforts are also necessary to push those countries whose citizens are living in displaced persons camps and detention facilities in Syria to repatriate their citizens.

**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 the Department has worked with the SDF for years to help counter terrorist elements in eastern Syria. These partners have historically played a critical role in our efforts to counter ISIS and al Qaeda. If confirmed, I will seek classified and unclassified briefings on the current role of these forces.

**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?**

The deployment of U.S. troops in any foreign country should always be tied to specific objectives and conditions, and this principle would guide any of my potential recommendations to the Secretary of Defense about troop deployments to any country.

**What is your understanding of the current U.S. national security objectives in Iraq?**

It is my understanding that current DoD objectives in Iraq support the enduring defeat of ISIS and other violent extremist organizations through a strategic partnership with the Government of Iraq.

**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.**

**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?**

The deployment of U.S. troops in any foreign country should always be reassessed continually based on changing objectives and conditions on the ground. If confirmed, I would support a thorough analysis along these lines prior to making a recommendation to the Secretary.

### *South Asia*

**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 United States has a vital national interest in ensuring terrorism that threatens the U.S. Homeland does not emanate from Afghanistan. It is my understanding that the Department's role in pursuing this objective is executed through Operation ENDURING SENTINEL (OES), the Afghanistan counterterrorism mission. The Defense Intelligence Agency has publicly reported to Congress, via the DoD Inspector General's quarterly report on OES, that ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K) maintains the intent and capability to strike outside of its traditional area of operations in South Asia and is probably committed to enabling attacks within the United States.

If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, the National Security Advisor, and our Allies to assess whether this strategy is effective and sufficiently resourced.

**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 seek to understand more clearly our posture and support the Secretary on any changes that would be necessary to achieve our national objectives to counter ISIS-Khorasan, al Qaeda and other related groups in Afghanistan.

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

If confirmed, I will support the Secretary of Defense's global posture review. I understand that this review will reassess whether existing missions and the forces assigned to CENTCOM can meet our needs.

**In your view, what tools and options are available to the United States to ensure that Pakistan is not used as a sanctuary for militants and violent extremist organizations (VEOs)?**

The President has made it clear that his highest priority is to ensure the safety and security of the United States and the American people. If confirmed, I will seek briefings on sanctuaries for militants and violent extremist organizations and the threats they pose to the safety and security of the United States and the American people.

## **U.S. European Command (EUCOM)**

### ***Implementation of the 2022 NDS***

**Do you believe the deterrent posture in Europe is sufficient to support the 2022 NDS and deter further Russian aggression in Europe?**

If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing our global posture to assess whether existing missions and forces assigned to EUCOM are sufficient to achieve our national defense strategy goals given the competitive geostrategic environment.

**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?**

It is my understanding that the EUCOM Commander designs the Theater Campaign Plan based on NDS priorities and the forces made available through the Global Force Management process, and that campaign plan is expected to be executable with those forces. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing our global posture to assess whether existing missions and forces assigned to EUCOM are sufficient to achieve our national defense strategy goals given the competitive geostrategic environment.

**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?**

If confirmed, I would support a global force posture review by the Secretary to reassess whether existing missions and forces assigned to EUCOM are sufficient to achieve our national defense strategy goals given the competitive geostrategic environment.

**If confirmed, what specific enhancements would you make to other U.S. capabilities or force posture in Europe to execute the NDS more effectively?**

If confirmed, once a global force posture review is conducted and a new NDS is released, I would recommend that the Secretary direct the Department to align forces with the findings of both reviews and any other relevant direction from the Commander in Chief.

### ***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.**

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

EDI investments since 2014 did not deter Russia's further invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. If confirmed, I would support a review of the allocation of resources across the different theaters of conflict and recommend investments that best protect U.S. interests, deter conflict, and leverage the investments of our Allies to provide for their own defense.

**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?**

It is my understanding that the EDI's lines of effort – increased presence, exercises and training, enhanced prepositioning, improved infrastructure, and building partner capacity – have bolstered the capabilities and readiness of U.S. forces in EUCOM, of NATO Allies, and of regional partners. If confirmed, with the Secretary, I would review the resource requirements necessary to achieve our national security objectives in Europe, with an eye towards increasing European Allied capabilities and leadership.

### *NATO Alliance*

**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 United States has demonstrated over decades the strength of its commitment to collective security, both in maintaining the world's most lethal military force and in deploying U.S. forces to maintain deterrence and defeat threats to our collective security.

If confirmed, I would seek to ensure that our NATO Allies demonstrate that their commitment to the Washington Treaty be as strong as ours. While the United States remains committed to NATO, it is time for more European security leadership for the defense of Europe.

**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?**

The strategic objectives of the NATO Alliance remain to prevent large-scale conflict in Europe, deter nuclear and non-nuclear aggression, and defeat threats to member states should deterrence fail.

**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?**

NATO’s status as a nuclear alliance serves to deter conflict and coercion against the alliance. It is my understanding that the United States has maintained nuclear weapons in NATO countries for several decades and is a foundational tenant of the collective nature of the alliance. At a time when the NATO Alliance faces nuclear saber-rattling from Russia, the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons serves as an important political, strategic, and military link between America and its European Allies.

**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 NATO Allied Land Command Commander.**

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

It is my understanding that dual hatting of these roles can be an effective way to integrate disparate organizations and, in some cases, a more efficient use of current resources. If confirmed, with the Secretary, I would review dual-hatted structures to understand if they serve our national security interests.

## *Russia*

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

There is no question that Putin is willing to use military force to accomplish his geopolitical agenda. The United States should actively deter Russia from acting against vital U.S. interests.

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

If confirmed, I would support a global force posture review to assess the effectiveness of existing missions and forces assigned to EUCOM, and whether they are sufficient to achieve our national defense strategy goals given the competitive geostrategic environment.

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

If confirmed, upon completion of the global force posture review, I would support the Secretary in making recommendations to the President regarding our future deterrent posture in Europe.

**In your view, what should DoD do to counter Russian malign influence in Europe?**

Countering malign influence requires a whole-of-government approach, performed in concert with Allies and partners, that goes beyond conventional military operations. If confirmed, I would support a broader interagency effort to counter malign influence as part of an integrated national\_level Russia strategy.

*Ukraine*

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

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

President Trump has made it a priority to end the war as quickly as possible. If confirmed, I will help ensure that DoD supports the President's negotiating team in pursuing that goal.

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

President Trump has stated that all options, including the provision of additional U.S. security assistance to Ukraine, are on the table as part of negotiations. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department of Defense is prepared to support the development of a wide range of options for the President and his team to consider as part of negotiations with Russia and Ukraine.

**What do you see as the role of U.S. and allied/ partner 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 President and Secretary of Defense have made it clear to our European NATO Allies that they must take the lead in supporting Ukraine. If confirmed, I would support the Secretary's efforts to press European Allies and partners to increase their security assistance commitments to Ukraine and advance the President's efforts to negotiate a durable peace.



## **U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDO-PACOM) and China**

**Is the current U.S. force posture in the Indo-Pacific region sufficient to support the NDS? How would you propose to restructure U.S. security posture in the Indo-Pacific to counter Chinese aggression, if confirmed? Please explain your answer.**

We must accelerate efforts to enhance U.S. force posture and increase operational capabilities in the Indo-Pacific region, given China's accelerated military modernization and the urgent need to reestablish deterrence. If confirmed, I will focus on prioritizing efforts that reestablish deterrence vis-à-vis the PRC.

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

If confirmed, I will engage stakeholders across the Department to urgently advance the Administration's goal of reestablishing deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region. This will include working both within the Department and with Congress to determine whether there is appropriate funding for strengthening our posture in the region, and whether the Pacific Deterrence Initiative is sufficient to achieve our aims.

**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.**

If confirmed, I will work closely with Congress to ensure there is sufficient funding for strengthening our posture and reestablishing deterrence in the Indo-Pacific. Furthermore, I would work with all other relevant stakeholders across the Department to determine whether the Pacific Deterrence Initiative is sufficient to achieve our military goals in the Indo-Pacific region.

**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?**

If confirmed, I will work with INDOPACOM to review the status and requirements of establishing a Joint Force Headquarters.

**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?**

Typhoon Mawar, which struck Guam on May 24, 2023, caused extensive damage to

military and commercial infrastructure across the island. I understand that the damage affected Andersen Air Force Base, Naval Base Guam, and Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz, and now requires significant repairs due to high winds and sustained rainfall. While not fully apprised of the details, I understand that Congress appropriated \$3.7 billion in supplemental funding for recovery efforts, and that the restoration process is ongoing.

The strategic importance of Guam necessitates a rapid and resilient approach to reconstruction. The island serves as a key power projection platform for the U.S. forces in the Indo-Pacific region and hosts significant Air Force and Navy capabilities that support operations across the area. Ensuring the continued functionality of Guam's military assets is vital to maintaining U.S. influence and deterrence in the region.

If confirmed, I will ensure the reconstruction effort not only restores Guam but also enhances the resilience of DoD operations to future all-hazard risks. This effort could include the use of advanced engineering practices, changes in the generation and distribution of energy, and collaboration with the government of Guam.

**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?**

Japan is a critical ally in the Indo-Pacific region, and we must work together to strengthen our deterrent posture in the Indo-Pacific region, including through developing joint warfighting capabilities and enhancing interoperability. If confirmed, I will consider the best command-and-control structure for U.S. forces in Japan to enable close coordination within our Alliance.

## *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."**

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

As expressed in the 2018 NDS and 2022 NDS, China is our pacing threat. I agree that China is "the most comprehensive and serious challenge to U.S. national security." Through a historic military buildup, China has developed capabilities for the specific purpose of being able to exercise military power in the Indo-Pacific region and deny the ability of the United States to project power into the region. If confirmed, I will work

with urgency to strengthen our force posture in the Indo-Pacific region to deter PRC aggression.

**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?**

U.S.-China military-to-military engagements are important channels to reduce risk and manage crisis. However, China seizes upon these important dialogues as leverage by offering or canceling senior-level engagements to reward or punish U.S. behavior in hopes of compelling changes in U.S. policy.

U.S. military-to-military dialogue with China should focus on clarifying U.S. policy and correcting China's misperceptions to minimize the risk of unintended escalation in a crisis. These dialogues should be conducted on a selective basis to minimize the chance they are used for political leverage.

**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 People's Republic of China has for decades made strategic investments in its military capabilities to exercise military power in the Indo-Pacific region and deny the ability of the United States to project power into the region. These investments have been made across all warfare domains and in capabilities symmetrical to those possessed by the United States – air power, aircraft carriers, submarines, missiles, nuclear weapons, and space-based capabilities – as well as asymmetric and next-generation capabilities that they hope will offset our conventional advantages.

If confirmed, I will review relevant classified and unclassified material to fully understand China's military advances.

## *Taiwan*

**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?**

China's military modernization over the last several decades has been executed with a focus of being capable of taking Taiwan by force if necessary and resisting a potential U.S. intervention. While it has made some progress, Taiwan still needs to significantly increase its defense spending and prioritize the acquisition of asymmetric capabilities. If confirmed, I will support the provision of critical U.S. support for Taiwan, particularly assistance that provides asymmetric capabilities that align with a crisis scenario, and pressure Taiwan to urgently increase its defense spending and accelerate reforms.

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

The United States presently maintains its longstanding commitments as outlined in the Taiwan Relations Act, Three Communiqués, and the Six Assurances. If confirmed, I will review our current posture with the Secretary of Defense.

### *The Korean Peninsula*

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

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) poses a clear threat to stability on the Korean Peninsula, in the Indo-Pacific region, and across the globe. It remains intensely focused on expanding its illicit nuclear weapons program and improving its ballistic and cruise missile programs, while expanding its malign cyber activities. The DPRK's longstanding chemical and biological weapons capabilities remain a threat. Its recent deployment of combat forces to Russia is also of concern. DPRK capabilities pose a particular threat to the safety and security of U.S. Allies that host U.S. forces in the region. If confirmed, I will review the latest classified and unclassified briefings on the DPRK threat.

**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?**

Improving missile defense systems, especially for the U.S. Homeland, will be important to countering the growing DPRK threat. We must also seek to stem the growth of DPRK nuclear and missile arsenals. If confirmed, I will review classified and unclassified materials and advise the Secretary if additional steps need to be taken.

**Do you agree that landmines have played a critical role in deterring conflict on the Korean Peninsula? Do you support continuing efforts by DoD to modernize related terrain shaping capabilities?**

If confirmed, I will consult with the Commander of United States Forces Korea and look forward to working with the Committee to address any concerns.

### *India*

**If confirmed, how would you enhance the overall defense relationship between the United States and India? What priorities would you establish?**

As President Trump reaffirmed, the U.S.-India partnership is anchored by a deepening convergence in our strategic interests. Our defense partnership has seen transformative growth through military exercises, defense sales, and strategic dialogue. If confirmed, I would continue to bolster our defense partnership with India through operational coordination, information sharing, and defense industrial and technology cooperation.

## **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.**

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

I understand that the procedures by which DoD receives requests from civil authorities, or qualifying entities, allows for appropriate coordination of the request across DoD. DoD should encourage its partners to, where possible, work with DoD in advance of a formal request to ensure clarity of requirements use of appropriate legal authorities.

**What factors should be considered in determining whether DoD will provide support to a civil authority?**

I understand that all requests for Defense Support of Civil Authorities are evaluated based on: Legality (compliance with the law); Lethality (potential use of lethal force by or against DoD forces); Risk (safety of DoD forces); Cost (including the source of funding and the effect on the DoD budget); Appropriateness (whether providing the requested support is in the interest of the Department); and Readiness (the impact on DoD's ability to perform other primary missions).

## **Transnational Criminal Organizations**

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

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

Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) are responsible for record levels of violence in Mexico and throughout the region. In recent years, regional TCOs have expanded their sources of revenue and leveraged new technology such as drones and artificial intelligence, almost certainly to increase their resilience. This has allowed regional TCOs to amass levels of power that directly threaten local citizens, regional governments, and the United States.

I strongly support the Administration's whole of government approach, including robust Department of Defense involvement, to appropriately prioritize the threat posed by TCOs. The recent designation of six cartels and two transnational gangs as Foreign Terrorist Organizations will help counter TCOs by limiting their financial resources.

If confirmed, I will support the Secretary of Defense in prioritizing this threat, consult with Congress, and make a final recommendation for the way ahead. Regardless of the outcome, we must continue to ensure safety of the homeland.

### **U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM)**

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

The influence and activities of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Russia, and Cuba in the SOUTHCOM AOR are undermining U.S. interests in the region, exploiting critical infrastructure, and threatening hemispheric security. The President and the Secretary have committed to finding ways for the Department of Defense to more actively confront these challenges.

If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary and the Commander of SOUTHCOM to review and recommend additional actions that the Secretary may take to support U.S. national security objectives and defend the homeland, in coordination with other Executive Branch departments and agencies and with partner countries.

**Do you believe these influences threaten hemispheric security and prosperity?**

The malign influence of adversaries, including Russia, Cuba, and the People's Republic of China (PRC), in the Western Hemisphere threatens our homeland. If confirmed, I will ensure DoD is acting on the President's direction to support U.S. national security objectives and defend the homeland.

### ***Detainee Treatment and Guantanamo Bay Naval Station***

**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. I support the standards for detainee treatment in the Army Field Manual on Interrogations, FM 2-22.3, issued in September 2006, and in DoD Directive 2310.01E, DoD Detainee Program, dated August 19, 2014 (Incorporating Change 2, Effective September 18, 2020). Individuals in the custody or control of the U.S. Government may not be subjected to any interrogation technique or approach, or any treatment related to interrogation, that is not authorized by and listed in the Army Field Manual.

**What are your views on the continued use of the detention facility at Guantanamo?**

Guantanamo Bay is the Department's only long-term detention facility for law of war detainees. If confirmed, I will support the continued operations of the detention facility at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, including the provision of additional detention space for high-priority criminal aliens, unless a suitable replacement can be identified. I will also ensure the continued safe, humane, and legal care and treatment of detainees through Joint Task Force – Guantanamo (JTF-GTMO).

*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.**

**What changes, if any, should be made to DoD's counternarcotics strategy and supporting activities?**

The Department needs to ensure it is maximizing its resources and authorities in support of U.S. and foreign law enforcement agencies. The Department should continue to assess how it can best leverage intelligence assets and other capabilities to support these partners' efforts to disrupt and degrade drug-trafficking organizations at their source.

If confirmed, I look forward to receiving classified and unclassified briefings on DoD's counternarcotics strategy and work through any updates that would be needed.

**Corruption and the absence of the rule of law enable the transnational criminal organizations' narcotics trade that contributes to the flow of illegal drugs into the United States.**

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

The primary focus should be on the flow of drugs headed to the United States. However, some drug-trafficking organizations have an increasingly global reach. Working with

partners to combat drug trafficking can help degrade those drug-trafficking organizations responsible for illicit drug flow into the United States.

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

We should assist partner nations in developing capabilities that respond to their specific security challenges. Focusing our limited resources on those countries that are major drug-producing or transit countries creates stability in those countries, improves security within their regions, and makes it less likely that drug-trafficking networks can thrive.

### *Venezuela*

**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?**

I am very concerned about the situation in Venezuela and its potential to create instability across the region. If confirmed, with the Secretary, I will work to ensure the Department is adequately resourcing efforts to deter or defend against any steps Venezuela might take to threaten U.S. interests, including by supporting U.S. Government-wide efforts to strengthen U.S. border security and repatriate illegal migrants.

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

U.S. national security is threatened by the malign activities of Cuba, Iran, the PRC, and Russia, all of whom provide Maduro and his representatives with essential financial and military support. Venezuela's increasing ties with Iran and its reliance on the PRC and Russia for military equipment are deeply concerning. Venezuela regularly sends its personnel to the PRC for training and professional military education. Russia also periodically conducts port calls and naval visits to Venezuela and has flown nuclear-capable bombers to Venezuela.

### **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.**



**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?**

I have not been briefed on the current classified National Defense Strategy, so I cannot accurately assess the strategic environment as it pertains to space. However, if confirmed, with the Secretary, I will ensure the next NDS prioritizes a secure space environment for civilian, commercial, and international partners as part of a broader U.S. space initiative, while also guaranteeing essential capabilities for our military forces.

**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?**

Space plays a critical role in American security, prosperity, and way of life. The PRC and Russia are investing in space capabilities designed to deny our freedom of action and undermine our strategic advantages. If confirmed, I would ensure that the United States pursues a robust space architecture, with a mix of kinetic and non-kinetic capabilities across all domains to protect and defend the Joint Force from hostile uses of space.

**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.**

The space domain continues to become much more contested. In addition to the PRC and Russia, both North Korea and Iran are expanding their space programs and advancing their ballistic missile capabilities. If confirmed, I will support the Secretary’s efforts to assure Joint Force access to space and to counter hostile uses of space.

**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?**

I have not been briefed on the current classified National Defense Strategy, so I cannot discuss its assessment of space or our current preparedness in that domain. If confirmed, I will make certain that the updated strategy adequately addresses space as a crucial area of military operations.

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

The PRC and Russia are developing and fielding counterspace weapons aimed at denying U.S. advantages in space. If confirmed, I will work with the U.S. Space Force, U.S. Space Command, and relevant intelligence agencies and commercial partners to understand the threats to our space systems and restore our deterrence.

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

I believe the United States must develop and maintain a range of kinetic, non-kinetic, space-based, and ground-based space capabilities in order to protect and defend the Joint Force against threats in and from all domains.

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

I believe the United States must develop and maintain a range of kinetic, non-kinetic, space-based, and ground-based space capabilities in order to protect and defend the Joint Force against threats in and from all domains.

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

To remain competitive, the Department must harness the ingenuity, adaptability, and affordability offered by the U.S. commercial space sector. If confirmed, I will prioritize the review of Department policies to understand where greater collaboration may be achieved.

### **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.**

**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?**

DoD's role in defending the Nation from an attack in cyberspace continues to evolve. I understand that DoD partners with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies to protect against and respond to cyber-attacks against the Nation. The Cyber Mission Force (CMF) is primarily charged with defending forward, conducting defense cyber operations abroad, while DHS and law enforcement are lead for homeland security with DoD in support.

If confirmed, I would review the status of the Cyber Mission Force and ensure that DoD is postured appropriately, in partnership with DHS and law enforcement, to protect the Nation from cyber-attacks.

While agencies like DHS and FBI focus on civilian infrastructure and criminal investigations, DoD and the CMF's priority should be defending against cyber threats with strategic or military implications. This includes threats to the defense industrial base, nuclear command and control, and the ability to project power globally. Effective

national cybersecurity demands close partnership between DoD and other entities, and I am committed to fostering this collaboration if I am confirmed.

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

It is my understanding that the published summary of the 2023 Department of Defense Cyber Strategy does not address the role that DoD and the Cyber Mission Force should have in combatting foreign influence operations. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary to prioritize DoD's role in defending the homeland from cyberspace threats.

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

It is my understanding that DoD defends forward by disrupting foreign cyber threats before they can attack U.S. critical infrastructure; supports requests for assistance from Federal civilian agencies or the private sector through appropriate channels; and enables U.S. commercial entities by providing better insights against foreign malicious cyber threats.

**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.**

It is my understanding the question of the "dual hat" leadership arrangement was adjudicated by the previous Secretary of Defense and Director of National Intelligence (DNI), and the arrangement was retained. However, I believe critical relationships such as these should be periodically re-evaluated, and, if confirmed, we will do so.

Proponents of the "dual hat" structure cite operational effectiveness and efficiency, faster decision making, fewer levels of bureaucracy, and lower cost as the National Security Agency and U.S. Cyber Command share many headquarters' functions. Critics of the "dual hat" cite the concentration of authority in one military commander and the associated challenges of proper oversight. They believe that ending the "dual hat" relationship and the appointment of a civilian director at NSA would increase oversight and would allow the leaders of each to concentrate more on the primary mission of their respective organizations.

If confirmed, I will support the Secretary of Defense in resolving these debates, consult with Congress, and make a final recommendation for the way ahead. Regardless of the outcome, we will continue to ensure mission success of both organizations.

**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?**

It is my understanding that while cyberspace operations are the responsibility of a relatively small number of cyber professionals, cyber risk is a challenge that should be shared across the defense enterprise. DoD pledged to take action to foster a culture of cybersecurity and cyber awareness. DoD also stated that it would establish an expectation that senior military and civilian leaders possess a baseline fluency in cybersecurity issues, and it committed to developing, funding, and implementing technical curricula across various levels of professional military and civilian education, emphasizing General Officer and Senior Executive Service leadership courses.

If confirmed, I would assess the effectiveness of these efforts and seek to remedy weaknesses and build on successes.

**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.**

If confirmed, I will support the President and the Secretary in their assessments of whether a specific cyber-attack by a foreign entity constitutes an act of war. Where a cyber-attack on the United States causes significant physical damage, disrupts critical national infrastructure, targets the civilian population, or is carried out with the clear intention to inflict substantial harm on a Nation’s economic or military capabilities, there would be a strong argument that such an attack could be viewed as an act of war.

If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of Defense and the interagency community of interest to review the extent and ramifications of the Salt Typhoon compromise and potential response options.

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

I am aware of the general nature of the Volt Typhoon and Salt Typhoon attacks, but I have not been briefed on classified details. To the extent that cyber actors affiliated with the People’s Republic of China (PRC) can compromise U.S. networks, that is certainly a national security concern and would suggest that U.S. networks currently lack sufficient cybersecurity safeguards. The United States should possess the ability to protect its critical networks from malicious cyber intrusions. If confirmed, I will work within DoD and with interagency partners to determine how best to work with industry to improve cybersecurity of critical infrastructure and provide necessary government responses to adversary activity, as appropriate.

**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?**

I believe that the Cyber Mission Force could benefit greatly from better access to, and assistance from, top technical talent with experience working at private sector technology companies. I applaud recent experiments by organizations like the Defense Innovation Unit to develop solutions to facilitate placing such individuals in military reserve status, allowing them to put their technical skills and knowledge to work in support of U.S. national security.

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

I think DoD should do a much better job of enlisting the talent and expertise of patriotic and talented Americans working at private sector technology companies to upgrade and enhance its capabilities and skills. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of Defense to review our Nation's current classified offensive and defensive cyber operations capabilities and will work with Congress on any recommended solutions.

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

It is my understanding from public reporting that our Cyber Forces have significant capabilities, but the current deterrent posture of the United States with respect to cyber requires further review. I also understand that the 2023 Defense Cyber Strategy emphasizes that military cyber capabilities are most effective when they are combined with other tools of national power. If confirmed, I look forward to receiving classified briefings on this topic to gain a greater understanding of our current cyber deterrent posture and available alternatives to strengthen that posture.

### **U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM)**

**Beginning in FY 2017, successive NDAsAs 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 USSOCOM as running through the ASD(SOLIC) to the Secretary of Defense for issues impacting the readiness and organization of special operations forces.**

**What is your understanding of the Department's progress in implementing the "service secretary-like" responsibilities of the ASD(SOLIC)?**

I am aware of the efforts to institutionalize the service secretary-like responsibilities of the ASD(SO/LIC) and the Secretariat for Special Operations. I understand the criticality of the civilian role in ensuring special operations forces (SOF) are most effectively and efficiently organized, trained, equipped, and resourced. I look forward to conducting a thorough assessment of the progress in implementing this critical civilian-military partnership for the SOF enterprise.

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

Yes. If confirmed, I would fully implement these reforms. I would also ensure these reforms translate into tangible improvements in how we oversee and support special operations forces.

**In your view, does the ASD(SOLIC) require additional authorities and resources, including additional civilian personnel, to administer oversight of special operations forces?**

If confirmed, I look forward to conducting a thorough assessment of current authorities and resources to assure this office has the resources, civilian personnel and authorities it needs to provide effective oversight of special operations forces.

### **Irregular Warfare**

**The Joint Staff's Joint Publication-1 defines "Irregular warfare" as a form of warfare where states and nonstate actors campaign to assure or coerce states or other groups through indirect, non-attributable, or asymmetric activities.**

**What is your understanding of the role and relative importance of irregular warfare in supporting DoD's strategic, operational, and tactical objectives?**

It is my understanding that Irregular Warfare (IW) is critical for the Department's mission to deter adversaries and ensure our Nation's security. IW provides flexible options for countering adversaries, combating terrorism, and stabilizing volatile regions. Unlike traditional warfare, IW leverages indirect, asymmetric approaches like working through foreign partners, shaping narratives, and disrupting enemy networks. This is essential in today's security environment as state and non-state actors increasingly employ tactics blending conventional and irregular means. As DoD advances its understanding and the implementation of IW into its core activities, it is imperative that it considers the role functions such as logistics and medical care will play in the accomplishment of its objectives. IW requires a concerted effort across the entire Joint Enterprise – not just Special Operations Forces.

**If confirmed, what would be your priorities to ensure that DoD is appropriately organized, trained, resourced, and has sufficient authorities to effectively conduct irregular warfare?**

It is my understanding that Irregular Warfare provides a cost-effective and asymmetrical way for our Nation to gain advantages throughout the spectrum of competition and in advance of crisis or conflict. I am committed to ensuring that irregular warfare lines of effort receive sufficient resourcing and that our special operations forces continue to be well-trained and equipped.

If confirmed, I will prioritize: 1) establishing and maintaining intelligence dominance, 2) building resiliency, 3) growing our international and inter-organizational alliances and partnerships, 4) suppressing adversary networks, and 5) building agile IW policies and organizations throughout the DoD components.

**What is your assessment of the use of irregular warfare by China, Russia, Iran, and other adversarial states to undermine the national security interests of the United States and those of our allies and partners?**

It is clear from media reports that the People's Republic of China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran challenge us daily, including through "political warfare" by using their "benign" instruments of national power in a warlike fashion to undermine our national security interests. If confirmed as Deputy Secretary of Defense, I will work with Congress to ensure we have the necessary authorities to address these threats and coordinate with other federal agencies (e.g., DHS, State, Commerce, Treasury) to reverse this paradigm. We will counter our adversaries' irregular warfare efforts and hold them accountable.

*Counterterrorism*

**What is your assessment of the threat to U.S. interests posed by Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, and their affiliates and adherents? Which group, in your view, presents the greatest threat to the United States?**

It is my understanding that despite significant and continuous U.S. efforts to degrade Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, both continue to pose a threat to U.S. interests around the globe. Though the significant degradation of the Islamic State appears to indicate that Al-Qaeda currently possesses a greater capability to threaten U.S. interests, the United States must carefully monitor the impact of the fall of the Assad regime in Syria on the Islamic State's ability to reconstitute.

If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department does not lose sight of the threats posed by either group or their affiliates and adherents, including their ability to threaten the U.S. homeland.

**If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you recommend to the U.S. counterterrorism strategy and DoD's role in supporting it? What metrics would you apply to measure the effectiveness of the strategy?**

If confirmed, I will support the Secretary of Defense in countering terrorism. Countering terrorism is a complex challenge that requires a whole-of-government approach to be effective, and DoD has a key role to play in that fight. We rely on the intelligence community to maintain awareness of the terrorist threats facing the United States. I believe that focusing on countering direct threats to the United States and Americans abroad, while maintaining a capability to develop indications and warnings of how the threat is evolving so that we aren't caught off guard in the future, will effectively balance our resource commitment to this important effort.

## **Military Operations in the Information Environment**

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

It is my understanding that DoD has made recent progress in improving the effectiveness of its operations in the information environment and defending against malign influence, though more work needs to be done. DoD's Strategy for Operations in the Environment in 2023 was an important first step.

I also understand that there are important efforts underway to fully implement oversight and policy authorities provided to the Secretary of Defense's designated Principal Information Operations Advisor (PIOA) in 10 U.S.C. 397. These efforts include strengthening the role of the PIOA-chaired Strategic Information Oversight Board so that the Department can better assess and improve how it is postured to shape the information environment to gain and maintain the U.S. military advantage. Department-level integration and civilian oversight are critical to improving DoD's operations in the information environment.

If confirmed, I will assess opportunities to use the role of Principal Information Operations Advisor to further improve DoD's effectiveness in the information environment and our ability to defend against malign influence.

**Does DoD have sufficient authorities and resources to conduct these operations effectively? If not, what additional authorities and resources would you request, if confirmed?**

I appreciate the support from Congress to ensure DoD maintains the appropriate authorities and resources for operations in the information environment.

If confirmed, I will review DoD's current authorities and resources to determine if any changes are necessary.

**The DoD's organizational structure and approach to Operations in the Information Environment (OIE) has not changed significantly in nearly 25 years, and was largely based on legacy psychological warfare approaches that go back to the Cold War. Do you foresee any need to revisit the organization, doctrine, training and tools for OIE to integrate the lessons we are seeing from our adversaries?**

The information environment has changed considerably in the last 25 years. Technological developments have lowered the barrier for entry, easing the ability of adversary state and non-state actors to spread propaganda to support their ends.



If confirmed, I will review DoD's current organization, doctrine, training and tools to determine if any changes are necessary.

**In your view, are DoD approaches for tools and training in OIE keeping pace with what we are seeing from our adversaries, in particular with regards to new tools like generative artificial intelligence, use of publicly available or commercially available data, and sentiment analysis tools?**

The employment of emerging technology is an essential area of focus. I understand that DoD has struggled to fully leverage the rapidly developing commercial technology that is driving the evolution of our global information environment.

If confirmed, I will review DoD's current use of technology in the information environment, determine what changes are necessary, and explore ways to accelerate the adoption of tools and training to support the DoD information advantage.

**In your experience, where do you see dependencies in DoD's approach to OIE on interagency partners, and do you have suggestions for how to strengthen those relationships and capabilities?**

The global information environment affects everyone. DoD must work with interagency partners when and where appropriate to ensure synchronization and coordination of U.S. messaging.

If confirmed, I will review DoD's current approach to working with interagency partners to ensure they are as productive as possible.

## **U.S. Strategic Command**

### ***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.**

**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?**

I agree with Secretary Hegseth's assessment that China, Russia, and North Korea have significantly expanded and modernized their nuclear force capabilities. These improvements, which include advances in warheads, delivery systems, and command and control systems, pose an increasing threat to the United States and its Allies.

China is expanding its nuclear arsenal at extraordinary speed. For example, China has rapidly increased its total number of nuclear warheads, developed new missile silos for solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), expanded the dual-capable DF-26 intermediate range ballistic missile force, and refitted Type 094 ballistic missile submarines with the longer-range JL-3 submarine-launched ballistic missile. Russia has developed new advanced nuclear weapons like the Sarmat ICBM, Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle, and Kinzhal hypersonic missile. North Korea is expanding its nuclear stockpile and improving miniaturization of warheads and road mobile launch systems.

Our adversaries continue to test their delivery systems and make improvements. Russia and North Korea have announced modification of their nuclear warfighting doctrines. This change by the Russians, combined with improved nuclear force capabilities has increased the potential for employment of tactical nuclear weapons in support of conventional operations in Ukraine.

**Do you agree with the assessment of 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?**

Nuclear deterrence is a central and critical foundation of our Nation’s strategy, and modernization of nuclear forces is a top priority to counter near-peer nuclear states, and rogue regimes who seek to expand their influence through the development of nuclear capabilities.

**Do you agree that a triad of land, air, and sea based nuclear delivery platforms is consistent with an effective deterrent posture in an era of great power competition with Russia and China?**

The three legs of the triad together provide mutually supporting attributes which best maintain strategic stability. It is critical to maintain and field a safe, secure, and effective nuclear triad.

**Do you believe the current program of record is sufficient to support the full modernization of the U.S. nuclear deterrent, including delivery systems, weapons, command and control systems, and infrastructure?**

It is critical to maintain and modernize all three legs of the triad – ICBMs, submarines, and bombers.

If confirmed, I will support the Secretary’s review of the programs of record to ensure it is sufficient to meet the deterrence challenges of the future and mitigate risks during the transition from legacy to modernized systems. As needed, I will direct appropriate adjustments to the programs and make recommendations to the President and the Secretary.

**If confirmed, do you commit to support full funding for efforts to comprehensively modernize the nation’s nuclear deterrent forces and accelerate programs wherever possible?**

I agree nuclear deterrence should remain the top priority of DoD. Maintaining full funding for a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent is much less expensive than fighting a war that we are unable to deter.

If confirmed, I look forward to supporting the Secretary of Defense in any review of the programs of record to ensure they are sufficient to support full modernization of the U.S. nuclear deterrent, direct appropriate adjustments to the programs, and make recommendations to the President.

**If confirmed, how would you ensure that DoD and the National Nuclear Security Administration continue the investments and senior leader attention needed to modernize our nuclear deterrent and avoid age-driven unilateral disarmament?**

As Secretary Hegseth said, the partnership with NNSA is one of DoD’s highest priorities. If confirmed, I look forward to working with them to accelerate production to provide critical nuclear weapons and components to our modernized nuclear delivery platforms and forces, including Columbia Class Submarines, B-21 bombers, and Sentinel ICBMs.

**The 2018 Nuclear Posture Review supported the development of the submarine launched cruise missile for regional deterrence stating that “in the near-term, the United States will modify a small number of existing SLBM warheads to provide a low-yield option, and in the longer term, pursue a modern nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM).” Congress has supported the authorization and funding associated with this endeavor.**

**If confirmed, will you support the recommendation of the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review?**

I understand that DoD and the Navy are complying with the FY24 NDAA requirement to establish and develop a Sea-Launched Nuclear Capable Cruise Missile (SLCM-N) program. If confirmed, I will review the SLCM-N program, and will work with others in the Department, Congress, and our industry partners to implement the law and ensure we have a program that delivers the capabilities needed to maintain credible deterrence in the evolving security environment.

***The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and the Nuclear Weapons Council (NWC)***

**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.**

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

I support the recapitalization and revitalization of NNSA infrastructure for improved and accelerated design, manufacture, and sustainment of the nuclear weapons stockpile to move faster and be more responsive to warfighter and strategic requirements. I will work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition & Sustainment, the Deputy Secretary of Energy, the NNSA Administrator, the Director of the Office of Management & Budget, and other agency stakeholders to strike the right balance of cost, schedule, and performance for our nuclear modernization programs among the full range of our defense investments.

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

Yes. The UK is a vital partner and our closest collaborator in nuclear security and deterrence.

**What is your understanding of the role of the Deputy Secretary of Defense relative to the NWC’s and NNSA’s responsibility for maintaining the nation’s nuclear weapons stockpile? How would you execute your duties vis-à-vis this role, if confirmed?**

The Deputy Secretary of Defense supports the Secretary of Defense to deliver warfighter weapons requirements through the NWC to the NNSA, which is resourced and responsible for modernizing and maintaining the safe, secure, and reliable nuclear stockpile. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Secretary Hegseth, the Secretary of Energy, and the NNSA Administrator to meet the Nation’s requirements.

**If confirmed, will you commit to working with the Deputy Secretary of Energy, the Administrator of the NNSA, and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget to ensure that annual budgets adequately support the modernization and sustainment of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile?**

Nuclear deterrence is the top priority for DoD. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Deputy Secretary of Energy, the Administrator of the NNSA, the Director of the Office of Management & Budget, and other agency stakeholders to support the mission.

*Arms Control*

**Arms control, when effective and verifiable, has been a valuable tool for managing competition and international security concerns. In contrast, unverifiable arms control regimes observed by only one party can generate great instability.**

**Do you believe that further reductions should be taken only within the context of a formal, verifiable arms control agreement with Russia, China and other nuclear-armed powers?**

The United States should pursue arms control when it is in U.S. interests to do so. Specifically, we should seek arms control agreements that enhance U.S. security and are verifiable. Currently neither PRC nor most Russian nuclear forces are constrained in any meaningful way by arms control agreements. Both the PRC and Russia have rebuffed U.S. efforts to engage in meaningful risk reduction talks since 2020. The most effective thing the Department of Defense can do to prepare itself for any future dialogue on arms control is to build a modern nuclear triad that deters conflict and assures U.S. partners and Allies.

**Do you believe that the United States should consider accepting limitations on its missile defense, cyber, or conventional power projection capabilities in order to obtain an agreement with Russia or China on nuclear weapons reductions?**

I do not believe we should limit U.S. options in any future negotiation with Russia or the PRC by prematurely imposing limitations, but instead remain open to all negotiable conditions that maximize our ability to protect U.S. interests and defend the Nation, deter our adversaries, and assure our Allies and partners.

### *Missile Defense*

**Rapidly growing Russian, Chinese, North Korean, and Iranian missile arsenals are outpacing United States' capabilities for defeating these threats to the homeland, allies, and U.S. forces abroad.**

**If confirmed as Deputy Secretary of Defense, what would be your priorities for U.S. missile defense capabilities for the homeland?**

If confirmed, my priority will be to deliver on the President's Executive Order 14186 issued on January 27 calling for the development and fielding of a next generation missile defense shield for America.

### **Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program**

**The CTR Program historically focused on accounting for, securing, and eliminating Cold War era weapons of mass destruction and materials in the states of the former Soviet Union. As part of its expansion to other countries, the CTR Program includes biological weapons and capabilities as well as biological surveillance and early warning and encouraging the development of capabilities to reduce proliferation threats.**

**In your view, how could coordination of the CTR Program across U.S. Government agencies that engage in threat reduction efforts (i.e., the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, and the State Department) be improved?**

The DoD CTR Program, like other programs that support partner capabilities, needs a careful and thorough review and a cost-benefit analysis to ensure its activities fully support its core counter weapons of mass destruction (WMD) mission. Like all DoD programs, the CTR Program should directly contribute to a lethal and effective fighting force and advance the Nation's priorities as established in the National Defense Strategy.

If confirmed, I will make clear my expectation – across the Department and for all programs, including the DoD CTR Program – that we need to work to maintain and improve coordination across the Federal Government. Regular engagement is invaluable to align resources and ensure efficiency.

### **Air Force Issues**

**It has been stated the Air Force is too small and too old to do what the nation asks of it.**

**Do you agree with this statement?**

The Air Force fleet is the oldest and smallest in the history of the Air Force, and my understanding is that the analysis indicates that to counter the pacing threat we need to invest in a family of medium- and long-range penetrating airframes coupled with modern munitions, human-machine teaming, and a hardened warfighting network. I believe the Air Force has made meaningful steps in that direction, but while there has been progress toward modernizing the force, the tension between near term readiness and readiness for the future fight remains a challenge due to fiscal realities.

Additionally, I do believe the requirements of the Air Force exceed its capacity to fulfill them. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Department of the Air Force (DAF) leadership and Congress to fully understand and address these challenges.

**If confirmed, where do you see the greatest risk in capability and capacity for the Air Force and what actions would you take or direct to mitigate those risks?**

It is my understanding that the Department of Air Force (DAF) accepted risk in modernization accounts to fund minimum-essential readiness in foundational accounts. Meanwhile, our strategic competitors are fielding their advanced platforms and developing systems that target our vulnerabilities. If confirmed, I commit to working with Congress to address DAF risks and deter our most consequential competitors.

**The Air Force is on record as needing to purchase a minimum of 72 fighter aircraft per year to maintain requisite force structure. In your opinion, what is the optimum**

**mix of 4th and 5th generation aircraft required to meet the threat outlined in the 2022 NDS?**

I believe our fighter inventory must increase and, consequently, the Air Force needs a mix of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generation aircraft to balance capability and affordability. I have not received any classified briefings on this subject, but, if confirmed, I will work with the Joint Staff, combatant commands and the Air Force to assess the current capability and underlying combat air requirements.

**What are your views on continuing development and fielding of the Next Generation Air Dominance program, the Air Force's sixth generation fighter?**

I have not received classified briefings on this subject, but, if confirmed, I look forward to doing a full review of the details and status of the NGAD program, to include the findings of the Air Force's recent analysis of the mission relevance of the NGAD.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with Department leadership and Congress to develop a balanced and affordable plan to grow the tactical fighter aircraft fleet that is prepared to win against a peer adversary.

**The follow-on modernization of the F-35 is slated to bring key warfighting capabilities to the Air Force, but the schedule and budget of this modernization program remain in flux.**

**Are you confident in the affordability and executability of the Department's plan for Block 4 Continuous Capability Development and Delivery (C2D2)?**

It is my understanding the F-35 Program requires continued investment in Block 4 modernization to retain a tactical advantage against key competitors and to enable Combatant Commanders to achieve success in a future high-end fight.

If confirmed, I will review the details and status of F-35 modernization, including the acquisition strategy for Block 4, to achieve a balance of cost and timely delivery of required capabilities to the warfighter.

**Given the importance of extending the range of U.S. aircraft, what do you believe to be the overall tanker requirement for the Air Force and at what rate and on what schedule must the Air Force procure KC-46 to be able to meet that requirement?**

The tanker fleet is a core element of our overall military strength. It is essential to U.S. power projection, Homeland Defense, strategic deterrence, global strike, rapid global mobility, and coordinated Joint Force and coalition efforts. I recognize the Department of the Air Force needs a total aircraft inventory that gives them the needed flexibility to manage tanker resources as dictated by the environment while investing in the necessary modernization to meet warfighting demands in the future. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Joint Staff, the Air Force, and Congress to review tanker fleet

requirements and procurement strategy to maintain a competitive edge in a highly contested environment.

**Do you agree with the Air Force approach of divesting aircraft-based command and control and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities now and shifting reliance to space-based capabilities in the future? Please explain your answer.**

It is my understanding that the Department of the Air Force (DAF) is divesting components of its airborne command and control (C2) and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) fleets to transition to more advanced and survivable capabilities in both domains. When combined, air and space-based capabilities provide a flexible and complimentary force to defend America and prevail in any conflict. If confirmed, I look forward to better assessing the capabilities needed in both the air and space domains.

## **Army Issues**

### ***Army Modernization Priorities***

**The Army is in the midst of a major modernization period focusing on six modernization priorities: long range precision fires, next generation combat vehicle, future vertical lift, air and missile defense, network and soldier lethality. The Army is also establishing a path for more continuous upgrades to rapidly evolving technologies under its Transformation in Contact initiative.**

**In your view, what are the most critical Army modernization priorities, particularly in the context of countering multiple simultaneous global threats?**

Building peace through strength will require that the Army modernize to address the threats facing our Nation today and into the future. I understand that the Army's Transformation in Contact initiative prioritizes efforts such as Next Generation Command and Control and Long-Range Precision Fires. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Army, and all the Services, to guarantee that we deliver the American people a warfighting force which will create peace through strength.

**How would you evaluate the importance of Army efforts in the Indo-Pacific, including the Army's activation of Multi-Domain Task Forces, to conduct cross-domain operations in support of the Joint Force?**

Achieving peace through strength will require DoD to provide the right mix of capabilities in the Indo-Pacific and across the globe. I understand that the Army's Multi-Domain Task Forces bring critical cross-domain capabilities to the Force. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Army, and all the Services, to guarantee that we deliver the American people a warfighting force which will create peace through strength.



## *Army Preparedness for the Pacific*

**Army prepositioned stocks remain a cornerstone of the Army ability to project power. Army leaders have publicly supported expanding land-based equipment packages in the Indo-Pacific region to reduce transit times and avoid logistical delays.**

**What are your thoughts of the value of land-basing versus maintaining stocks afloat?**

While I am outside the Department, I do not have the information to fully evaluate the right mix of afloat and land-based stocks. However, I understand that, in many cases, land-based equipment may be cheaper to maintain, more responsive to the point of need and less vulnerable to peer and near-peer adversaries than equipment sets afloat. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Army, and all the Services, to guarantee that we deliver the American people a warfighting force which will create peace through strength.

**What additional capabilities should be prepositioned in INDOPACOM?**

While I am outside the Department, I do not have sufficient information to identify additional capabilities which must be prepositioned in INDOPACOM. However, if confirmed, I will commit to working with the Army, and all the Services, to make sure that America has the right capabilities to deliver peace through strength.

**Army watercraft are a discreet but important tool to facilitate contested operations in a maritime environment. A decision in 2018 and since reversed resulted in significant delay in maintaining and modernizing the Army's watercraft fleet.**

**How would you prioritize capabilities like Army watercraft readiness, that are critical to intratheater logistics in a contested environment?**

The Army is critical to providing the intratheater logistics that will be necessary to win in a contested environment. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Army, and all the Services, to prioritize the efforts which will guarantee intratheater mobility and achieve peace through strength.

## *Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD)*

**In your view, are the roles and responsibilities for Army Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) appropriately assigned across the defense services and agencies?**

It is my understanding that the Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) system involves stakeholders across the Department of Defense. Army IAMD is a critical part of our defense approach, and President Trump recognizes the importance of IAMD through his Iron Dome for America Executive Order. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary

of Defense and across the Department to insure IAMD responsibilities are assigned in a manner that best supports mission success.

**If confirmed, how would you ensure the Military Services make the investments required to fulfill their IAMD responsibilities, including for base defense? How would you ensure effective integration of the Services' current capabilities, as well as of the capabilities each is separately developing?**

It is my understanding the IAMD system is a complex architecture that involves collaboration with other defense agencies and services, which contribute their own sensors and data into the overall system. While I am outside the Department, I do not have access to the information necessary to fully evaluate the whole system but, if confirmed, I will work with all stakeholders to fully integrate our capabilities and to insure execution of President Trump's Executive Order on Iron Dome for America.

**The Army serves as the Department's executive agent for the Joint Counter Small Unmanned Aerial Systems Office (JCO), and has made progress demonstrating, testing, and advancing effective counter small unmanned aerial systems (C-sUAS) capabilities for the Joint Force.**

**If confirmed, would you support continuation of the JCO effort? How would you prioritize and focus efforts across DoD to counter larger UAS?**

Rebuilding lethality requires effective counter small unmanned aerial systems capabilities. While I am outside the Department, I do not have sufficient information to evaluate the JCO and its place in a cross-Department effort. If confirmed, I will work with Department leaders, and with Congress, to ensure the warfighters have the necessary tools and technologies to counter UAS and protect our assets at home and abroad.

## **Navy and Marine Corps Issues**

### ***Recapitalizing the Fleet***

**Despite the Navy's stated requirement for at least 381 ships, it is currently operating with approximately 296 battle force ships.**

**Do you consider the Fiscal Year 2025 shipbuilding plan, which reaches the policy goal of 355 ships only in 2038, to be acceptable? How would you accelerate the number of ships delivered to the United States Navy?**

I have read the Navy's FY25 shipbuilding plan, which outlines its perspective on the future battle force with a timeline to achieve a 355 ship Navy in 2038 given current workforce and industrial base capability and capacity. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Navy, USD(A&S), Congress, and industry to continue ongoing efforts directed on improving productivity and workforce development, as well as developing new

initiatives focused on the shipbuilding supply chain, that could open windows of opportunity to accelerate shipbuilding profiles.

**The Navy’s FY 2025 shipbuilding plan will significantly reduce the number of battle force ships and vertical launch systems over the course of the next five years.**

**How would you mitigate the impacts of this reduced capacity, or how would you plan to retain or grow the Navy’s capacity?**

I understand the number of the Navy’s vertical launch systems is expected to decrease based on the FY25 shipbuilding plan. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Navy to better understand current fleet capabilities, and how extensions of DDG 51 FLT I ships and the delivery of DDG 51 FLT III ships and SSNs with Vertical Payload Modules, will meet the Navy’s needs.

### *Nuclear Submarines*

**Navy leaders have testified that the *Columbia*-class program, the Department of the Navy’s top acquisition priority, will require significant investment and will result in equivalent reductions of other programs in the Navy budget, if a higher Navy topline or outside funding is not provided.**

**What would you do to ensure the Navy and industry reaches the two Virginia-class and one Columbia-class submarine goal per year requirement by 2028 while keeping other Navy priorities on track?**

A robust shipbuilding industrial base is critical to producing the ships our Navy and Nation requires. If confirmed, I will work closely with Navy and industry to prioritize efficient investment in the shipbuilding industrial base while minimizing impacts to other Navy priorities. This will include developing the skilled workforce and updating the critical infrastructure necessary to achieve the two Virginia-class and one Columbia-class per year construction goal. Additionally, I will work with the Navy and USD(A&S) to refine acquisition and contract strategies, ensuring that these strategies incentivize our industry partners to delivery these vessels on time and at budget.

### *Hybrid Fleet*

**In Navigation Plan 2024, the Chief of Naval Operations made “scale robotic and autonomous systems to integrate more platforms at speed” a top priority.**

**Do you support the transition to a hybrid fleet of manned and unmanned vessels, and if so, what would you do to achieve a successful transition?**

Yes. I support the transition to a hybrid fleet of manned and unmanned vessels. This evolution is crucial for increasing our capacity and augmenting our operational forces with new/novel technologies that will provide both lethal and non-lethal capabilities. If

confirmed, I will prioritize our efforts across our Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, and Facilities (DOTMLPF) and advocate for changes that will capitalize on the pace of which technology is changing while ensuring robust cybersecurity measures to safeguard all of our capabilities.

If confirmed, I will advocate for the creation of a Hybrid ecosystem alongside our Allies and partners in order to test our doctrine and sustainment requirements necessary to ensure seamless integration and maximize “scaling” of maritime capability. Additionally, I would advocate for interoperability standards and foster collaboration with industry. By focusing on these areas, we can create a resilient and adaptive naval force capable of meeting future challenges effectively.

### ***Military Sealift Command***

**DoD announced that it will retire 17 logistics and support vessels due to a lack of civilian mariners.**

**What should DoD and the Navy do to increase the availability of civilian mariners? In your view, would there be opportunities to work with other agencies to ensure that DoD can meet its logistical requirements?**

I understand that DoD and the Navy are working with the Military Sealift Command to expand outreach efforts to improve the civilian mariner talent pipeline. In my opinion, engagements with State maritime academies will likely strengthen partnerships that will increase the number of maritime academy graduates into the civilian mariner population. Additionally, collaboration with the maritime industry to identify talent management best practices and efforts to expand compensation incentives may improve the retention of civilian mariners.

### ***Naval Aviation***

**What are your views on the current status of the naval aviation enterprise?**

In my opinion, the Naval Aviation Enterprise (NAE) faces opportunities and challenges as it seeks to innovate, adapt to new strategic priorities, and navigate fiscal constraints. Naval aviation is central to modern naval operations and U.S. Navy’s integrated contributions to U.S. Joint war fighting capability. Naval aviation continues to evolve, though, as it seeks to counter peer threats like China, which seeks to directly confront the advantage our Navy and naval aviation provide by fielding advanced anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities.

Emphasizing and investing in long-range precision strike, coordinated, flexible responses, and ensuring carrier air wings remain lethal and effective in contested environments will maintain the Navy’s strategic dominance across the globe. To face challenges in aircraft readiness, it is imperative that the Navy continue to balance a sustainable, readiness-focused fleet with the procurement of newer platforms. Additionally, retaining skilled

aviators and maintainers amid high operational tempos and resourcing challenges, with effective training and readiness, must remain a focus.

**If confirmed, how will you ensure that the Navy’s fighter fleet is able to modernize to meet the Chinese threat?**

The future carrier air wing (CVW) must harness a revitalized aviation/weapons industrial base to be more lethal, networked, and autonomous in its role to provide critical battlespace awareness, sea control, long-ranged fires, and air superiority for the Joint Force. We need to ensure that it integrates advanced sensors, can employ advanced weapons capabilities, and has the ability to operate in increasingly contested environments.

It is my understanding that the Navy is coordinating with U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Air Force in tri-service development of collaborative combat aircraft—or “CCA”—that will be additive unmanned and autonomous capability to our manned fighter fleet, increasing the mass and complexity that our adversaries will face if they choose to confront us in combat.

If confirmed, I will work with the OSD staff, Joint Staff, combatant commands, and Navy to assess relevant threats and review combat capabilities to ensure they meet operational needs.

### ***Marine Corps Modernization***

**The Marine Corps modernization efforts center on a reorientation toward amphibious warfare and improved integration with the naval force. Capability development and experimentation focus on contested maritime operations.**

**What is your understanding of the Force Design plans of the Marine Corps?**

It is my understanding that the Marine Corps Force Design is an overarching plan to deter and win against the pacing threat through innovative formations, equipment, and operating concepts. I understand the Marine Corps has made significant progress modernizing over the past four and a half years, and this ongoing modernization effort was self-funded by the Marine Corps by making hard choices to divest legacy systems and invest in systems which provide an asymmetric advantage.

**If confirmed, what changes to the Marine Corps or to support from the joint forces would you recommend?**

It is my understanding that the Marine Corps has undergone transformational change over the last five years, optimizing force structure while remaining expeditionary, efficient, and lethal. The relevance of Marine Corps formations against the pacing challenge remains a measure of effectiveness, and their modernization efforts ensure the

Commandant continues to provide ready forces that meet Combatant Commander requirements.

If confirmed, I will work with the OSD staff, Joint Staff, combatant commands, and Department of Navy leadership to ensure the Marine Corps can sustain power projection while maintaining the flexibility to respond to evolving threats.

**The Marine Corps also serves as one of the Nation's primary reaction forces, particularly in response to noncombatant evacuation operations and natural disasters.**

**Are you comfortable with the Marine Corps' current preparedness to execute these missions? Please explain your answer.**

I understand the Marine Corps maintains a high state of readiness for non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO) and disaster relief missions, emphasizing the critical role of logistics. General Eric M. Smith, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, has highlighted the importance of a continuous presence of ARG/MEUs sortieing forward from both U.S. coasts and Japan. This strategic positioning ensures rapid response capabilities, as crises requiring evacuations or immediate assistance can arise unpredictably. The Marine Corps commitment to balancing crisis response with modernization efforts further enhances its logistical preparedness.

By integrating naval mobility and maintaining forward-deployed units, the Marine Corps ensures it can effectively support a range of missions, from humanitarian assistance to full-scale combat operations. Overall, the Marine Corps' forward posture and naval integration capabilities enable it to respond swiftly and effectively to a range of military operations.

## **Reform of DoD Business Operations and Decision-Making Processes**

### ***Digital Modernization***

**The Department expends significant resources on information technology and related services, yet remains highly reliant on slow legacy systems and enterprise infrastructure, and on personnel intensive workarounds for critical operating functions such as personnel, financial management, logistics, and acquisition. Not surprisingly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, DoD struggled to enable the total force to work remotely in a persistent and secure fashion, incurring health and safety risks that should not have been necessary had the Department not repeatedly deferred investments in digital modernization initiatives.**

**If confirmed, what steps would you take to prioritize and resource digital modernization initiatives such as secure enterprise-wide cloud, teamwork, and collaboration tools, as well as senior leader decision support initiatives like advanced analytic capabilities (ADVANA)?**

Digital modernization is critical to ensure our warfighters maintain decision advantage, to improve workforce productivity, and to spend tax dollars responsibly as demonstrated by a clean Department-wide audit. If confirmed, I will make digital transformation a priority.

To drive progress on these issues, I will leverage the authorities and resources of the Department, including those of the Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Officer and the Chief Information Officer, to accelerate the appropriate use of industry software and data management best practices to reduce technical debt and meet the Department's priorities in command and control, enterprise analytics, financial management, and workforce productivity. From my time in the private sector, I have seen such best practices for digital transformation and, if confirmed, will be committed to applying these practices in the Department to meet our priority objectives.

**If confirmed, how would you ensure a broader use of modern management tools and systems that you would seek to implement at the Department of Defense, if confirmed?**

The Department's adoption of modern management tools and systems is essential to meet the President's priorities for a clean Department-wide audit, greater management efficiency, and more lethal warfighting effects. If confirmed, I would accelerate data-driven decision making and outcome-based performance management in DoD, and mandate the enhancement, interoperability, and broader use of tools, like the Advancing Analytics (Advana) enterprise data and analytics platform, to inform senior leader decision making.

If confirmed, I would also use best of breed commercial technologies, implement best practices for software development, and mandate data sharing to ensure DoD systems can share data with those who require its insights. In addition, I would ensure DoD is fully capitalizing on the benefits of artificial intelligence to advance the Department's priorities, such as the audit. Finally, if confirmed, I would drive performance targets and monitor progress through the Department's Strategic Management Plan (SMP), ensuring that our work here is transparent to our Nation's taxpayers.

### ***Management reform***

**The Department of Defense is one of the most complex organizations in the federal government. To help with oversight and management, Congress has mandated tools including the Strategic Management Plan and the defense management framework codified in title 10, U.S. Code, 125a. In addition, the FY2025 NDAA formally established the position of the Performance Improvement Officer to help the Department with forward-looking business transformation efforts.**

**Based on your experience, how do you recommend using these tools to improve management discipline in the Department to gain greater efficiency and effectiveness from DoD initiatives?**

I have recognized throughout my decades of experience in the private sector that management discipline is crucial for improving a business's efficiency and effectiveness. This is done by establishing clear expectations and requirements, enforcing standards, and promoting accountability.

If confirmed, I welcome the opportunity to leverage the tools Congress provided to cut unnecessary bureaucracy and streamline processes, which will ultimately make the military stronger and more lethal.

**Do you have recommendations for effectively managing DoD operations?**

I understand the U.S. Congress has provided the Department with tools to improve DoD's management discipline in and across the defense enterprise (including as recently as December 2024). If confirmed, I look forward to understanding and applying all available tools to improve DoD's management discipline, including through the responsibilities given to the DoD Performance Improvement Officer (PIO).

Transparency and accountability are essential to improve management discipline in the Department, or anywhere else. These will be priorities, if confirmed. In my experience, data-informed analytics can improve the alignment of strategy to resources; and help track critical resource execution in large organizations. I will look for ways to drive improved performance through processes, resource execution, and accountability. We owe our warfighters efficient and effective resource alignment for key programs and results-driven processes.

**DoD must respond to warfighting needs and unexpected contingency operations, A policy that works well in a peacetime environment may be ill-suited to the exigencies of warfighting.**

**Based on your experience, how do you consider and evaluate the tradeoffs between efficiency and warfighting necessity, and how do you anticipate integrating that into DoD decision making processes?**

The Secretary has said the ultimate test for everything in the Department of Defense is lethality. If confirmed, my priority will be to meet the President's vision and Secretary's direction to ensure we deliver the American people a warfighting force which will create peace through strength. Increased efficiency and accountability are core elements to make sure visions are achieved.

**What role do you see the Deputy's Management Action Group (DMAG) in supporting your management processes? Do you have any recommendations for how the DMAG can be leveraged differently than how it has been used in the past?**

My view is that the Department can and should produce both efficiency and necessary warfighting capabilities. Warfighting effectiveness evaluations will be critical to



understanding how much capability to pursue. The priority level of a mission and the level of threat to that mission will also be important factors in tradeoff decisions. If confirmed, I will require that decision-making processes appropriately consider risk and do so with strong analytic foundations.

If confirmed, I intend to use any management forum to drive outcomes for the country and to ensure that I have a full understanding of the risks that should be considered in any decision brought to the forum, and I look forward to using such forums to rapidly advance DoD's warfighting effectiveness and make its business processes more efficient.

### **DoD Auditability**

**Since 1995, DoD's financial management has been on the Government Accountability Office's High-Risk List, identified as vulnerable to fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement. Over the past several years, DoD undertook a department-wide financial audit, despite not being audit-ready, and has made significant progress toward auditability. The Department is now targeting December 31, 2028 to achieve an unmodified or clean opinion.**

**If confirmed, what steps would you take to maintain the significant momentum achieved in auditability over the past several years at the Department of Defense?**

The December 31, 2028, clean audit opinion deadline, set in law, means DoD has less than four fiscal years remaining to earn an unmodified opinion. Secretary Hegseth has already deemed audit as a priority. If confirmed, one of my first actions will be to ensure existing audit roadmaps and remediation priorities still make sense toward achieving accelerated audit progress. Whether they are sufficient or need to be adjusted, if confirmed, I would commit myself to rigorous oversight of those efforts to drive significant and continuous progress to ensure everyone who spends a dollar in DoD contributes to our clean audit requirement. All resource owners, not just the financial management community, must be held accountable for swift, meaningful progress toward this goal.

**If confirmed, what specific actions would you take or direct to achieve better outcomes than have past initiatives intended to improve DoD auditability?**

In line with what the Government Accountability Office (GAO), Congress, and other auditors have observed, I believe much of DoD's audit roadblocks stem from its own complexities, one of which is the burdensome number of outdated, unauditable, disparate financial, logistics, and contract writing systems that hinder rapid decision-making across the Department. Systems stove piping has led to too many business and financial systems. These should be consolidated so that processes are simplified, internal controls improved, and data standardized, all leading to auditability. If confirmed, I would rapidly speed up the shutdown of legacy systems that only serve niche requirements, while leveraging cutting-edge technology to increase efficiencies, accountability and the ability

for DoD to achieve a clean audit opinion. This is the sure way to facilitate audit remediation, save money, bring greater cybersecurity, implement single source data for enhanced decision making, and move the audit needle.

**How does the DoD audit contribute to operational readiness, in your view?**

Many naively believe audit is a backroom function, but that couldn't be further from the truth. To pass an audit, you must account for everything you own or owe – whether billets, bullets, bases, pay, planes, and ships – and be able to explain the resource's location, its condition, and its value. In fiscal year 2024, DoD owned \$4.1 trillion in assets and held \$4.3 trillion in liabilities. That is an amazing amount of resources and responsibility, all of which exists to ensure the defense of our Nation. The by-products of audit – accountability, strengthened controls, common data pictures, clean single source data, and better analytic tools -- naturally lead our commanders and leaders to better insights and decision making. That is how audit is an enabler to increasing operational readiness.

**Achieving a clean financial audit is massive undertaking for the Department. Do you have recommendations for how to improve that process to make it less costly and more efficient?**

I am very respectful of auditor independence, but I don't believe the burden of audit is all on the auditee. Auditors and other stakeholders also bear responsibility to ensure audits are conducted efficiently and effectively. For example, the DoD OIG is DoD's overall financial statement auditor, but both it and the GAO ought to be ensuring their own independently conducted program audits build toward a comprehensive portfolio of audits that together lead to comprehensive insight. Like those being audited, auditors need to ensure everything they do is adding value to the overall effort to get DoD audited. They need to make sure there is no redundancy between audits, that information sought can't be obtained through more efficient means or from what's already been provided, and that timelines can expand and contract to get DoD's complex audit areas fully vetted. They expanded the timeline for the Marine Corps audit and it was a success. More importantly, auditors should be funded to have the capacity to fully audit. Likewise, we need to be thinking about technology changes that will make audit less manual, and more automated in ways that make sense and give confidence in test results.

**In your view, are there lessons that can be learned beyond the goal of a clean audit opinion? Based on your experience, do you anticipate operationalizing any intermediate lessons from the audit into the DoD's overall management reform objectives?**

In my view, audit should never only be about the opinion. Rather, leaders should view audits as enduring opportunities to constantly seek improvements. Use the audit to pinpoint areas for enhancement and then do just that. Use the audit to build, leverage, and expand analytic tools and grow workforce capability and capacity. I understand that DoD audit needs were really the genesis for ADVANA, its central data repository that

now tracks and supports everything from war efforts to humanitarian relief. The same goes for using the audit to force modern technology, such as implementing AI warehousing and AI budget formulation. Likewise, set the tone-from-the-top and then do what you say you're going to do. This is exactly what the Marine Corps did to get its first clean opinion. It's also what Secretary Hegseth is doing – setting the tone-from-the-top by vocally making audit a priority with urgency and applying this urgency to a mandate for reform.

## **Acquisition Management**

### ***Acquisition Reform***

**Recent NDAs have enacted sweeping reforms to the Department's acquisition process, including introducing new acquisition flexibilities and delegating significant acquisition authority to the Services.**

**In your view, has the Department successfully adopted the flexibilities provided in the Adaptive Acquisition Framework? If not, what would you do to improve the adoption of rapid acquisition procedures to bring innovation into the Department?**

Congress has given the Department of Defense authorities and flexibility to acquire capabilities at speed and scale through the Adaptive Acquisition Framework. If confirmed, I will work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment and the Military Departments to ensure the Department of Defense is effectively utilizing these authorities to support our warfighters. If I identify that the Department needs to do more to use these authorities, then I will work to make sure that the Department implements these reforms and fully leverages all authorities provided by Congress.

**How would you seek to balance the need to rapidly acquire and field innovative systems while ensuring acquisition programs stay on budget and schedule?**

Our warfighters need the best capabilities to deter and defeat our adversaries in conflict. It is my understanding that Congress has given the Department the authorities to acquire and field innovative capabilities at speed and scale. If confirmed, I will work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment and other Department stakeholders to ensure we are providing proper oversight of acquisition programs, so they are staying on budget and schedule.

**Civilian control of the acquisition system has been a cornerstone of the post-World War Two acquisition system. What are your personal views on the principle of civilian control of the defense acquisition system?**

A strong acquisition workforce is needed to ensure our warfighters are getting the best systems at speed and scale. Strong civilian leadership is needed to support the workforce

in delivering the capabilities to the warfighters. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of Defense to lead the Department and civilian experts to ensure the acquisition workforce is a good steward of taxpayer dollars and delivering the best capabilities to deter and defeat our adversaries.

### *Requirements*

**The Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act required the Joint Staff to take a clean-sheet approach to the requirements process and the Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act required the Secretary of Defense to establish an advisory panel on reforming the requirements process.**

**What recommendations would you make to the requirements process to make it more adaptive to changes in threats and technologies?**

Too often, DoD creates inflexible and gold-plated requirements. Our warfighting requirements are and should be at the center of how the Department drives and shapes capability development. If confirmed, I will work to fully implement the direction from the FY2025 NDAA and establish an advisory panel on reforming the requirements process in coordination with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment and the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Department's entire acquisition process, including requirements, resourcing, and procurement, needs to focus on solving warfighting problems and delivering the capabilities they need to be the most lethal and effective force. The Department needs a process that embraces strategic thinking, focuses on warfighting needs, and unleashes our warfighting potential.

**What role do you see for the Joint Staff versus the military services in the requirements process?**

The Joint Staff has provided leadership and collaboration in partnership with the military services and the combatant commands in the development and validation of military requirements within the current system. The Joint Staff also has analytical capacity utilizing data and support from the military services that will need to be relied upon to improve our processes and shape the future of the Joint Force. It is my expectation that this partnership will continue with appropriate civilian input.

### *Defense Industrial Base*

**In recent years, Congress, industry, and DoD have increasingly expressed concerns about the health of the defense industrial base and its ability to reliably meet defense needs. The FY2021 NDAA sought to address these issues, in part, by establishing an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy. In 2022, the Department of Defense released the National Defense Industrial Strategy (NDIS), and in 2024 the NDIS Implementation Plan was published.**

**In your view, does the published NDIS and NDIS-Implementation Plan address the**

**most significant challenges facing the defense industrial base? How would you address these challenges any differently, if confirmed?**

I understand that the National Defense Industrial Strategy and its implementation plan have been designed to address the top industrial base challenges collectively identified across DoD, Congress, and Industry. If confirmed, I will be committed to addressing these challenges to our Defense Industrial Base and adapting as we manage new threats, Presidential orders, and updated industry inputs. I will work across the Department to ensure that we resource these priorities, with a focus on delivering expanded capability and capacity to accelerate deliveries to the warfighter.

**What steps should the Department take to increase the overall production capacity of the defense industrial base?**

Increasing the overall production capacity of the defense and organic industrial base is paramount as we reduce our reliance on adversarial nations and increase our domestic supply chain resilience. I understand that the NDIS lays out mechanisms to increase production capacity, including incentivizing industry by investing in extra capacity, and broadening the supplier base by investing in new production methods. If confirmed, I will prioritize efforts to strengthen our industrial base and support the warfighter.

**What steps should the Department take—on its own or as part of a whole-of-government approach—to increase domestic and allied industrial capacity and reduce reliance on suppliers in China?**

Reducing reliance on adversarial nations, particularly PRC sources, is a critical effort to achieving peace through strength. Proactively developing, growing, and sustaining multiple and redundant production lines across U.S. and allied sources is imperative for the United States to ensure necessary production capability and capacity while mitigating exposure to supply disruptions. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment to prioritize efforts to reduce our reliance on suppliers from China, or any other adversaries.

**Given the need to ensure fair competition within the defense industrial base, how would you ensure your dealings with the defense industrial base are free from potential conflicts of interest?**

I am committed to the highest ethical standards and, if confirmed, I will retain no investments which may lead to a potential conflict of interest.

### **Test and Evaluation**

**A natural tension exists between the goals of major defense acquisition programs to reduce cost and accelerate schedule and the need to ensure performance meets requirements and specifications—the objective of the test and evaluation function.**

**If confirmed, how would you approach your relationship with the Director, Operational Test and Evaluation, particularly in light of the independence and direct reporting relationships and responsibilities accorded the Director in law?**

If confirmed, I would promote early and frequent communication and coordination between DOT&E and other DoD entities to mitigate and eliminate natural tensions. I would enforce resolution of disagreements through evidence-based analysis and prioritization of our warfighters and their ability to achieve desired effects. DOT&E's mission, as directed by law, is to report on weapon system performance (effectiveness, suitability, survivability, and when necessary, lethality) based on independent analysis of collected data in operationally representative test. If confirmed, I pledge to rigorously maintain DOT&E's independence and ability to execute their mission because DoD decisions and warfighter optimization of their systems depend on DOT&E reports on weapon system performance.

**The Major Range and Test Facilities Base (MRTFB) and DoD's associated test and evaluation infrastructure are critical national assets. In recent years it has become clear that digital engineering and digital modeling and simulation tools and infrastructure will be critical to achieving the Department's objectives for optimizing existing legacy weapons systems and facilitating the delivery of modern software-defined capabilities.**

**Are you satisfied with DoD's test and evaluation capabilities, including the test and evaluation workforces and infrastructure of the Military Services? Please explain your answer. If not, how would you address shortfalls in the test and evaluation enterprise, if confirmed?**

The MRTFB, including its associated test and evaluation (T&E) infrastructure and workforce, is critical for our Nation to deliver weapons systems that give our warfighters a decisive advantage in any confrontation. Since I am not yet confirmed, I cannot fully evaluate the effectiveness of the test and evaluation infrastructure. If confirmed, I will review the gaps in the Department's T&E capabilities, including the T&E workforces and infrastructure, to ensure DoD has the digital and software expertise needed to optimize existing legacy weapon systems and deliver modern software-defined capabilities.

**Based on your experience, how do you see artificial intelligence (AI), digital twin technology and model based systems engineering (MBSE) approaches improving both test and evaluations approaches, and supporting improved acquisition outcomes?**

It's my understanding that AI, digital twin technology, and MBSE significantly enhance the Department's T&E approaches and decision-making. Advancements in these technologies lead to faster product development and reduced costs, ultimately supporting improved acquisition decisions and outcomes, even into sustainment.

**In your view, how can industry provided data be better leveraged with government furnished test data? Do you believe current data standards are sufficient for current needs, as well as the needs for emerging technologies like AI, digital twin and MBSE?**

It is important for the Government to partner with industry to better serve the warfighters and I understand that the Department is focusing on efforts to standardize data across government and industry, establish data sharing agreements, and fielding interoperable systems that can easily integrate data from different sources. The Department's efforts in this area must continue to evolve to harness developments in private industry and, if confirmed, I will support all efforts which will make our Department more capable of supporting the warfighter.

### **Defense Security Cooperation**

**What should be the primary objectives of Department of Defense security sector assistance activities, in your view?**

DoD security cooperation programs can provide Allies and partners with military equipment, services, and training to support the U.S. national security objectives and meet partner capability requirements identified by the Combatant Commanders. If security cooperation programs do not support or meet the requirements of the U.S. national security strategy, these programs should not be funded.

**Is the Department of Defense appropriately organized and resourced to execute security sector assistance effectively? If not, what changes would you make or direct, if confirmed?**

I understand that many stakeholders, including many in Congress, believe that the current timelines to deliver critical capabilities to our Allies and partners are far too lengthy. If confirmed, I will work with partners, including this Congress to make the process as timely and effective as possible at advancing the interests of the United States and our Allies.

### **Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)**

**It has been noted repeatedly that the 2005 BRAC round resulted in major and unanticipated implementation costs and saved far less money than originally estimated.**

**Do you believe that another BRAC round is needed? If so, what changes to law and implementation policy would you recommend to improve on the outcomes of the 2005 BRAC process?**

If confirmed, I will explore all options to enhance the Department's ability to restore lethality, including whether a request for BRAC authority may be warranted to optimize the Department's installations footprint. If the Secretary of Defense and President were to determine a BRAC is appropriate, we will work with Congress to identify and implement process improvements.

**If you are confirmed, and were Congress to authorize another BRAC round, how would you set priorities for infrastructure reduction and consolidation across DoD?**

The Department needs to ensure that its infrastructure portfolio is appropriately sized and utilized. If confirmed, I would commit to reducing the amount of excess infrastructure and ensure the Department's infrastructure aligns with mission requirements. If Congress were to authorize a future BRAC, I would ensure the priorities for infrastructure reduction and consolidation would align with Secretary of Defense's priorities of rebuilding the military by matching threats to capabilities and reestablishing deterrence by defending our homeland.

### **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. As early as 2004, then-General Mattis testified before Congress that DoD must "unleash us from the tether of fuel" if U.S. forces are to sustain momentum and retain freedom of maneuver. He cautioned that "units would be faced with unacceptable limitations because of their dependence on fuel" and resupply efforts "made us vulnerable in ways that would be exploited by the enemy." Today, DoD energy requirements are projected to increase significantly due to technological advances in weapons systems and distributed operations over longer operating distances.

**If confirmed, what would you do to harness innovations in operational energy and link them with emerging joint operational concepts?**

If confirmed, I will ensure that sustaining the energy needs of our forces in contested environments is prioritized across operations, planning, and capability development. I will ensure that the incorporation of operational energy innovations is done in a manner that enhances operational effectiveness and extends our operational reach. We will also consider changes in our tactics, techniques, and procedures, assess and mitigate risks to the energy supportability of our operational plans, and include appropriate operational risks and logistics constraints in the development of new capabilities.

**How can DoD acquisition systems better address requirements related to the use of energy in military platforms? In your view, should energy supportability be a key performance parameter in the requirements process?**



The energy key performance parameter, which is required by statute, is critical to ensure that energy supportability is appropriately considered during the requirements development process. Reducing the energy demand of our operational capabilities and improving their posture in terms of energy supportability reduces risks created by fuel logistics and ensures maximum lethality. If confirmed, I will ensure that the development of capability requirements is based on a robust analysis of energy supportability risks and that acquisition decision-making accounts for energy supportability and emerging technologies throughout program lifecycles.

### **Science, Technology, and Innovation**

**U.S. superiority in key areas of innovation is decreasing or has disappeared. Our competitors are engaging in aggressive military modernization and advanced weaponry development. DoD has identified 14 key areas in which investment to develop next generation operational capabilities is imperative: hypersonics; integrated network system of systems; directed energy; advanced computing and software; human-machine interfaces; integrated sensing and cyber; space; quantum science; microelectronics; trusted AI and autonomy; renewable energy generation and storage; future generation wireless technology; advanced materials; 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.**

**If confirmed, would you make any changes or adjustments in current DoD modernization priorities?**

DoD should always be surveying the technology landscape and updating investments and priorities. If confirmed, I will ensure the DoD research and engineering ecosystem is responsive and that it addresses critical threats, capabilities, and opportunities.

**What do you see as the most significant challenges (e.g., technical, organizational, or cultural) to DoD's development of these key technologies?**

There are unique challenges associated with different types of technology development. Some may be organizational and cultural. Some technologies face more basic scientific or physics challenges. It is my understanding that limited access to test assets or aging test infrastructure, as well as failures to prioritize certain technology areas are all challenges DoD faces in technology development. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department evaluates each of these challenges within their unique context and attempts to resolve them in the most appropriate manner.

**What is your understanding of the mechanisms in DoD that the science and technology community uses to coordinate, integration, and reduce unwarranted duplication across the S&T enterprise?**

I understand that the USD(R&E) is required by statute to “designate Senior Officials for Critical Technology Areas supportive of the National Defense Strategy.” These individuals execute statutory mandates to coordinate research and engineering investments, integrate technologies, and align budgets to promote technology transition and delivery. These Senior Officials are also explicitly directed by statute to advise the USD(R&E) of unwanted or inefficient technology duplication, areas of misalignment, or lack of coordination.

Moreover, I understand that the S&T community and the executives responsible for management and oversight of the Department’s S&T resources have established an S&T Executive Committee and Communities of Interest in the interest of ensuring increased coordination and integration of efforts amongst the S&T community and consequently reducing unwanted duplication across the S&T enterprise.

If confirmed, I am committed to reviewing and evaluating the DoD’s processes to identify any opportunities for improvement and reform.

**In your view are the Department’s investments in these technologies appropriately focused, integrated, and synchronized across all Military Departments and Agencies?**

Since I have not been confirmed, I do not have access to the detail necessary to reach a firm conclusion about these investments. However, if confirmed, I will prioritize the review of the Department’s investments in future technologies to ensure that the Department’s investments are aligned with national security needs.

**Based on your experience, are there enduring technology areas that might not be considered emerging, such as energetic materials or corrosion control, that DoD should remain focused on as categories outside of the modernization priorities?**

The DoD should constantly review and update its modernization priorities to ensure it is responsive to the needs of the warfighter and is addressing critical threats, capabilities, and opportunities. For example, outside of the 14 Critical Technology Areas, the OUSD(R&E) also focuses on research in munitions; energetics; alternative positioning, navigation, and timing capabilities; counter-unmanned systems; nuclear modernization; autonomous systems; and advanced materials. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department allocates its resources in an appropriate manner to address the threats from our adversaries.

**What steps would you take, if confirmed, to strengthen National Security Industrial Base and National Security Innovation Base systems and processes to ensure that critical information is protected from foreign economic and industrial espionage?**

I understand that the Department has multiple authorities to preemptively protect our economic and national security interests, especially in an era of intense competition with China.

If confirmed, I will work with DoD, and Interagency partners, to ensure DoD undertakes whatever steps necessary to safeguard the technologies, capabilities, and critical information necessary to defend the homeland, and equip our warfighters with the most lethal, advanced, and exquisite capabilities -- free of foreign influence and industrial espionage.

**In your view, how can DoD balance the openness of the S&T enterprise, while still protecting the most sensitive research from nefarious exploitation by our adversaries?**

I believe that DoD can balance openness and protection through a risk-based approach that integrates security without stifling innovation. I understand that the current approach includes targeted protection, strengthening the due diligence of DoD partnerships, proper consideration of control or classification of information, and counterintelligence to detect and mitigate threats in real time. If confirmed, I will work to promote research security by providing tight protections around DoD's most sensitive work and ensuring adequate protections for less sensitive fundamental research.

#### *Deputy's Innovation Steering Group*

**The current Deputy Secretary of Defense established the Deputy's Innovation Steering Group (DISG) to help improve coordination of innovation efforts across the Department and to break down process barriers. It has been the main forum for coordination and selection of projects to be funded under Replicator, as well as prototyping activities under Rapid Defense Experimentation Reserve (RDER).**

**What do you see as the role of the Deputy in fostering innovation in the Department? In your view, how should that role be deconflicted with the responsibilities of the Under Secretary for Defense for Research and Engineering?**

If confirmed, I will advance a focused and agile culture of innovation within the Department. It is imperative that we make sure that we have the right innovation that we can scale and get to the warfighter. My role will be to ensure the Department has the tools and resources needed to advance this vision and that these efforts are integrated and focused on the right Warfighting challenges.

**What is your understanding of the duties and responsibilities of the DISG? Are there elements that you might want to save, adapt or discard if you are confirmed?**

My understanding is that the Deputy's Innovation Steering Group (DISG), co-chaired by the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, is designed to rapidly evaluate, identify, and execute innovative solutions for key operational problems facing the Joint Force. The DISG focuses on critical joint operational gaps that need fielded capabilities more quickly than the Department's current acquisitions process is able to provide. If confirmed as the Deputy Secretary, I will carefully evaluate the

DISG, and all other processes, to make sure that we can remove barriers to innovation and fielding critical capabilities at scale.

**The Defense Innovation Unit was elevated to a principal staff assistant (PSA) for the Secretary and the Deputy. If confirmed, how might you leverage that role to better support the Department's innovation activities?**

The Department needs to source and field capabilities from the commercial industry more quickly and at greater scale. In key technology areas like software, commercial industry has rapidly adjusted their development timelines to meet a fast-changing market, while DoD is still struggling to reframe its acquisition process from a hardware-centric to a software-centric approach. Since I am not yet confirmed, I cannot specifically identify the best ways to leverage DIU's capabilities but, if confirmed, I commit to prioritizing DoD's efforts to harness our industry against threats, revitalize our defense industrial base, and scale and rapidly field emerging technologies.

### *Replicator*

**Under Deputy Secretary Hicks, DoD established the Replicator effort to focus the Department's energy and resources on the highest priority needs.**

**What is your view on the Replicator program?**

The Department must do more to deliver capabilities for warfighters, at scale, on the most critical operational problems. My understanding is that the Replicator initiative has focused on two critical areas: Replicator-1 is focused on delivering thousands of all-domain attritable autonomous systems to INDOPACOM to counter the pacing threat posed by the People's Republic of China, and Replicator-2 is focusing on countering the threat posed by small unmanned aerial systems to our most critical installations and force concentrations. Both of these operational problems remain pressing challenges and, if confirmed, I will continue to ensure the Department focuses on delivering innovative capabilities to warfighters in line with the Secretary's priorities of rebuilding our military and reestablishing deterrence.

**In your view, is a separate process like Replicator needed within DoD to address the most pressing investment areas or should the existing acquisition and management process be sufficient to address urgent needs?**

It is my understanding the Replicator program tailors the rapid acquisition pathway to ensure rapid acquisition and deployment for items urgently needed to react to an enemy threat or respond to significant and urgent safety situations. I believe the Department must utilize all of the authorities available to acquire capabilities to meet the most pressing and urgent needs, to include the capabilities being accelerated through Replicator. If confirmed, I will work with the appropriate stakeholders to review the value of initiatives like Replicator.

## *Private Equity and Venture Capital*

**In 2023, the Department established the Office of Strategic Capital to give DoD the capability to issue loans and loan guarantees to complement and supplement traditional grants and funding for innovative technologies. This has opened up new avenues for other means to support small and nontraditional defense companies in more cost-effective ways.**

**In your view, how do financial instruments, like loans, private equity and venture capital, fit into the DoD tool box to support innovation and technology development for national security purposes?**

Capital markets are a major source of strength for the United States in the global competition for technological advantage. DoD can leverage that advantage through financial instruments like loans and loan guarantees, which have been used as part of proven strategies to attract and scale private capital in support of national security priorities, including the development of critical technologies, their components, and the ability to grow and scale production.

**If confirmed, how would you improve understanding of these tools, and in turn, improve their use alongside traditional funding mechanisms?**

If confirmed, I would work through DoD and with other U.S. Government agencies, Congress, the private sector, and other key stakeholders to highlight the efficacy and impact of these tools and support their use to address U.S. national security priorities. To that end, I would support entities like the Office of Strategic Capital and leverage fora such as the Strategic Capital Advisory Council, the forthcoming National Security Capital Forum, and the interagency process to engage and coordinate with stakeholders on opportunities to use attract and scale capital to further DoD's mission.

**Based on your experience in the private sector, do you have any recommendations or suggestions in leveraging private equity and venture capital, if confirmed?**

Based on my experience in the private sector, I believe that private equity and venture capital can bring significant resources to bear in support of U.S. national security priorities and can offer insight into market dynamics, opportunities, and risks that affect DoD's mission. If confirmed, I would engage representatives from venture capital and private equity alongside other stakeholders.

**How would you characterize the threat from adversarial capital from hostile actors like China to our national security industrial base?**

Adversarial capital, particularly from China, poses a significant threat to the National Security Industrial Base by enabling intellectual property theft, supply chain infiltration, and strategic influence over critical technologies vital to our military advantage.

If confirmed, I will review Department and Interagency efforts to address adversarial capital and I will work with the appropriate authorities, including this body, to protect against adversarial capital and cyber intrusions.

**Do you have any recommendations on how DoD should be structured to address these issues of economic competition, especially when it comes to adversarial attempts to gain strategic facilities or technologies that might be used against us?**

It is imperative that the Department is postured to address strategic competition with China in all aspects which could undermine American warfighting advantages. If confirmed, I will work with stakeholders across DoD to review our structure and resourcing to determine whether changes are necessary.

### **Military Talent Management**

**In your judgement, how effective is the military at identifying, promoting, and rewarding top performers?**

My experience in the private sector has highlighted the critical need to identify and reward top talent within an organization and, in my career, I have worked with multiple highly talented serving and former Service Members. If confirmed, I look forward to examining how the Department identifies, promotes and rewards individuals based on their merits and, if I identify changes which will improve performance, then I commit to working with the necessary authorities, including this body, to make our Service Members more lethal and effective.

**Similarly, how effective is the military at identifying and removing underperforming or counterproductive servicemembers?**

Managing an effective organization does, at times, require removing underperforming team members. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Services at the direction of the Secretary to ensure the Department has the right people in the right positions, and that personnel decisions are based solely on merit.

**What should be done to improve military talent management?**

Talent management is a key component to any successful organization, and the Department of Defense is no different. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Services at the direction of the Secretary to ensure the Department effectively attracts, recruits, develops and retains the talent necessary to build and sustain a lethal fighting force.

### **Assignment Policies for Women in the Service**

**Since 2015, all military occupations and units have been open to the assignment of any service member who can meet the occupational standards, including women.**

**Do you believe in the fundamental principle that any person, regardless of gender, who meets occupational standards for a particular job should be afforded the opportunity to compete for and perform the job?**

My view is that every Service member, regardless of sex, who can meet objective occupational and readiness standards for a career field should have the opportunity to compete for jobs in that field.

### **Service of Openly Gay and Lesbian Servicemembers**

**Since the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) in 2010, gay and lesbian members of the Armed Forces have served in the United States military without having to conceal or lie about their sexual orientation. According to RAND, approximately 6 percent of the force identify as gay or lesbian. Successive chiefs of service in administrations of both political parties have noted that repeal of DADT did not create any significant challenges opponents foresaw.**

**Do you believe repeal of DADT has created challenges for the military? If yes, please provide a detailed explanation.**

Our Service members are focused first and foremost on being the most ready, lethal force in the world. The repeal of DADT has allowed all Americans – who can meet the military’s high standards to maintain readiness – to serve our country. That’s the way it should be.

### **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 too high.**

**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 assault, and to protect service members who report sexual assault from retaliation, are working? If not, what else must be done?**

Sexual assault harms our warfighters and our military readiness. It has no place in the military. I know the Department has committed significant resources and undertaken numerous efforts to address sexual assault. If I am confirmed, I intend to learn more

about the specifics of these efforts as we continue to rid the force of this criminal behavior.

**If confirmed as the Deputy Secretary of Defense, you would recommend additional authority from Congress to improve the Department's programs to prevent sexual harassment and sexual assaults?**

Given both the Department's and Congress' ongoing efforts, it is my impression that significant authority already exists to further these initiatives. If confirmed, I commit to learning more about the authorities that exist and, if necessary, I will work with this body to make any necessary changes.

**If confirmed, what specific role and tasks would you establish for yourself in DoD's program of preventing and responding to both sexual harassment and sexual assault?**

If confirmed, I will work to ensure that our policies, programs, and resources are as strong as possible to eliminate sexual assault and other behaviors that distract our Service members from the mission and undercut cohesion and trust. We must have ready, lethal warfighters who can deploy and fight as a cohesive unit.

### **Active and Reserve Component End Strength**

**The active military is smaller today than at any other point since the start of World War II. Since 2020, the active force has shrunk by over 60,000 personnel.**

**Do you believe military end strength should increase? If yes, where do you believe that growth should occur?**

Military end strength should be based on what is necessary to support the National Defense Strategy. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Secretary to determine what that number is and to ensure the Department meets that target.

**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 aggregate active end strength should be based on the requirements in the National Defense Strategy and associated operational plans. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Secretary as he builds the next National Defense Strategy, and I will work to ensure that we build a force which can achieve to determine what that number is and to ensure the Department meets that target.

### **Role of the Reserve Component**



**Historically, the reserve components have been positioned as a strategic reserve to be used in the event of significant armed conflict involving the United States. In the post-9/11 era, 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 to meet readiness requirements.**

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

This Secretary is committed to restoring lethality in our fighting force and supporting President Trump’s agenda to build peace through strength. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary to assess Reserve Component roles, resources, training, and levels to ensure the Total Force is organized, manned, trained and equipped to best meet our national security objectives.

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

If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary to determine what reforms are necessary to ensure the Total Force can attract and retain the talent necessary to meet our national security objectives.

### **Operational Tempo (OPTEMPO)**

**Since the end of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the military services continue to operate at a historically high OPTEMPO, which senior civilian and military leaders in the Department of Defense have deemed “unsustainable.”**

**What is your plan 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 a potential future major conflict?**

Despite the end of large-scale U.S. troop deployments to Iraq and the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan, I understand that the military’s operational tempo remains high. If confirmed, I will work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, the Secretaries of the Military Departments, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Military Service Chiefs to ensure that we are sending the right forces to accomplish our Nation’s objectives and to refine our deployments, rotations, and

domestic training to ensure that our OPTEMPO is sustainable. We must continue to maximize readiness for any future conflict while simultaneously avoiding exhausting our force.

### **Recruiting and Retention**

**The 2024 National Defense Strategy Commission stated that “The DoD workforce and the all-volunteer force provide an unmatched advantage. However, recruiting failures have shrunk the force and raise serious questions about the all-volunteer force in peacetime, let alone in major combat.” In addition, DoD studies indicate that only about 23% of today’s youth population is eligible for military service, and only a fraction of those who meet military accession standards are interested in serving.**

**Do you agree with the premise that the shortage in the number of American youth eligible, qualified for, and interested in serving in the Armed Forces poses an existential threat to national security?**

Yes, I do. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Secretary to help the Department address this significant challenge.

**In your opinion, why are so few individuals in the 17-24 age range eligible for service, and what can be done to increase the pool of individuals qualified for, and interested in military service?**

I understand that many individuals in this age group are disqualified from military service due to medical conditions, including mental health concerns, obesity, and diabetes. The recent executive order establishing the “President’s Make America Healthy Again Commission” will improve this situation over time by aggressively combating the critical health challenges facing our citizens. If confirmed, I will support the Secretary in ensuring that the Department has the right standards and incentivizes young people to serve.

**What programs, policies, or tools does the Department need to increase the propensity to serve of today’s youth?**

I understand that the propensity of young Americans to serve has long been in decline. I expect the President’s actions in his first weeks in office and the Secretary’s commitment to a reinvigorated warrior culture to increase the interest of young people in serving in our Nation’s military. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting the Secretary in finding ways to continue to increase the propensity to serve of today’s youth.

**If required to choose between maintaining high recruitment and retention standards and achieving authorized end strength levels, which would be more important, in your view?**

President Trump and Secretary Hegseth have made it clear that the Department must recruit the most capable individuals and ensure every Service member meets the high standards to serve and defend this Nation. The Department should not lower its standards, but rather should inspire young Americans to strive to meet those standards.

**Do you believe the total military compensation system, including deferred and non-cash benefits, is adequate to recruit and retain the number of highly qualified individuals needed for military service?**

The Department must ensure that it provides a compensation package sufficient to attract young Americans. It also needs to effectively communicate the benefits, including non-monetary benefits, of service to those young people.

**Do you believe the Armed Forces recruits and retains a diverse workforce, representative of the nation?**

Service members come from all across America to be part of a unified team, and the Department should welcome all who meet its high standards. The Secretary has made it clear that those high standards will be the same for all, regardless of race, gender or ethnicity.

**Do you believe it is important that servicemembers possess the ability, including that acquired through training, to work effectively with fellow servicemembers from different geographic areas, backgrounds, education, and experience to maximize the effectiveness of the Armed Forces?**

Yes. Throughout America's history, the military has been a leading force in building strong teams out of young Americans from across our country. As Secretary Hegseth has made clear, the unity of our military is its strength.

### **Military Quality of Life and Family Readiness**

**Military quality of life and military family readiness are critical factors in the recruitment and retention of servicemembers. Military families want access to high quality education for their children, and to high quality health care and childcare services on military installations and in local communities. Military spouses seek education and employment opportunities, and military families benefit from modern morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) services.**

**If confirmed, what quality of life and MWR programs would you make a priority?**

I fully support quality of life and MWR programs that reinforce a resilient and ready force, both at home stations and in deployed environments. These essential programs include commissaries, spouse education and employment support, high quality childcare,

mental health counseling services, and fitness opportunities, build and sustain warfighter and family readiness.

If confirmed, I will support the efficient use of resources to ensure our warfighters and military families have access to the quality of life they deserve. Quality of life programs are vital to retaining our talented Service members and their families, restoring the warrior ethos, and rebuilding the strongest, most lethal military in the world.

**The Committee often hears that Active component military families have difficulty obtaining child care both on base and off base. Acknowledging that there is a nation-wide shortage of qualified child care providers, the unique circumstances around military life require stable and reliable childcare options in any economic or labor environment.**

**What are your innovative ideas for increasing the availability of accessible, high-quality childcare, at an appropriate cost, for military families?**

Access to proximate and quality childcare is critical for our Service members and their families. If confirmed, I will fully support the Department's efforts to partner with Congress, States, and local leaders to attract and retain the best available childcare professionals and expand childcare availability in our Child Development Centers.

### **Non-Deployable Service members**

The Department has published DODI 1332.45, *Retention Determinations for Non-Deployable Service members*.

**Do you agree that service members who are non-deployable for more than 12 consecutive months should be subject either to separation from service or referral into the Disability Evaluation System?**

I agree with the Secretary that Service members who are non-deployable for 12 consecutive months or more should be reviewed for separation or a medical disability evaluation as appropriate.

### **Military Health System**

The Military Health System (MHS) is one of the nation's largest medical systems. Its three-fold mission includes: 1) Ensuring military personnel are healthy enough to perform their assigned tasks; 2) Ensuring military medical personnel are trained and ready to provide medical care to support operating forces around world; and 3) Provide a medical benefit to over 9.5 billion beneficiaries.

**In your judgement, how should the Department of Defense balance the sometimes-competing demands of the MHS mission?**

I don't think that these missions are in competition with each other, and are in fact, complementary. As I understand it, the principal mission of the Military Health System is to ensure the force is ready, and our medical teams are ready – wherever in the world we may need to go.

The decision that the Department leadership must make to carry out this mission in the most efficient manner is this: what care should be delivered in military medical treatment facilities and what care should it purchase from the private sector? It's a complex framework for decision-making – and requires consideration for where military forces are training and operating from, regardless of the medical capabilities in the local communities. DoD must resource the Military Health System, including where we place our military and civilian manpower, to most effectively provide health care and generate medical forces.

And make no mistake – I will ensure our Service members and their families have the finest care available, wherever it is provided.

**The MHS was recently reorganized to increase focus on combat casualty care while maintain robust health care for authorized beneficiaries. The Department of Defense requested over \$60 billion for MHS in fiscal year 2025, which is \$10 billion more than the enacted MHS budget from fiscal year 2021. Despite this increase, the MHS remains underfunded in certain key areas.**

**If confirmed, what actions will you take to ensure that the MHS is capable of caring for our combat wounded personnel as well as providing quality medical care to authorized beneficiaries?**

Military medicine is one part of a no fail mission. We owe it to the men and women who serve this country to provide the highest quality, lifesaving health care both on the battlefield and at home. We will not cut any corners when it comes to this mission.

If confirmed, I will carefully look at our military medical budget, and ensure we are requesting appropriations and using those funds in an efficient way that best supports this mission, to include unfunded requirements that demand attention, as Secretary Hegseth has pledged. I will establish clear and precise resourcing priorities and strict controls to show good faith and transparency when requesting an increase in appropriations, as well as emphasizing efficiency in operations. Finally, I will also look to compare Military Health System performance and costs against other leading health systems in the United States.

I also recognize that health care is expensive – and DoD is not insulated from health care cost growth, whether that's due to the cost of prescription drugs, new technology, or the need to operate in medically remote locations. I will ask our medical leaders to seek opportunities to be better purchasers of health care services and to find economies of scale and other efficiencies.

## **What should be done to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the Military Health System?**

As an investor with a great deal of experience in the private sector, I will bring a strong focus on mission and efficiency to the Department. Since I have not been confirmed, I do not know the details, but I can assure that you I will work with our Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to determine the best ways to raise effectiveness and efficiency within the Military Health System.

## **Department of Defense (DoD) Civilian Workforce**

**DoD is the federal government's largest employer of civilian personnel. The vast majority of DoD civilian personnel policies comport with requirements set forth in title 5 of the U.S. Code, concerning the Federal civilian workforce generally, and corresponding regulations under the purview of the Office of Personnel Management. This has over the years, it has provided numerous extraordinary hiring and management authorities tailored to specific segments of the DoD civilian workforce to meet unique DoD workforce requirements.**

### **In your judgment, what is the biggest challenge facing the Department in effectively and efficiently managing its civilian workforce?**

The Department has great people working for it and I am committed to making sure that the Department continues to have the best people. Throughout my career, I have focused on getting the right people into the right jobs and in structuring organizations to use their people effectively. If I am confirmed, I will review the effectiveness of the numerous personnel management authorities and systems and explore greater efficiencies. The Department must make every effort to do this well in order to recruit and retain highly skilled professionals that contribute to the Department's mission and goals.

### **Do you advocate the creation of a new "title 10" DoD civilian workforce and a concomitant body of title 10 personnel authorities applicable only to the DoD civilian workforce? If so, how should these new authorities improve on title 5, in your view?**

If confirmed, I will focus on making sure that the Department has the best people and I am aware this proposal could provide a unique opportunity to design a personnel system specifically tailored to the Department's mission, potentially surpassing the prescriptive limitations of Title 5. If confirmed, I will work with the Congress to carefully evaluate this and any other reform which can better equip the Department to address evolving national security challenges.

### **What recommendations do you have to improve DoD's management of its civilian workforce?**

I have extensive business experience in finding great people and restricting organizations to use their people well. If confirmed, I will work with Congress to identify ways to strengthen our civilian talent management efforts and implement modernized hiring practices that enhance workforce efficiency. The civilian workforce is a key part of the DoD team, and the Department must efficiently recruit and retain highly skilled civilian team members who contribute to the Department's core missions.

**Do you believe DoD's civilian workforce is part of the "total force" and operates as an indispensable force multiplier for the armed forces?**

DoD civilian employees are integral to the lethality and readiness of the Force. For example, the tens of thousands of civilian employees working in depots and arsenals ensure equipment readiness, support mobilization and contingency operations, and enhance operational capability by maintaining/upgrading military equipment to ensure the fighting force has the tools necessary to accomplish the mission.

### **Defense Department and the Intelligence Community Collaboration**

**Since September 11, 2001, collaboration—both analytical and operational—between the Defense Department and the Intelligence Community has grown increasingly close. On one hand, seamless collaboration is vital to effective and rapid responses 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.**

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

DoD-Intelligence collaboration is vital to national security and so believe that it is vital to be always improving collaboration. From my time and experience chairing the President's Intelligence Advisory Board, I believe intelligence priorities, resource management, and information sharing are some of the most critical areas for collaboration. From what I can tell from outside the Department, coordination and collaboration with the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) and the broader IC has improved, but we can do better. If confirmed, I will support the Secretary in working closely with the DNI to ensure the IC is fully supporting the DoD's priorities and that DoD's intelligence elements are also responsive to the ODNI's requirements.

### **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.

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

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



Yes

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

Yes