

Senate Armed Services Committee
Advance Policy Questions for Peter “Pete” B. Hegseth
Nominee to Serve As Secretary of Defense
January 6, 2025

Duties and Qualifications

Section 113 of title 10, U.S. Code, establishes the Secretary of Defense as the head of the Department of Defense (DOD) and principal assistant to the President in all matters relating to the Department.

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

My background, experience and expertise is what qualifies me to serve as Secretary of Defense. I served 14 years in the United States Army National Guard, including three Army deployments – as a platoon leader in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, as a platoon leader and assistant civil military operations officer in Samarra, Iraq, and as a senior counterinsurgency instructor in Kabul, Afghanistan. I have led in combat and understand what warfighters face and need, which is indispensable experience. I have an undergraduate degree from Princeton University and a master’s degree in Public Policy from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. I have led two of the most consequential post-9/11 veterans organizations in America: Vets for Freedom and Concerned Veterans for America, honing my leadership and expertise on matters of national security, military reform, foreign policy, battlefield assessments, and reforms to VA/veterans policy. Both of these groups grew rapidly under my leadership and achieved a great deal. In my work at FOX News, I honed my communication skills on those topics—and the American people need to be informed, engaged and inspired to join and support our military. Communication skills will matter a great deal. Recently, I authored a book called “The War on Warriors” that was a #1 New York Times bestseller, and based on input from active and retired American warriors. My life has been dedicated to serving our nation, standing with our warriors, and advocating for our military. I will bring all these skills to the role.

If confirmed, and given your observations and experience, what innovative ideas would you consider implementing with regard to the structure and operations of the Department of Defense (DOD)?

Given my observations and experience throughout my career, if confirmed, I intend to make the United States military a warfighting-centric organization once again. This includes refocusing resources on readiness and the capabilities necessary to deter, fight, and prevail in conflict. Working with this Committee and Congress, we can reform the structure and processes of the Pentagon to be decisive, rapid, and streamlined. If confirmed I would pursue changes to drive the Department focus from a high priority on process and bureaucracy to our warfighters able to take action and manifest lethality. Anything less would be a disservice to our servicemembers and undermines American security.

In addition to organizational and process reforms, a mindset shift is required in American military culture. We must lead the Department's men and women in uniform to protect America with a significant focus on lethality and deterrence. If confirmed, I will lead military and civilian leadership alike to promote individuals who understand put readiness and lethality first.

If confirmed, what duties and functions would you assign to the Deputy Secretary of Defense?

If confirmed, I would designate the Deputy Secretary of Defense to manage the day-to-day activities regarding budget and resourcing, acquisition, research and engineering, and overall management of the Pentagon. Additionally, if confirmed I would work collaboratively with the Deputy Secretary of Defense to ensure that our efforts are complementary with the guiding principle of consistent forward progress in all areas, leveraging momentum in different components to bolster others for which progress is not as rapid or effective.

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

If confirmed, on day one I would immediately be challenged to posture our military and the Pentagon to deter further deterioration of the situations in Ukraine, Israel, Syria, and other instability around the world. Simultaneously, if confirmed I would immediately address the test from the Chinese Communist Party and tackle head-on any areas that may cause the Chinese Communist Party to perceive an opportunity for aggression. If confirmed, during my tenure as Secretary of Defense I would prioritize emerging from this dangerous security environment as a lethal, modern fighting force that is positioned to deter future conflict, defend the homeland, and protect American interests. If confirmed, organizational and process-oriented reform will be a high priority of mine to shift the Pentagon workforce to a warfighting mindset to enhance our deterrence and guarantee a war is never fought.

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 fundamental tenet of our enduring constitutional republic. The principle of civilian control undergirds all actions of the Department of Defense and is ingrained in both the Department's military and civilian personnel in their service to the Nation. If confirmed as Secretary of Defense, I will do all in my power to ensure the foundational ideal of civilian control is reinforced throughout my tenure at the helm of the Department.

If confirmed, specifically what would you do to ensure that your tenure as 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 can best exemplify civilian control of the Armed Forces by being a present, engaged, and decisive civilian leader of the Department of Defense the law requires, and the President and the Congress expect me to be. If confirmed, I will develop and maintain strong, collegial, collaborative and respectful working relationships with the senior-most military leaders of our Armed Forces. However, in my role as Secretary of Defense, I realize that these officers will not be my peers, but that they will be my lawful subordinates.

Consistent with the practice of past Secretaries of Defense, I plan to be personally involved in the selection of officers for all three- and four-star assignments and will ensure that nominated officers fully adhere to the mandate of civilian control. I will be receptive to the advice and recommendations of uniformed military leaders; I will continue to ensure that decisions consistent with the law and with our democratic traditions are made by the civilian leaders of the Department.

If confirmed, what lessons would you draw from the tenures of former Secretaries of Defense, and how would you apply those lessons to your own service, if confirmed?

With respect to the activities and operations of the Department of Defense, I believe that what's past is prologue. Our history sets the context for present conditions. If confirmed, I will draw upon lessons derived from the successes and challenges of my predecessors as Secretary of Defense, both living and dead, and irrespective of partisan affiliation. I will also welcome occasional interaction and dialogue with my living predecessors in hopes that the insight gained from their experiences will contribute to making me a better Secretary of Defense.

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?

The 2018 NDS and 2022 NDS have each identified China as the Department of Defense’s pacing threat. I share this assessment and further believe that a Chinese Communist Party *fait accompli* invasion of Taiwan is the Department’s pacing risk scenario. Xi Jinping has openly expressed his intention to annex Taiwan to mainland China, has told his military to be prepared to use force to achieve such an outcome by 2027, and has invested heavily this last decade in military capabilities needed for such a campaign. The Chinese leader’s words, and his military’s actions, suggest that this is a very real threat. If he were to succeed, it would have a profound negative impact on future U.S. trade, military alliances, and influence around the world.

To counter this threat, it’s critical that we establish a denial defense in the western Pacific—resourced with the relevant forces postured forward—while strengthening global burden-sharing and greatly increasing investment in our defense industrial base to credibly support such a strategy.

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

As expressed in the 2018 NDS and 2022 NDS, Russia presents a significant conventional, gray zone, and strategic threat to the United States and Europe, and acts as a destabilizing force in several other regions globally. Even constrained by the international sanctions regime that has been in place since 2014 and was strengthened during President Trump’s first Administration, Russia has been able to maintain and field capable military forces, to deliver strategic capabilities, and to increase production of key platforms and materiel.

Russia has substantially built up its nuclear arsenal which poses a threat to U.S. homeland and tactical nuclear arsenal threatening its neighbors in Europe and Asia. Russia’s cyber and information operations, undersea warfare, and ambitions in Space and the Arctic are particularly acute. Russia’s ability to operate extra-regionally using mercenaries like the Wagner Group and proxies is not insignificant.

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

Recent actions taken by China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea in Ukraine and elsewhere suggest a cooperative approach to undermine U.S. influence and its alliances around the world.

Technology transfer and materiel sales have allowed these countries to circumvent or alleviate the costs imposed upon them by sanctions, scale capabilities, and finance military operations. Notable examples are Unmanned Aerial System transfers between Iran and Russia, Iranian oil sales to China, and North Korean special forces serving in Russia's war with Ukraine.

Military conflict spurred by any one of these actors could be used as an opportunity for another actor to engage in aggression if they believe U.S. forces are tied down. It is a foundational principle of strategy that one's adversaries should be divided.

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?

The Department has only partially leveraged the potential of our defense industrial base and defense innovation base to cost-effectively deliver capabilities at the speed of relevance. Several initiatives have aimed to deliver proliferated, distributed, and attributable capabilities on short timelines, but more work needs to be done to shift the Department's thinking away from developing expensive, exquisite platforms over many years that we cannot afford to lose, toward delivering innovation at scale on compressed cycles.

If confirmed, I will work with my staff, the Chairman, and the Military Departments to rethink how our approach to requirements and acquisition can be streamlined.

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?

If confirmed, I will ensure that strategy drives the budget and not the other way around. To achieve this, my team will begin development of an updated National Defense Strategy, in coordination with and supportive of the new National Security Strategy. These strategies will inform our annual resource allocation process (i.e., the Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution system), primarily via my annual Defense Planning Guidance. If confirmed, issuing a FY2027-2031 DPG will be one of my first key management priorities.

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 multifaceted challenge that involves trade-offs between near-term and long-term priorities. Certain readiness spending can increase our ability to “fight tonight” or 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 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 that we do not cannibalize our ability to modernize the joint force for the future fight. I would direct the Services to review our 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 our 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 our 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 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 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?

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, 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 tonight” and achieve victory. If confirmed, I will also work with the Services, OSD, and the Chairman to ensure that our joint force maintains its position as the most capable, lethal force in the world.

What would your primary considerations be in reviewing active versus reserve force sizing and composition?

Reserve units provide depth and expertise for the Services. The mix of active and reserve forces should be assessed by each Service and by the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. If confirmed, as part of the development of a new National Defense Strategy, plans review process, and the annual Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE) process, I would direct a reassessment of the balance between active and reserve components to ensure that the joint force has the necessary support for its missions while minimizing cost.

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?

I have not been briefed on the current classified version of the National Defense Strategy, so I cannot comment on the resources required to implement it. If confirmed, aligning resources to a new National Defense Strategy will be one of my top priorities, because the current trendline of defense spending falling below 3 percent of our gross domestic product is a threat to our national security.

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?

Assessing the adequacy of the defense budget begins with developing a National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy. If confirmed, I would work with my colleagues, senior military officers and this Congress to assess the resource levels required in the defense budget to achieve the goals of those strategic documents: defending the homeland and deterring China and other competitors. The Department of Defense budget must focus on lethality and innovation, technology is changing the battlefield.

Keeping America safe is the top priority for President Trump, and the Department of Defense should have a budget that prioritizes the most impactful investments and minimizes unnecessary and wasteful spending so the military can be the most lethal in the most cost-effective way. There are opportunities to reevaluate programs, create efficiencies, and buy things faster and cheaper within the Department of Defense's budget.

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

Our nation's resources are precious, and every dollar spent on defense should be spent carefully and effectively. At a national level, the President and Congress allocate finite resources across many priorities. Building the strongest and most powerful military in the world must be done responsibly, but it cannot be done on the cheap. If confirmed, I will work with the President and Congress to make sure that we are effectively aligning the resources required to protect our nation.

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 work of this committee and the PPBE Commission has highlighted some of the challenges with how the Department of Defense allocates resources, most notably its limited agility. If confirmed, I would review the findings of these efforts and implement those that would help us to achieve our strategic objectives and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Department of Defense's resource allocation process.

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?

It is vital that we use all the resources given to the Department of Defense effectively, and overcome the challenges of working within a large bureaucracy. We need to make good decisions faster, and this means finding the right balance of transparency, accountability, and decentralization. If confirmed, I would work with this committee and other stakeholders to improve how the Department makes resourcing decisions.

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 am encouraged that Department of Defense reform is a topic of bipartisan interest. If confirmed, I would review the specific recommendations from the Commission on PPBE Reform with my

key Principal Staff Assistants, to include the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, the Undersecretary of Defense for Comptroller, and the Director of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation, to determine the recommendations that will improve our budgeting process to build a strong national defense. If confirmed, I would work with Congress to implement those recommendations and any others necessary for meaningful reform.

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?

Advancing U.S. national security requires the coordination of multiple departments of the United States government and is a team sport. Diplomacy plays an important role in the team. If confirmed, I would work with my colleagues in other departments to ensure the application of resources requested by the President and appropriated by Congress work together to advance U.S. national security objectives.

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

I am currently not able to provide an informed opinion on the budgets of non-DOD departments and agencies. If confirmed, I would be happy to review the resourcing of non-DoD agencies and discuss sufficient resources in coordination with the Director of the Office of Management and Budget and the Committee. While budget decisions are the purview of the President, I will advocate for the resources necessary to make America strong again and our force a credible deterrent.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff

Section 921 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY 2017 made changes to section 151 of title 10, U. S. Code, concerning the role of the Joint Chiefs as military advisors to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense.

What is your assessment of the authorities and processes by which the Joint Chiefs provide military advice and opinions to the President and the Secretary of Defense? What changes, if any, do you assess are required?

The authorities and processes by which the Joint Chiefs provide military advice and opinions to the President and the Secretary of Defense are derived from statute, departmental directives, and from longstanding internal practices. I do not presently have any recommendations to change the existing authorities and processes for provision of military advice. If confirmed, I will continually monitor and assess the processes by which the President and I receive military advice and opinions and will recommend or initiate improvements as necessary.

What is your level of confidence that these authorities and processes will provide you, if confirmed as the Secretary of Defense, the best military advice, including “minority opinions” that may diverge from those of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs or the majority of members of the Joint Chiefs?

It is critical that Secretary of Defense receive the best military advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, including when applicable the divergent minority views of members of the Joint Chiefs that are out of sync with Chairman or most members of the body. If confirmed, I will emphasize to the Joint Chiefs, individually and collectively, that by law, each is independently a military advisor to the President and the Secretary of Defense. I will reinforce that, especially where there is disagreement, it is a disservice to the President and the Secretary of Defense not to provide the full views of all the Chiefs.

Do you commit, if confirmed, to always provide your best advice to the President, even when your advice and opinions might differ from those of other members of the Cabinet, the President’s other senior advisors, or from the President’s own views?

Yes. If confirmed, the provision of honest, frank, and candid advice to the President will always be one of my most solemn responsibilities. I will provide such advice to the President even if my advice differs from the advice, views, or opinions of the rest of the President’s national security team, other members of the Cabinet, or other senior advisors, and even if my views are contrary to the views of the President himself. The President has told me that he expects nothing less from me.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff

Section 151 of title 10, U.S. Code, provides that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the principal military adviser to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense. Pursuant to Section 163(a) of title 10, U.S. Code, the President has directed that communications between the President or the Secretary of Defense and the commanders of the combatant commands be transmitted through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

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

If confirmed, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff will be my principal military adviser. Our relationship will be structured in a manner consistent with each of our statutory authorities and responsibilities. We will have routine, regular, and constant interactions. I will have collaborative and collegial working relationship with him, and I will always be receptive to his views, advice, and opinions, even if they are divergent from my own. I also expect the Chairman to structure his relationship with me in accordance with the law and his responsibilities.

If confirmed, would you modify the current duties and responsibilities of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in any way? Are there any other duties and responsibilities you would consider assigning or delegating to the Chairman?

I am not aware of any reason to modify the current duties and responsibilities of the Chairman. There are no additional duties and responsibilities I intend to assign to the Chairman at this juncture, beyond those enumerated in statute.

If confirmed, what timeline would you assess to be appropriate for the Department's development, programming, and implementation of the joint operating concepts required by the NDS?

I have not reviewed the current National Defense Strategy, which is classified. If confirmed, I will review how long it took for previous NDS-required joint operating concepts to be developed, programmed, and implemented and will, after consultation with the Chairman, make an informed assessment of the appropriate timeline for the development and implementation of future joint operating concepts. Given the charge from the President for a newly-lethal department making our deterrent credible again, I anticipate urgent action.

Use of Military Force

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

As a general rule, the use of force should be a last resort after other options have been exhausted. If confirmed, my recommendations to the President would provide different-in-kind options for the use of force, and a description of the different types of risk each option would entail, whether that is risk to mission, risk to forces, risk to strategy, or other types of risk.

The use of military force must always be assessed in terms of its actual ability to achieve the desired security/political outcomes by disrupting, denying, or defeating adversary forces. Therefore, military force should always be considered within the broader context of the whole-of-government effort to respond to conflicts and crises.

In your view, is a "new" Authorization for the Use of Military Force needed at this time? Please explain your answer.

If confirmed, I will review the current Authorizations for the Use of Military Force with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, and I will provide the President with my recommendation when requested.

What factors would you consider, if confirmed, in determining which forces of other nations are eligible for collective self-defense by U.S. forces, and under what conditions? What limitations, if any, would you seek to impose on the provision of collective self-defense by U.S. forces?

I would consider existing statute, policy, operational circumstances and other obligations when considering which nations could be eligible for collective self-defense. If confirmed, I will review these factors and make any recommendations to the President.

Are there circumstances in which you believe it appropriate for U.S. military forces to be under the operational command or control of an authority other than the chain of command established under title 10, U.S. Code? What is your assessment of the authorities and agreements in place to permit U.S. military personnel to carry out such activities?

I will review whether there may be circumstances in which U.S. military forces are required to temporarily operate under the operational control of authorities outside of the title 10 chain of command. The Commander in Chief will always retain ultimate authority, however, over these forces and our forces. If confirmed, I will review the existing authorities and agreements and make any recommendations to the President.

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 maintains the strongest alliance system in the world, and the common defense of our mutual interests with our allies and partners creates an unmatched strategic advantage. Our allies and partners understand that the United States will continue to emphasize that strong and healthy alliances cannot be one-sided, or the foundation of mutual trust will erode. In the past four years, some relationships have frayed due to weakness from the Commander in Chief and Secretary of Defense, illustrated by the eruption of two major wars and the disgraceful manner of our withdrawal from Afghanistan.

If confirmed, I will direct the Department to reevaluate how we are fostering healthy alliances and partner relationships. Increased ally and partner defense spending and burden sharing are critical to ensuring that our relationships are not one-sided.

Mutual trust will be enhanced as our allies' and partners' capabilities strengthen because of consistent, deliberate, long-term cooperation.

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?

If confirmed, I would deliver a National Defense Strategy that puts a priority on strategic competition with peer challengers to United States interests. I would direct my Under Secretary of Defense for Policy to deliver Guidance for the Employment of the Force and a framework for security cooperation that brings coherence and strategic alignment to each AOR's steady-state efforts to outcompete near peer challengers.

The competitive challenge the United States faces is cross-regional and cross-functional, meaning that every Combatant Command, whether geographic or functional, has an important role in sustaining our competitive advantage through steady-state campaigning, security cooperation, military diplomacy, or other efforts.

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?

Foreign Military Sales (FMS) of interoperable and complementary capabilities to our allies and partners improves our ability to fight by, with, and through our allies and partners. Joint training and exercises can further increase our combined abilities. FMS can function as part of a broader acquisition strategy to drive down unit costs for both the United States and our allies and partners, enabling us to collectively deliver more advanced capabilities than we might otherwise if a program were not designed for export.

Industrial base integration can 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 direct the Under Secretaries of Defense for Acquisition & Sustainment and the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy to explore opportunities to craft acquisition and allied and partner force development strategies that fully leverage the expertise and economies of scale that our allies and partners bring.

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 it competes for capabilities when it faces an emerging requirement. If confirmed, I will conduct a global force posture review to reassess whether existing missions and forces assigned to USAFRICOM are sufficient to achieve our goals given the competitive geostrategic environment.

We must work effectively by, with, and through partners in Africa, even with a limited forward presence. Security cooperation is a critical instrument of defense policy in this AOR, because it enables us to collaborate in building strong partner forces that are interoperable with our own and can carry out missions both jointly and on their own.

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

If confirmed, I will conduct a global force posture review to reassess 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?

The primary objectives of the Department in the USAFRICOM AOR include: 1) countering the activities of terrorist groups that have both the capability and intent to strike the U.S. homeland or critical U.S. overseas interests; 2) countering specific activities of near peer competitors acting in the region in ways that would harm critical U.S. strategic interests.

These priorities will be nested within the broader whole-of-government foreign policy strategies addressing a variety of issues affecting Africa. Key to achieving those priorities is our continued work with allies also operating in the AOR and with regional partners, especially in capacity building so that our regional partners can undertake missions on their own.

If confirmed, I will ensure that the National Defense Strategy and subordinate implementation guidance properly aligns the Department's goals in the AOR with national and departmental-level strategy.

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 extremist organizations and other emerging threats, 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 or U.S. personnel.

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?

Both China and Russia treat Africa as a playing field in which they can expand their influence, obtain economic advantages, and secure military positions for themselves.

China has become the largest trading partner for many African nations, which gives it diplomatic, financial, information, and infrastructure advantages that it can wield to its benefit. Port infrastructure and IT infrastructure pose dual-use and intelligence challenges. China has established an overseas military base in Djibouti – proximate to U.S. Camp Lemonnier, which is our primary military base in Africa – and is seeking additional basing options, including on the Atlantic coast. By participating in peacekeeping operations, China’s military also gains operational experience. Taken together, China uses Africa to advance its objectives in maneuvering for strategic position and securing access to markets and outlets for excess savings.

Russia likewise views Africa as an arena for influence, access to raw materials, a market for arms sales, and jockeying for position against Western interests. Russian mercenary and paramilitary forces have exacerbated instability in Africa, intervening in internal conflicts, resulting in extended and bloodier civil wars. Extended zones of instability allow space for terrorist groups to recruit, grow, plan, train, and operate.

The USAFRICOM AOR covers 53 nations spanning the second-largest continent in the world and representing almost 20% of the world’s population. Our partner objectives are correspondingly diverse, and generalizations about the complex set of African relations with the U.S., China, Russia, and Europe would obscure more than they reveal.

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.**

The key national security interests of the United States in the Middle East are counterproliferation, counterterrorism, defense of our key partners, great power competition, and stability in world energy supply.

The Middle East remains a proliferation risk. Iranian development of a nuclear weapon would destabilize the region, threaten U.S. interests and partner security, provide Iran a shield behind which they could engage in more aggressive proxy or gray zone activities, and increase the risk of nuclear accidents or miscalculation. Proliferation of nuclear know-how from the region could in turn destabilize other regions.

Counterterrorism remains a high priority national security interest in the USCENTCOM 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. Areas of instability, civil war, and anarchy provide spaces where terrorist groups can recruit, grow, plan, train, and operate, 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. We have 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 our ability to disrupt and defeat shared threats.

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.

If confirmed, I will conduct a global force posture review to reassess whether existing missions and forces assigned to USCENTCOM are sufficient to achieve our national defense strategy goals given the competitive 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 states in the region as well as European allies to counter threats emanating from within the USCENTCOM AOR. If confirmed, I would seek increased opportunities to enable regional partners to counter terrorist groups. If confirmed, I would also look to increase regional and European cooperation 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 and Russia are both working to expand their influence in the Middle East and to put their thumbs on the scales of the global energy markets. China's economic, financial, and technological activity in the region serves to increase its influence across the region in ways that will have long-term implications.

Russian technical assistance with nuclear technology, arms sales, paramilitary presence, intervention in civil conflicts, and forward basing all present challenges to U.S. interests in the region. If confirmed, I will conduct a global force posture review to reassess whether existing missions and forces assigned to USCENTCOM are sufficient to achieve our national defense strategy goals given the competitive geostrategic environment.

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?

National security objectives with respect to Iran include counterproliferation, defense of our partners, and counterterrorism. Iran's nuclear program continues to advance, shortening the time needed for weaponization. Since October 7, 2023, Israel has faced a complex range of threats, many of which are directly backed or sponsored by Iran – from Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and directly from Iran itself. Additionally, the Iranian Threat Network of proxies and aligned terrorist and militia groups have posed a persistent threat to stability across the region.

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 counterterror operations.

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's military poses a significant threat to the security of the U.S., its allies, and its partners, and it has increasingly used proxy forces to launch kinetic attacks across the Middle East. Iran's direct support of Hamas led to the horrific attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. Since that date Iran has launched two major ballistic missile and drone strikes against Israel from Iranian territory.

Through proxies, Iran has conducted hundreds of drone and rocket attacks on U.S. forces in the Middle East and provided the Houthi rebels in Yemen with missiles and drones that have been employed against global shipping and against Israel itself. On top of all that, Iran continues to inch closer to gaining a nuclear weapons capability.

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?

If confirmed, I will conduct a global force posture review to reassess whether existing missions and forces assigned to USCENTCOM are sufficient to achieve our national defense strategy goals given the competitive geostrategic environment.

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

Achieving our national security goals with respect to Iran should be done through a whole-of-government effort that employs the breadth of U.S. government capabilities, of which military force is only one aspect.

Israel

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

My understanding is that the Department's current objectives with respect to Israel are protection of U.S. forces and citizens in the region, flow of critical security assistance to Israel as it defends against further terrorist attacks from Iranian proxies, coordination with the Israelis to help secure

the release of hostages held by Hamas, to include American citizens, and strengthening of force posture across the region to deter any state or nonstate actors from escalating the crisis. Israel is dismantling Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthis, and Iranian Armed Forces capability, including in Iran. Iran is the primary destabilizing force in the region and the United States seeks to benefit from the dismantling of its terrorist proxy network.

If confirmed, I will review our objectives and posture in the region and make any recommended changes to the President.

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's right to defend itself from Iranian terrorist proxies. After President-elect Trump is inaugurated and decides our course of action for our current global military operations, the Department will support the President accordingly.

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?

My understanding is that the Department's current objective in Syria supports the enduring defeat of ISIS. If confirmed, I will review our objectives and posture in the region and make any recommended changes to the President.

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

President-elect Trump has stated a position that the U.S. should not get involved in Syria. The Department will respond to orders from the Commander in Chief.

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

The 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 counterterror operations. If confirmed, I will seek classified briefings on the state of ISIS to determine further efforts required to ensure their defeat.

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

If confirmed, I will seek classified and unclassified briefings on the 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 possible use of U.S. troops in any foreign country should be tied to specific objectives. Any possible recommendation for troop deployment to any country I might make to the President would be guided by this principle.

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

My understanding is that the current DOD objectives in Iraq support the enduring defeat of ISIS, counterbalancing Iranian influence, and maintaining a strategic partnership with the Government of Iraq. If confirmed, I will review our objectives and posture in the region and make any recommended changes to the President.

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 possible use of U.S. troops in any foreign country should be tied to specific objectives. Any recommendation for possible troop deployment to any country I might make to the President would be guided by this principle.

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?

President-elect Trump called the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan “the most embarrassing moment in the history of our country.” As a veteran of the Afghanistan campaign, it was particularly painful for me to learn of the deaths of 13 U.S. service members and hundreds of Afghan soldiers during our catastrophic withdrawal. The Department of Defense is working to prevent the spread of terrorism emanating from Afghanistan. The USCENTCOM Commander testified before Congress that ISIS in Afghanistan is developing capability for “external operations” and aspires to attack the U.S. homeland.

If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of State, and the National Security Advisor, and our allies to formulate recommendations on Afghanistan for the President.

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 conduct a global force posture review to reassess whether existing missions and forces assigned to USCENTCOM are sufficient to achieve our national defense strategy goals given the competitive geostrategic environment. However, my understanding is USCENTCOM has only conducted one so-called “over the horizon” counterterrorism strike in Afghanistan since the withdrawal and that ISIS in Afghanistan is developing capability for “external operations” and aspires to attack the U.S. homeland.

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

If confirmed, I will conduct a global force posture review to reassess whether existing missions and forces assigned to USCENTCOM are sufficient to achieve our national defense strategy goals given the competitive geostrategic environment.

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)?

If confirmed, I will seek classified and unclassified briefings on the role of sanctuaries for militants and violent Islamist extremist terrorists.

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 will conduct a global force posture review to reassess whether existing missions and forces assigned to USEUCOM 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?

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 will conduct a global force posture review to reassess whether existing missions and forces assigned to USEUCOM 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 will conduct a global force posture review to reassess whether existing missions and forces assigned to USEUCOM are sufficient to achieve our national defense strategy goals given the competitive geostrategic environment.

If confirmed, what specific enhancements would you make to 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 will 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 the February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. If confirmed, I will review the allocation of resources across the different theaters of conflict and recommend investments that best protect US 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 USEUCOM, of NATO allies, and of regional partners. If confirmed, I would review the resource requirements necessary to achieve our national security objectives in Europe.

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 Article 3 and Article 5 obligations to be as strong as ours.

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 great power conflict in Europe, deter nuclear and non-nuclear aggression, and defeat threats to our 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. The United States has maintained nuclear weapons in NATO countries for several decades and is a foundational tenet of the burden-sharing 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, 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, as we saw under both the Obama and Biden administrations. I believe Putin has designs for expansion of Russian territory and influence and the degradation of the NATO Alliance. The U.S. 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 will conduct a global force posture review to assess the effectiveness of existing missions and forces assigned to USEUCOM, 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?

Upon completion of the global force posture review, I will make 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 on Ukraine.

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

Despite suffering a deterrence failure – not just conventional deterrence, but deterrence by threat of sanctions and “deterrence by detection/disclosure” – Ukraine was able to hold off Russia’s attempt at a *coup de main* against Kyiv and a breakthrough on the Eastern front. Neither side has been able to wage a war of maneuver, with the conflict settling into a war of attrition. Recently, Russia has escalated attacks across a variety of Ukrainian targets.

If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department of Defense plays a key role in the whole-of-government effort to support the President’s Special Envoy for Ukraine-Russia.

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

If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department of Defense plays a key role in the whole-of-government effort to support the President’s Special Envoy for Ukraine-Russia.

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

If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department of Defense plays a key role in the whole-of-government effort to support the President’s Special Envoy for Ukraine-Russia.

U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) 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 need to accelerate efforts to strengthen our force posture and increase operational capabilities in the Indo-Pacific, given China's historic and rapid military buildup and the urgent need to reestablish deterrence. If confirmed, I will review our posture in the Indo-Pacific and identify ways to prioritize such efforts.

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 work to identify programs that could urgently strengthen deterrence in the Indo-Pacific and prioritize such programs in accordance with the new Trump Administration National Defense Strategy.

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. If confirmed, I will work with the Undersecretary of Defense for Comptroller and other relevant stakeholders to determine whether the Pacific Deterrence Initiative is sufficient to achieve our military goals in the Indo-Pacific.

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 the 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?

Guam is critical for the execution of INDOPACOM's plans and operations in the region. Unfortunately, Typhoon Mawar inflicted significant damage on the island of Guam and on our military infrastructure.

If confirmed, I will work closely with Congress and the Joint Force to reconstruct our infrastructure and facilities there so that Guam is fully leveraged as a power projection platform in the Indo-Pacific. The resilience of our infrastructure on Guam is important and will need to be protected.

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?

Developing joint warfighting capabilities and enhancing interoperability with Japan will greatly strengthen our deterrent posture in the Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, I will work to identify an appropriate command-and-control structure that is best suited for our forces in Japan and the future of our critical 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 presents the pacing challenge faced by the United States. I agree that China is “the most comprehensive and serious challenge to U.S. national security.” If confirmed, I will work with urgency to strengthen our force posture in the Indo-Pacific to deter Chinese Communist Party 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?

Through a historic military buildup, the Chinese Communist Party has developed capabilities for the specific purpose of being able to exercise military power in the Indo-Pacific and deny the ability of the United States to project power into the region. The Chinese Communist Party poses the most significant security challenge to the United States.

Military-to-military dialogue can be useful in reducing miscalculation and misperception. Intent, however, may not be accurately conveyed by dialogue. Chinese Communist Party actions will always speak louder than their words.

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 Chinese Communist Party spent several decades making long-term strategic investments into its military capabilities for the specific purpose of being able to exercise military power in the Indo-Pacific and deny the ability of the United States to project military power into the region. These investments have been made 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 asymmetrical and next-generation capabilities that they hope will offset our conventional advantages.

The Defense Department’s 2024 Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China Report discussed, for example, China’s world leading hypersonic missile arsenal. Recent reporting indicated that China may have developed a sixth-generation fighter jet. If confirmed, I will review relevant classified and unclassified material to fully understand Chinese 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?

The United States can help prevent miscalculation by maintaining our longstanding policy in support of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. If confirmed, I will review relevant current classified and unclassified material and make recommendations to the President.

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 President and other national security leaders and meet with the Committee in a classified session to discuss further.

The Korean Peninsula

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

The DPRK’s status as a nuclear power, its intense focus on increasing the range of missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads, and its growing cyber capabilities all pose a threat to stability on the Korean peninsula, in the Indo-Pacific region, and globally. Those threats are of particular

concern given the DPRK's proximity to close U.S. allies that base U.S. troops. If confirmed, I will seek classified and unclassified briefings on the threat posed by DPRK.

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 Homeland, will be important to countering the DPRK threat, in addition to efforts to stem the growth of its nuclear and missile arsenals. If confirmed, I will review classified and unclassified materials and advise the Commander in Chief 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 then further discuss these matters with the Committee.

India

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

It is my understanding that over the past decade, the Major Defense Partnership between India and the United States has strengthened considerably with increasingly robust joint military exercises, defense sales, and strategic dialogue. If confirmed, in coordination with the State and Commerce Departments, I would review our current relationship and agreements and then provide the Defense Department's recommendations to the President.

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?

The procedures by which Federal, State, and Local agencies request DOD support have been honed over decades and are generally effective in ensuring that DOD resources are brought to bear when needed. However, there is always room for improvement to enhance efficiency and timeliness, particularly as the nature of threats and emergencies evolves. The Stafford Act, the National Response Framework (NRF), and the Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) guidelines provide a clear framework for how civil authorities can request and receive DOD assistance during

emergencies such as natural disasters, counter-drug operations, or incidents involving weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

That said, challenges remain in areas such as interagency coordination, communication during rapidly evolving crises, and aligning expectations with the unique capabilities and constraints of the DOD. Ensuring that procedures remain adaptable to emerging threats, such as cyberattacks or catastrophic disasters, is critical.

Finally, the capabilities and assets of the DOD may not always be available for immediate support to civil authorities. The potential exists where adversaries may attempt to exploit our ability to project force into a distant theater during a domestic crisis. This must be accounted for in the NRF and if confirmed, I am committed to working with the Secretary of Homeland Security and other interagency partners to ensure our nation's plans account for these scenarios.

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

Several critical factors must be considered when determining whether DOD will provide support to a civil authority, including legal authorities, nature of the emergency, immediacy of the need, capabilities and readiness, and cost and resource allocation.

If confirmed, I would ensure that DOD remains a reliable and responsive partner to civil authorities while adhering to legal and operational principles. By continuously refining procedures, enhancing interagency training, and leveraging lessons learned from past emergencies, we can strengthen our collective ability to respond effectively to crises and safeguard the American people.

Transnational Criminal Organizations

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

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

Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) pose an evolving and multifaceted threat to the security of the United States. Over the past decade, their activities have become increasingly sophisticated, diversified, and transnational in scope, facilitated by advances in technology, globalization, and geopolitical instability.

The intersection of TCOs with state-sponsored actors and terrorist organizations amplifies the challenge. For instance, TCOs often cooperate with rogue states or adversarial nations to smuggle goods, fund malign activities, or undermine governance structures in democratic nations. The threat is no longer confined to physical borders. TCOs use cyberspace as a new battleground,

conducting ransomware attacks and targeting critical infrastructure. Their operations weaken the rule of law, erode trust in institutions, and directly challenge U.S. national security and sovereignty.

If confirmed, my focus would be on strengthening interagency coordination to address these threats comprehensively. This includes enhancing partnerships with the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, and the intelligence community to disrupt TCO operations. International collaboration is also vital; by working closely with allies in the Western Hemisphere and beyond, we can dismantle networks and address the root causes of these activities.

Additionally, if confirmed I would prioritize investments in technology and intelligence capabilities to detect and disrupt TCO activities in real time. This effort includes leveraging artificial intelligence, data analytics, and cyber defense measures to stay ahead of the evolving tactics of these organizations. The United States must adopt a holistic approach that integrates defense, law enforcement, and international cooperation. By doing so, we can address the systemic challenges posed by TCOs and safeguard our nation's security, prosperity, and way of life.

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?

China, Russia, Cuba, and other malign actors are conducting a systematic, deliberate campaign in the SOUTHCOM AOR to undermine American influence and exploit the region's resources and people for their own objectives. To achieve their goals, these malign actors promote corruption, spread disinformation, and bolster authoritarian rule to suppress the people and solidify one-sided deals.

Violent criminal organizations operate virtually unimpeded in South America, trafficking drugs, weapons, people, animals, and spreading violence throughout the region. The consequences of this instability wreak havoc on the region and ultimately find their way into American homes as the fentanyl crisis migrates north from these areas.

President-elect Trump has committed to finding ways for the military to more actively confront these challenges, and if confirmed I will work with the Commander of USSOUTHCOM to determine what actions may be taken. If confirmed, I would also work with the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Treasury to develop a set of options for the President to deter malign influence in the USSOUTHCOM AOR.

Do you believe these influences threaten hemispheric security and prosperity?

Yes. Chinese, Russian, Cuban, and other malign influences in the USSOUTHCOM AOR seek to undermine American credibility, destabilize the region, and ultimately threaten the security of our homeland. Abetted by these nefarious influences, cartels have free reign to produce and traffic illicit drugs, including fentanyl, across the American border and into our communities. Furthermore, Chinese investments in the region through their Belt and Road Initiative, that 22

South American countries have signed on to, are primarily directed towards critical infrastructure and strategically important locations such as ports.

Russia's navy has conducted increasingly frequent port calls in the region and Moscow has continued to support nefarious regimes to extract strategic access and resources from South American countries. The deals made with these South American countries are not mutually beneficial and only serve to further diminish their strength as their most valuable resources are taken away, their people forced to live in fear of cartels, and their governments unable to stabilize their own countries.

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 specified in Army Field Manual 2-22.3, *Human Intelligence Collector Operations* and DOD Directive 2310.01E, *Department of Defense Detainee Program*.

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

The detention facility at Guantanamo has served a valuable national security function over the last 20 years. Though the total number of detainees at the facility has declined over time, the remaining detainees at Guantanamo continue to pose a significant threat to U.S. national security. Recent agreements by the Biden Administration to repatriate terrorists are concerning. If confirmed as Secretary of Defense, I will work with Congress to determine the way forward for the detention facility and remaining detainees.

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's counternarcotics support should be applied to the maximum extent possible, within existing laws. It is my understanding that the Department of Defense disrupts and degrades the flow of synthetic opioids by leveraging intelligence assets, supporting interagency partners, and supporting partner nation law enforcement and interdiction activities.

If confirmed, I would direct the Department to increase existing activities and propose additional ones to secure our border and address transnational criminal organizations at their source to stem the flow of synthetic opioids into our communities.

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 worldwide production and spread of cocaine, fentanyl, and synthetic opioids is largely propagated by transnational criminal organizations with ties to our adversaries – China, Russia, Iran and North Korea. It is my understanding that Mexican drug cartels receive fentanyl and its precursors directly from Chinese companies, manufactures the final product and ships it into the United States homeland – with full knowledge by the Chinese Communist Party on what is transpiring. The Department of Defense and our military are charged with defending the citizens of the United States from foreign adversaries, and the counternarcotics mission is fundamental to this responsibility.

If confirmed, I will work with senior leadership in the Department to address the narcotics threats for what it is – a threat to our homeland and the American way of life.

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

If U.S. security assistance is used, it should be aimed at protecting U.S. interests, including protecting Americans from illegal narcotics.

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?

It is my understanding that without the support of America's adversaries, Maduro would have no power in Venezuela. Maduro's continued grasp for power in Venezuela undermines regional stability and allows for malign influence from China, Russia, and Cuba to entrench themselves further in the region.

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

It is my understanding that the Venezuelan regime relies heavily on China, Russia, Cuba, and Iran and often looks to undermine U.S. interests wherever it can.

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 version of the National Defense Strategy, so I cannot comment on its characterization of the space domain or the changes the Trump Administration's new NDS will make. If confirmed, I will direct that the new NDS ensures that space is safe for our civil, commercial, and international partners to operate as part of a broader American push into space, in addition to providing critical capabilities to the Joint Force.

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?

Winning the competition in space and establishing space superiority is critical for continuing the American way of life through the 21st Century. Great Power competitors are making notable strides in their respective space capabilities which are designed to deny our freedom of action and potentially to establish their own space superiority, to include traditional space missions, offensive and defensive space control capabilities, enabling capabilities, and end-user services.

If confirmed, I will ensure that the United States pursues a robust force structure and operations plan to ensure American superiority in 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 US must monitor global anti-satellite capabilities. The United States, China, Russia, and India have all successfully conducted anti-satellite capability tests. We will remain vigilant regarding North Korea's space capabilities. If confirmed, I will ensure the new NDS addresses this critical warfighting domain.

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 version of the National Defense Strategy, so I cannot comment on its characterization of the space domain or our current levels of readiness in

the space domain. If confirmed, I will ensure the new NDS addresses this critical warfighting domain.

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

For decades, space was a largely uncontested domain dominated by the United States. Space is now a highly contested warfighting domain with competitors developing and fielding space systems that could present a threat to the United States. Their advancements cover kinetic (orbital and direct ascent), non-kinetic, electronic, and offensive cyber capabilities. If confirmed, I will work with Congress, the military services (particularly the US Space Force and its National Space and Intelligence Center), relevant IC agencies (e.g., ODNI, DIA, CIA, NRO, etc.), and commercial partners to re-examine threats to our space systems and ensure credible deterrence and defense.

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

If confirmed, I would support America embracing a balanced space deterrence force structure that includes offensive and defensive space control capabilities.

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

If confirmed, I would support America embracing a balanced space deterrence force structure that includes offensive and defensive space control capabilities.

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

If confirmed, I would review implementation status of the DoD Commercial Space Integration Strategy (April 2024) and the US Space Force Commercial Space Strategy (April 2024) and determine where we can more aggressively embrace our commercial partners and resource accordingly. This review would include an assessment of the tremendous potential to build on the success of commercial launch and commercial SATCOM and harness the potential within our commercial partners to expand into new mission areas, where appropriate.

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?

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

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

While agencies like DHS and the FBI focus on civilian infrastructure and criminal investigations, the DOD and CMF's priority is defending against cyber threats with strategic or military implications. This includes threats to the defense industrial base, nuclear command and control, and the ability to project power globally. Effective national cybersecurity demands close collaboration between DOD and other entities, this is something I am committed to if I am confirmed.

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

The PRC poses a broad and pervasive cyber espionage threat. It routinely conducts malicious cyber activity against the United States as well as our Allies and partners. It steals technology secrets and undermines the DIB in an effort to erode U.S. military advantage. It undertakes cyber intrusion and surveillance efforts against individuals living beyond its borders, including U.S. citizens, whom it considers enemies of the state.

Russia remains an acute threat to the United States in cyberspace. Russia has undertaken malign influence efforts against the United States that aim to manipulate and undermine confidence in our system. Russia targets U.S. critical infrastructure as well as that of Allies and partners. It continues to refine its espionage, influence, and attack capabilities.

If confirmed, I will ensure that appropriate resources and policy are committed to cyberspace, as it has truly become a warfighting domain. DoD and its broad and deep capabilities in cyberspace require continued investment and coordination with the myriad of USG partners as it defends forward against all Nation-state and other cyber threat actors.

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 2023 Cyber Strategy does not address the role that DOD and the Cyber Mission Force should have in combating foreign influence operations. As Secretary, I will seek to understand those activities and evaluate how best to defend the nation from foreign influence operations while also protecting the liberties of American citizens.

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

As noted above, under the 2023 Cyber Strategy and, within the limitations of the law, it is my understanding that the Department sought to posture itself to enable better insights against foreign malicious cyber threats, to disrupt foreign cyber threats to the U.S. critical infrastructure, and to support requests for assistance from Federal civilian agencies or the private sector through appropriate channels.

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.

The dual-hat relationship of the National Security Agency (NSA) and U.S. Cyber Command has been debated for many years. Proponents of the “dual hat” structure cite operational effectiveness and efficiency, faster decision making and fewer levels of bureaucracy and lower cost as many headquarters' functions are shared. 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 as Secretary of Defense, I will bring these debates to conclusion, consult with Congress, and make final recommendation for the way ahead.

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?

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. The Department pledged to take action to foster a culture of cybersecurity and cyber awareness. It also stated that it would establish an expectation that senior military and civilian leaders possess a baseline fluency in cybersecurity issues, and 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 as Secretary, 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 would work with the national command authority about whether a specific cyberattack by a foreign entity constituted an act of war. Where a cyberattack on the United States caused significant physical damage, disrupted critical national infrastructure, targeted the civilian population or was 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.

In making such a determination, I expect the considerations might include examining the following aspects of a cyberattack: Scale and Impact; Intention to Cause Physical Harm; Targeting of civilian populations; State Actor Involvement; and Military objectives. If confirmed, I will discuss the extent and ramifications of the Salt Typhoon attack with the President and the Intelligence Community and will present the President with response options as needed.

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 nature of the Volt Typhoon and Salt Typhoon attacks. 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 safeguards. The U.S. should possess the ability to protect its critical networks from malicious intrusion. If confirmed, I will work with the Interagency partners to determine how best to provide that protection.

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

The Cyber Mission Force could benefit greatly from better access to, and assistance from, top technical talent from civilian 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 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 we should do a much better job of enlisting the talent and expertise of patriotic Americans working at civilian technology companies to upgrade and enhance our capabilities and skills. If confirmed, I will take a hard look at 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 bears further review. If confirmed, I look forward to classified briefings on this topic in order 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 NDAs have empowered the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (ASD(SOLIC)) to serve as a “service secretary-like” civilian official for special operations forces. Among other reforms, the law defines the administrative chain of command for SOCOM as running through the ASD(SOLIC) to the Secretary of Defense for issues impacting the readiness and organization of special operations forces.

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

My current understanding is that the ASD (SOLIC) sits in the chain-of-command above USSOCOM for special operations-peculiar administrative matters. If confirmed, I will review the Department’s progress to ensure that the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ASD) for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (SOLIC) has authorities commensurate with the FY 2017 NDAA.

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

If confirmed, I commit to fully implementing the reforms and acknowledge the most recent language in the recently passed FY 2025 NDAA which directs DOD to institutionalize the “service secretary-like” role through various updates to DOD processes, policies, and plans.

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 will review the authorities and resources of the ASD(SOLIC) and share the results of this review with the Committee.

Irregular Warfare

The Joint Staff’s Joint Publication-1 defines irregular warfare as a “form of warfare where states and non-state 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?

My current understanding is that DOD is going through an irregular warfare transformation predicated by the conclusion of two active conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. This transformation

seems to be focused on refocusing away from counter terrorism and on a more global competitive security environment.

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?

My current understanding is that DOD recently issued irregular warfare implementing guidance that directs specific actions to be taken by an irregular warfare steering group and recommendations were presented to the Deputy's Management Action Group for consideration.

If confirmed, I will review the existing policies and resourcing and make any recommended changes to the President.

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?

I assess that China, Russia, Iran and other adversary states and non-state actors have aggressively employed Irregular Warfare to undermine the national security interests of the United States and our allies. Our adversaries are highly skilled at using asymmetric operations, including infiltration, espionage, cyber-attacks, information operations and other irregular warfare techniques to change perceptions and erode confidence. They use ongoing attacks to probe for weakness and to refine their tactics, techniques and procedures.

If confirmed as 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 adversary irregular warfare efforts and hold adversaries accountable. Furthermore, we will review, revise and expand our own irregular warfare capabilities to provide additional national security options to the President of the United States.

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?

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 U.S. 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?

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.

If confirmed, I will direct a review of DOD's current role and work with the interagency if any adjustments to roles and responsibilities are required.

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?

DOD has made progress on conducting effective military operations in the information environment, including by releasing JP 3-04 information in Joint Operations (2022) and the DOD Strategy for Operations in the Information Environment (2023).

If confirmed, I will review these policies and assess DOD's capability to effectively conduct military operations in the information environment.

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 work this Committee has done with DOD to ensure 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 in which DOD operates has changed considerably in the last 25 years.

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?

I understand that DOD has struggled in the past to 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 new tools to determine what changes are necessary and explore ways to accelerate the adoption of tools and the use of training to ensure US dominance in OIE.

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 numerous interagency partners. DOD must work with these partners when and where appropriate.

If confirmed, I will review DOD's current approach to working with interagency partners to determine if these relationships need to be altered or strengthened.

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?

In recent years 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 & 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 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 missiles. Russia has developed new advanced nuclear weapons like the Sarmat ICBM, Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle and Kinzhal hypersonic missile. North

Korean 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 doctrine. This change by the Russians, combined with improved nuclear force capabilities (specifically tactical systems) has eroded deterrence and 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 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?

It is critical to maintain and modernize all three legs of the triad – ICBMs, submarines, and bombers – Sentinel, Columbia, and B-21, respectively.

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?

If confirmed, I will direct an immediate review of the program of record to ensure it is sufficient to support full modernization of the US 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?

The partnership with NNSA is one of my highest priorities. 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, B-21, and Sentinel as well as new theater ranged nuclear systems.

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?

The NNSA is responsible for maintaining the nation’s nuclear weapons stockpile and meeting military requirements for nuclear weapons capabilities, which are established through the interagency Nuclear Weapons Council (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 Secretary of Energy, the NNSA Administrator, and the Director of the Office of Management & Budget 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 in the P5.

What is your understanding of the role of the 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 Secretary of Defense delivers warfighter requirements from the services 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 the Secretary of Energy and NNSA Administrator to meet the nation’s requirements.

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 its interest to do so. Currently neither China nor most Russian nuclear forces are constrained in any way by arms control agreements. Both China and Russia have rebuffed US efforts to engage in meaningful risk reduction talks since 2020. In the absence of a willing partner in dialogue it will be the policy of the Department of Defense to build a modern nuclear triad that deters conflict and assures 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 believe we should limit our options in any future negotiation with Russia or China by prematurely imposing limitations on ourselves but instead remain open to all negotiable conditions that maximize our ability to protect US critical interests and defend the nation.

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 Secretary of Defense, what would be your priorities for U.S. missile defense capabilities for the homeland?

My priority will be to deliver on the President's promise to the American people to protect the homeland with an Iron Dome for America. I will direct a review of the current missile defense programs and pursue systems to defend against hypersonics, ICBMs, UAS, and including threats from the South and the Arctic, among others. We will also look to remove bureaucratic impediments that slow, unnecessarily complicated progress without contributing to the rapid and effective establishment of operational capability.

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?

DTRA's CTR program, like other programs that support partner capabilities, needs a careful and thorough review and a cost benefit analysis performed. Like all DOD programs, these programs

should directly contribute to a lethal and effective fighting force and align to the nation's priorities, established in the National Defense Strategy.

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? Please explain your answer.

The Air Force did not grow larger during the post 9-11 buildup. Instead, it grew smaller as the acquisition of new aircraft failed to offset programmed retirements of older aircraft. In 2016 this left the Air Force with 32 active-duty fighter squadrons, only four of which were ready for conflict with a near peer competitor. The first Trump Administration recognized an aircraft shortfall and, from 2017 through to 2021, increased the US Department of the Air Force budget by 31%. President Trump is committed to rebuilding our military, including the United States Air Force, and if confirmed I will execute on this commitment.

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?

Over the last 30 years, the Air Force fighter aircraft inventory has shrunk. This development threatens the ability of the Air Force to achieve air superiority in a near peer competitor conflict. The 2024 President's budget required the Air Force to eliminate 60 fighters and 9 bombers from its inventory. The result is an Air Force with a total force that equates to 47% of the fighter assets, 43% of the bomber assets, 67% of the tanker assets, and 76% of the airlift assets that it possessed last time the United States was prepared to fight a near peer competitor.

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?

The Air Force needs a mix of 4th and 5th generation aircraft balancing advanced capabilities and affordability to increase our fighter inventory, as called for in the 2018 "The Air Force We Need" plan rolled out during President Trump's first Administration. If confirmed, I will direct an immediate assessment of the DAF capability and will recommend we commit additional resources, as appropriate.

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

If confirmed, I will carefully review the findings of the Air Force's recent analysis of the mission relevance of the NGAD and our overall need to improve the capability and capacity of the Air Force, to develop a balanced and affordable plan to grow the tactical fighter aircraft fleet that is prepared to win the "fight tonight" 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)?

Block 4 F-35 brings significantly improved capabilities to the fight, including the APG 85 radar and greatly expanded electronic warfare capabilities. These capabilities require a tech refresh on Block 3, including computing resources and engine modifications. If confirmed, I will carefully review the acquisition strategy for "Block 4 Lite" capabilities to achieve a balance that cost-effectively accelerates delivery of needed modernization.

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?

Our KC-135 fleet is aging fast. The KC-46 remains the Air Force choice for long haul missions. The Service is committed to delivering 183 airplanes by FY 2029. If confirmed, I will direct a review of the KC-46 and NGAS programs with a view to establishing a capability roadmap to provide needed capability on-time through and beyond the 2029 timeframe.

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.

The Air Force has relied on wide body aircraft with Moving Target Indication (MTI) radar to support dynamic targeting and engagement of air and ground targets. The E-7 "Wedgetail" prototyping effort continues that trajectory with the hope that the relatively mature platform would offer timely capability to augment the rapidly aging AWACS (Air MTI) and J-STARS (Ground MTI) fleets. Space based capabilities such as radar and electro-optical sensors can offer an alternative from Low Earth Orbit (LEO) if near continuous target coverage is available on orbit. Recent collaborations between government and the private sector indicate that we will have sufficient proliferation to enable space-based MTI.

If confirmed, I will direct a review of MTI alternatives, including both air- and space-based capabilities, informed by the recently completed Space Warfighting Analysis Center (SWAC) MTI Force Design Analysis with a view towards supporting our readiness to "fight tonight."

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?

Recent events have shown that the cyber realm, autonomy, and precision fires, among others, will play key roles in future near-peer conflicts, and the Army modernization effort is critical to ensuring that our Soldiers retain overmatch capabilities in those conflicts. If confirmed, I will work with the Army to ensure that its modernization priorities align with that objective.

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?

The Army is an essential piece of our Joint Force in the Indo-Pacific. The Indo-Pacific is a vast theater containing a significant portion of the global population, and the Army plays a critical role in building relationships with our allies, coordinating ground defense, and deterring aggressors across that theater. If confirmed, I will ensure that our efforts in the Indo-Pacific leverage the Army's strengths.

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 views on the value of land-basing versus maintaining stocks afloat?

The importance of time and distance as planning factors in the Indo-Pacific cannot be overstated, and both land-based and afloat stocks are critical components of the Department's ability to effectively respond in that theater. If confirmed, I will carefully examine our current land-based and afloat stocks in the region, as well as the merits and tradeoffs of each, to ensure that we are most effectively postured for mission success.

What additional capabilities should be prepositioned in INDOPACOM?

If confirmed, I will work with civilian leadership, the Joint Staff, and INDOPACOM to review our mission requirements and current prepositioned capabilities in the region and will prioritize the prepositioning of any unmet requirements.

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 Department must be ready to conduct intratheater logistical resupply in contested environments, and Army watercraft are a key piece of that readiness. If confirmed, I will review the Department's ability to perform that critical task and work across the Department to ensure that we are prepared to do so effectively.

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?

IAMD is a large and complex mission system that requires participation across the Department, and recent events in the Middle East have shown the criticality of the capability it provides. If confirmed, I will work with the Joint Staff, the Services, and civilian leadership to ensure that the roles and responsibilities for IAMD are assigned to the right Services and agencies to ensure 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?

IAMD is a critical component of defending our service members and must be a joint task to be executed most effectively. If confirmed, I will prioritize reviewing the extent and sufficiency of the contributions of each of the Services to that task and explore ways to better integrate their current and future capabilities.

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?

The conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine have reinforced the need for the Department to effectively counter small Unmanned Aerial Systems (sUAS), and that is inherently a Joint effort. If confirmed, I will wholeheartedly support the effort to effectively counter sUAS to ensure that the Joint Force has the protection it needs. I will closely examine how the Department can best further that mission and counter larger UAS, including any potential reallocation of roles and responsibilities with respect to the JCO.

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?

We need a comprehensive review of shipbuilding focused on ensuring the U.S. Navy is second to none and continues to maintain global freedom of navigation. The current worldwide ship distribution is based on the needs of the Combatant Commanders and these operational commanders continue to request more naval assets than we are able to provide. I also plan to address the increasing duration of ship and submarine maintenance periods and the detrimental impact on maritime readiness. If confirmed, I look forward to closely examining the Navy's current plan to reach 355 ships and commit to working with the Congress to address current challenges and work diligently to accelerate the growth of our Fleet.

How would you accelerate the number of ships delivered to the United States Navy?

As President Trump has warned, the decline of the U.S. industrial base and manufacturing capability is a critical economic challenge, but it is also a severe handicap to maintaining national security, particularly given the urgency to grow the Navy for deterrence in the Pacific. If confirmed, I will work closely with Congress and the Navy to increase our shipbuilding capacity.

Our plan to improve shipbuilding must address the size and modernization of public and private shipyards, the depleted shipbuilding workforce and the number and quality of suppliers and subcontractors. I will work with the Secretary of the Navy and the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition & Sustainment to increase the use of multi-year contracts and reduce requirements creep that can lead to cost and schedule overruns.

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?

Shipbuilding is an urgent national security priority. If confirmed, I will immediately direct the Secretary of the Navy and the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition & Sustainment to create a shipbuilding roadmap to increase our capacity within the shipbuilding industrial base, remove bottlenecks within the supply chain, and reduce near-term risk by improving Navy maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) capability. As our warships and submarines sit idle in MRO facilities, they are not available to Combatant and Fleet Commanders for maritime operations.

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?

Our submarine force is a critical component of the current force structure in a key domain where we must preserve our hard-earned supremacy that will be vital in the future. If confirmed, I will direct the Secretary of the Navy and the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition & Sustainment to conduct an affordability review and provide new proposals to address the cost and schedule growth challenges that hamper our submarine construction.

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?

It is clear that unmanned systems are a fundamental part of the future warfighting environment. Therefore, we must expeditiously move to integrate unmanned systems in our surface and undersea fleets. If confirmed, I will direct the Service Secretaries, the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition & Sustainment, and the Under Secretary of Defense for Research & Engineering to accelerate adoption and integration of cost-effective and highly capable unmanned systems to transition to the force of the future.

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?

I understand DoD’s plan to retire 17 military logistics ships is due to lack of civilian manning. To ensure credible maritime deterrence and defense, the U.S. must maintain maritime logistics capability to rearm and resupply our Navy warships in times of peace and war. If confirmed, I will work with Congress, the Secretary of the Navy, and other federal agency leaders to rebuild our civilian mariner workforce and pursue reduced manning capabilities to ensure sufficient logistics and support vessel manning and expand our national capability to provide adequate logistical support during a sustained conflict.

In your view, would there be opportunities to work with other agencies to ensure that DOD can meet its logistical requirements?

In addition to improved incentive programs and enhanced recruiting and retention to grow the civilian mariner workforce, if confirmed, I will evaluate all available options to leverage the capabilities of other agencies to help meet the Navy's logistical requirements.

Naval Aviation

**What are your views on the current status of the naval aviation enterprise?
If confirmed, how will you ensure that the Navy's fighter fleet is able to modernize to meet the Chinese threat?**

The naval aviation enterprise has made substantial progress in recent years – transitioning the Marine Corps to F-35 STOVL aircraft and modernizing the Navy by adding the F-35 to the capable Navy F/A-18 force. The P-8 and E-2D have modernized components of the naval surveillance fleet. Similar progress has been made on the naval rotary wing fleets, and the fielding and deployment of unmanned UAVs, such as the MQ-4C Triton is a historical leap forward. The naval enterprise has also focused on improving maintenance to ensure naval aviation fleet mission capable rates. However, our adversaries are constantly modernizing their inventory and expanding their capability. If confirmed, I will ask the Secretary of the Navy and the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition & Sustainment to review the threat and the current state of our naval aviation acquisition, modernization, and sustainment programs to optimize our plans for preserving and expanding our overmatch capability against all threats.

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?

As Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom concluded, the Marine Corps rightfully returned to its Naval roots, requiring a reset in terms of force structure, manning, and equipment to reorient to the pacing threat. As with any of the Services, if confirmed, I will conduct a posture review of their combat capabilities to ensure that they are providing the Combatant Commanders with the necessary forces for their relevant Operational and Contingency Plans.

If confirmed, what Marine Corps capabilities would you prioritize?

If confirmed, I would prioritize enhancing the Corps' ability to operate in contested littoral environments, emphasizing long-range precision fires, advanced reconnaissance, and unmanned systems to support distributed operations. Second, I would invest in modernizing amphibious capabilities, ensuring that the Corps retains its unique role as the nation's premiere force for rapid crisis response.

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.

The Marine Corps' non-combatant evacuation operations and response to national disasters are important capabilities for the Commander In Chief. The availability of these forces for these missions are challenged by current levels of amphibious ship availability. Navy maintenance, repair and overhaul capability needs to be improved to meet force commitments.

I will ask the Secretary of the Navy to assess the readiness of large deck amphibious ships which have low mission capable rates. These ships must be ready and available to support the full range of USMC operations from deterrence to defense and noncombatant evacuation operations. We must also ensure our Navy resources can appropriately sustain support functions including refueling and resupply functions.

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)?

The Department must modernize its data and technological infrastructure to succeed on tomorrow's battlefield, to pass an audit and ensure it is spending tax dollars appropriately, and to maximize the productivity of the entire workforce. If confirmed, I will direct the Chief Information Officer to build the data and technology infrastructure and improve initiatives like ADVANA that we need to fight and win. We can't afford to give our adversaries an advantage because of our own failure to modernize.

If confirmed, how would you ensure a broader use of modern management tools at the Department of Defense?

Even with the current focus on modern management tools, the Department still uses a management and governance framework derived during the Cold War-era. Our management tools and approaches require significant modernization to reflect present-day defense requirements and commercial best practices. If confirmed, I will commit to bringing modern management tools to

the Department that allow my team to manage effectively with agility. This will include application of AI/ML capabilities, modernizing decision support tools from the boardroom to the battlefield, and further developing promising capabilities like ADVANA. I will lead by example by requiring that my principal staff assistants to use these tools to tee up decisions in our senior leadership forums.

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?

The Department of Defense is the largest and most complex organization in the federal government. Congress has consistently been a strong voice for reform, and has provided a range of tools, yet the Department has failed to modernize and operate in a responsive, business-like manner. All leaders within the Department, including the PIO, must focus on managing our resources to the highest standards of accounting and stewardship, and do so while minimizing waste of taxpayer resources appropriated by Congress.

The Pentagon must use all available tools to improve the accuracy and agility of decision making that is transparent, logical, and auditable, through access to better data and use of modern business processes. This includes establishing complimentary and aligned PPBE and management frameworks informed by data and designed for decision-making, not maintaining status quo or simply meeting reporting requirements. I will charge all senior executives on my team, including PPBE leaders, PIO, and CDAO, to find and act on all opportunities to improve management discipline, either on their own or with my engagement.

Do you have recommendations for effectively managing DOD operations?

If confirmed, my job will be to rebuild the strongest and most powerful military in the world to keep America safe. Effectively managing current operations is a key part of this.

We must identify, recruit, and empower the best talent, and manage our information effectively, enabled by modern tools such as AI/ML and data analytics, made available at the right time, and delivered to the right people. If confirmed I will continue efforts to ensure that leaders at all levels have the information they need to make the best decisions at their fingertips and most effectively manage the Department's operations.

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 ultimate test for everything in the Department of Defense is lethality. While we should learn the lessons of our recent deployments during the past decades, and be very cautious about when and where we use the military, if and when deploy our forces, the question is not simply about efficiency, it is all about warfighting effectiveness and lethality so that our deterrent will be respected.

What role do you see the Defense 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?

The Deputy's Management Action Group (DMAG) is one of the tools that the Deputy Secretary of Defense uses to manage the Department of Defense and implement decisions. If confirmed, I look forward to having a strong Deputy Secretary who will lead the DMAG to maximize leadership visibility into the Department and make crucial decisions about budgeting, acquisition, personnel, reforms, and operations.

DOD Auditability

Since 1995, DOD's financial management system 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 2027 to achieve an unqualified 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 first serious attempt to audit the Department of Defense began during the first Trump administration and, if confirmed, I intend to make achieving a clean Department-wide audit a top priority. As we have seen in the case of the Marine Corps, which has achieved a clean audit, leadership really matters.

If confirmed, I will make it clear to all my senior leaders that their personal attention and energy should be applied to ensuring strong forward progress on auditability.

If confirmed, what specific actions would you take or direct to achieve better outcomes to improve DOD auditability?

If confirmed, I will meet with my DOD financial leadership team to determine what audit steps need to be taken. With a focus on accountability, I will consider issuing a Department-wide memorandum capturing my intent and associated deadlines. I would also focus on the audit as a critical part of ensuring that resources are used to maximize lethality and readiness.

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

The audit contributes to operational readiness in at least two key ways. First, achieving a clean audit is important for the Department's accountability to the American people, and to the representatives of the American people in Congress. Second, auditability will enable the Department to have greater insights into resource allocation, availability, and execution to make better decisions, faster, with modern resourcing systems that provide higher quality data available immediately to decision makers at all levels. The combined effect is that DOD can move faster with the resources we have been given to generate the lethality and readiness we need. If confirmed, I look forward to driving the Department toward a clean audit.

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?

If confirmed, I will meet with the team responsible for leading the audit effort across the Department, and as outlined above, make clear that I expect senior leaders to focus their personal attention on achieving a clean audit. If there are other specific recommendations that are identified to make the audit preparation more efficient or less costly, I will share those back with this committee.

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?

I believe the Marine Corps' clean audit achievement is something other components within the Department should learn from. One key lesson is that leadership attention matters, and that the senior leaders of an organization must make audit readiness a priority, or their organization will not make rapid progress. Overall, I believe that accessible, reliable, and timely data is key to effective management and reform of the Department of Defense. Audit is a key driver for delivering the data leaders at all levels need to lead well.

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?

It is my understanding that the Adaptive Acquisition Framework is a flexible set of acquisition pathways for effective, suitable, survivable, sustainable, and affordable solutions to deliver advanced capabilities to the end user in a timely manner. Yet our defense acquisition system is not fast or agile enough to provide our men and women in uniform with the most advanced equipment available on time and under budget. If confirmed, I will work with my staff and the Military Departments to leverage the flexible authorities granted by Congress to maximize the use of competition, disciplined requirements, and the innovation of non-traditional vendors to accelerate fielding of advanced capabilities our, among others.

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

If confirmed, I will work with the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, the Undersecretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, and the Military Departments' Senior Acquisition Executives to ensure we have the necessary policies in place to strengthen the health of the defense industrial base (DIB), fostering a greater increase in competition for defense contracts, and improving access to more cutting-edge technologies that are critical for the success of the modern warfighter. It is my understanding that the Department of Defense has several initiatives and programs in place to facilitate rapid fielding and innovation, and if confirmed I would seek to leverage and build upon these initiatives where practicable. It is also my understanding that several defense acquisition programs are over budget and schedule and require a thorough review that I would direct the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment to conduct.

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?

The successful acquisition of high-performance systems that meet the needs of our warfighter and deliver on time and under budget will require the integration of skills, perspectives, and contributions of multiple stakeholders, including civilian, military, and industry. Those contributions, however, must converge under decisive civilian leadership to evaluate the full range of available options, account for cost, schedule, and technical constraints, and prioritize the right balance of capability, affordability, and availability. If confirmed, I will lead a team of civilian experts who will be accountable to the American taxpayer and warfighter to deliver the world's most advanced and capable systems 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?

Mastering the requirements process is critical to managing an effective and efficient acquisition system. I welcome and applaud Congressional leadership on this issue, and, if confirmed, I will establish the advisory panel on reforming the requirements process as directed by FY2025 NDAA, in conjunction with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. I will direct the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment to work with this panel to evaluate available reform options, and to ensure the Department of Defense's entire acquisition process is aligned to provide our warfighters with the capabilities they need to win an unfair fight in the most timely and cost-effective manner.

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 in the development and validation of military requirements within the current system. 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 FY 2021 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?

A robust and resilient defense industrial base not only reliably provides dominance for our forces on the battlefield, but a revitalized defense industrial base can and must be an effective deterrent against our adversaries. If our enemy knows that our industry is agile and capable of replenishing our forces in a protracted battle, they will think twice about confronting the US and our allies. We can achieve this peace through strength with increased competition among traditional and non-traditional suppliers, targeted infrastructure investments, the modernization, automation, and

digitization of our manufacturing base, and better leverage market forces to prioritize competition and maximize innovation and efficient production.

The initial NDIS and NDIS-Implementation Plan represent an important first step in developing an aggressive industrial policy that actively manages our Defense Industrial Base as a strategic national security asset. The success of the warfighter requires a robust and resilient defense industrial base. It is my understanding that the NDIS Implementation Plan contains six initiatives: Indo-Pacific Deterrence, Production and Supply Chains, Allied and Partner Industrial Collaboration, Capabilities and Infrastructure Modernization, New Capabilities Using Flexible Pathways, and Intellectual Property and Data Analysis.

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment to critically review and, if necessary, address gaps within the NDIS and its Implementation Plan, as well as the classified annex to the Implementation Plan. I will support the health of the DIB by cultivating a regulatory environment that promotes the Department's access to the most innovative technologies, foster greater competition in the contracting space, and leverage transformative innovation of not only the traditional contractors but also the non-traditional defense contractors, small business, and commercial vendors.

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

If confirmed, I will work with the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment to leverage available tools to invest in expanding and improving our domestic production capacity, including the Defense Production Act, the Office of Strategic Capital, and evaluate other options to achieve stable supply chains and Made in America defense capabilities.

I also want to ensure the Under Secretary for Research and Engineering brings the department back to its core mission of developing technologies that only DoD can do due to lack of commercial viability. This will allow us to innovate faster and create an ecosystem of scaled suppliers that can more quickly deliver systems that are needed.

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?

In addition to the initiatives outlined above, the President's priority to encourage our allies to increase their defense spending to elevated levels will provide increased investment capital and stable funding required for domestic and international defense industry partners to make infrastructure and manufacturing modernization investments to increase domestic and allied industrial capacity. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of State, Secretary of the Treasury, and Assistant to the President for Industrial Base Policy to support the onshoring of production of critical technologies and critical components of the supply chain, prioritizing those sectors and product lines most reliant on China. If confirmed, I will also leverage the relationships with our closest allies, sourcing materials and components from friendly nations to promote the

security of our supply chain and acquisition system when a domestic alternative does not readily exist.

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 will ensure that the Director, Operational Test and Evaluation (DOT&E) will hold that performance is always a paramount acquisition metric along with cost and schedule for all Department programs. I will respect the responsibilities and independent authorities of the DOT&E as defined by Congress and ensure that the DOT&E is sufficiently resourced to assess whether performance meets requirements with consideration of the always evolving threat, which is critical to fielding the most technologically advanced and lethal warfighting capabilities.

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?

I have not formed a comprehensive view about the Department’s overall T&E capabilities but there are worrisome elements about resources and workfulness. If confirmed, we will carefully assess the test and evaluation (T&E) enterprise of the Department, including the T&E workforce and infrastructure within the Military Services, to ensure that the entire T&E is sufficiently resourced to strategically assess whether performance meets requirements with consideration of the always evolving threat.

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?

Rapidly emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and digital engineering can be efficiently leveraged to execute T&E functions with resource optimization while promoting

affordability and expediency. This is a critical development in the technology landscape that DoD should and will be the global leader on. Artificial Intelligence is a powerful set of capabilities that we must use as we know our adversaries, particularly China, have invested in such capabilities. Artificial Intelligence in the US commercial sector is the most advanced in the world and we should take advantage of that as a basis for DoDs specific needs. If confirmed, I will fully support the T&E enterprise's further deployment of these technologies through strategic partnerships with industry to ensure that the Department is optimally leveraging the most current and innovative advances within these rapidly evolving technical domains.

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?

If confirmed, I will carefully assess to what extent industry provided data can be better leveraged with government furnished test data. Because such domains as AI and digital twin technology are evolving so rapidly, if confirmed, I will work closely with the Director of Operational Test & Evaluation, the Under Secretary of Defense for Research & Engineering, and the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition & Sustainment to assess whether current data standards are sufficient for current needs given the rapidly evolving technology landscape. More importantly, the rapid change in AI will likely drive continued need to augment data standards to the modern environment and I believe we need to focus on the evolution of these standards as an accepted new normal.

Defense Security Cooperation

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

The primary objective of DOD security assistance programs is to provide military equipment and training to our partners and allies as needed to support our national security objectives and to meet partner capability requirements as laid out by our Combatant Commanders. If security assistance programs do not meet the needs of our 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?

There are several reforms that could be put in place to help execute security assistance programs more effectively. First, the DoD must encourage the industrial base to emphasize exportability in the initial development of defense systems. FMS sales to our partners and allies in the year 2021 were at a record low, in part because many of our Program of Record military systems were not designed, from the start, for foreign sales and so the required changes to these systems were more costly "back end" retrofits rather than less costly conversions that could have been designed in from the beginning. Exportability must be designed from the start. Second, approval timelines for security assistance programs – whether they are FMS or DCS (Direct Commercial Sales) - take

far too long. Often, our partners and allies are unwilling to wait for a decision from our lengthy approval process and then decide to buy systems from other nations. Those losses of sales to other nations are detrimental to interoperability with US forces, as well as the loss of jobs for our defense industrial base. We must ensure better staffing for our security assistance organizations and find more efficiencies in our arms sales decision-making processes. If confirmed, I will work to ensure a more efficient and effective security assistance program and processes within DoD and throughout the Federal government, including the interagency and any conjunction with the Department of State.

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 work with leaders in the Department and across the Executive Branch to assess whether another BRAC round is needed. If the President were to determine a BRAC is appropriate, we will work with Congress to identify and implement process improvements.

If you are confirmed, and if Congress authorized another BRAC round, how would you set priorities for infrastructure reduction and consolidation across DOD?

If confirmed, and if another BRAC round was authorized by Congress, I would focus the process on one simple principle: what infrastructure does the Department need now and into the future to ensure we have the most lethal military on the planet?

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?

Our approach to developing operational energy innovations must be closely linked to and motivated by warfighter needs. I will ensure that the DoD, intergovernmental, and industry partners who develop these technologies are linked to a known current or future requirement, either to increase lethality, or decrease operational risk. When proven innovations become available, I will ensure that the Pentagon leverages all tools, including linking them with emerging joint operational concepts where appropriate, to get them into the hands of the warfighters.

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?

Energy use requirements can be considered in the financial, cost, technological, and operational requirements.

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?

It's a management truism that if you focus on everything, you risk focusing on nothing. In a world of great power competition where technology is the currency of that competition, there are emerging technical domains which the United States must have a command of, and there is a need to set a vision for each modernization area and manage the Department's efforts at the highest levels to achieve its goals. A set of priorities that can command more focus while reorienting others where there are better, or less costly, solutions should be a top priority for our USD R&E efforts.

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

We still have a long way to go in creating avenues for the infusion and application of commercial technologies. We must increase our influence over commercial technology segments which are so large that our needs are seemingly small or insignificant, such as microelectronics and biotechnology. We do not have adequate test infrastructure and must prioritize manufacturability at scale. We must close the "valley of death" – that gulf between the laboratory benchtop and the battlefield. This requires a small set of priorities that receive more focus that can rapidly adapt to

a changing environment. The pace of innovation has fundamentally altered the battlefield, and our structure has not adapted to that yet.

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?

Coordination, integration, and reducing inadvertent duplication is a continuous process and is conducted at several layers. First, the Department relies on individual investigators to know and network with their peers across DOD, so each knows what the others are doing. Second, the Department uses so-called “Communities of Interest” as a manager-level function, with COIs for up to 20 topical areas such as sensors, that, taken together, span much of our technical pursuits. Each COI has membership that works in a particular area and provides a mechanism to exchange information on projects. Third, in January of every year – while the budgets are being built-- OUSD(R&E) pulls the technology leaders from across the Department for a three-day session to review the entire portfolio. Finally, at the end of each summer, each of the Services and Agencies presents their S&T programs as a prelude to the Department losing the budget by the end of the calendar year. We must continually measure progress and be courageous enough to stop duplication and competing efforts, acknowledge when failures are evident and rely on vendors if they have a solution that is already available on which we can build. With this mentality, we will also encourage the defense industrial base to innovate more and in DOD’s interest.

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

With the stand-up of the OUSD(R&E) in 2018, a new category of position was established – Principal Director (PD). The idea was that these individuals, one for each modernization priority, would chart the way ahead for each area. Their responsibilities were twofold: 1) to set the Department’s goals for the immediate, near-, mid- and far-term in their assigned technical area; and, 2) serve as the portfolio manager for the Department – not by direct control of program budgets but by the array of mechanisms that OSD has available to manage the Department’s activities. Over the years the roles of the PDs have lost focus. The functions of these PDs must be revitalized and there needs to be an objective process that quickly eliminated duplication and internal competition, while acknowledging failure and being open to other technology platforms that can be utilized by DoD.

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?

Yes. The Department’s critical technology areas are identified to ensure enduring advantage for the U.S. in new areas of competition. They are broad and there has been “mission creep” over the last four years. The Department must be laser focused on both advances enabled by technological evolution broadly, including overseas and, commercial sector innovations, as well as enabling technologies essential for solving national security challenges.

At the same time the DoD S&T enterprise has a great legacy of innovation, and we should strive to have it flourish with the minimum necessary oversight, but the maximum amount of productive work given its mission and its limitations. A good example of what your question gets at is the Joint Munitions Program. It is not elevated to a critical technology area but that does not mean it is unimportant. It is a long-term cross-Service activity that is joint with the Department of Energy's National Laboratories and, over the years, has given rise to innovations that are reflected in nearly every significant munition in our conventional weapon stockpile.

What steps would you take to improve the Department's ability to identify and adopt innovative technology?

The Department has for too long relied exclusively on the Defense Industrial Base for technology. While this worked during the Cold War, it is no longer the case. Today the technology investment in the private sector dwarfs that of the Department of Defense in certain areas. Therefore, we must take immediate steps to improve our capability to identify and internalize private sector technology. We also need to take advantage of private sector capital investments, talent and best practices. The Office of Strategic Capital and the Defense Innovation Unit is a good start, and we will look at their performance to ensure maximum effectiveness. But beyond DIU, we will look to establish other mechanisms and avenues for the infusion and adoption of commercial technology across the Department. This also should include procurement reform to ensure that its easier for DoD to do business with emerging technologies and a clear-eyed assessment of what should and should not be done by DoD, the Defense Industrial Base and the emerging technologies sector.

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?

Leveraging and protecting the National Security Industrial Base and National Security Innovation Base is critical to preserving our nation's ability to fight and win wars in an increasingly complex global environment. This effort requires a whole-of-government approach, and the Department has a big role to play. If confirmed, I would ensure that the Department works closely with industry to protect those bases against the full spectrum of foreign threats, including nefarious foreign investment, IP theft, cyber intrusion, infiltration of U.S. academia, and other means.

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?

We want the best and the brightest to contribute to our S&T endeavors. We have a robust defense research enterprise, and our universities are the envy of the world. We need to build on these strengths as we compete for technological superiority, and perhaps more importantly technical talent with our peer adversaries. In my view, we want maximum inclusivity in the national security S&T enterprise while forestalling nefarious actors. As to how we need to enforce existing policies with respect to disclosure, we should be realistic about what technologies are already public to ensure that we are not protecting sensitivity at the expense of innovation. That being said, we need

to align our protection strategies with university research integrity principles with respect to intellectual property theft whether from intrusion, inadvertent publication or loss of trade secrets by key employee attrition. There may be an opportunity to use artificial intelligence to increase our vigilance to identify nefarious exploitation activities and improve our national security S&T protection posture.

Military Talent Management

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

I believe that the U.S. military generally does a good job identifying and promoting top talent in our junior officer ranks, particularly during tactical assignments. However, the current promotion system does not necessarily select senior leaders for their institutional knowledge or strategic acumen, which are increasingly desirable as officers progress.

The military struggles to reward talent and retain talent because of the inflexible nature of its time-based compensation and promotion system. An exemplary officer can only expect to be promoted one or two years more quickly than a peer of average performance. That's a very different dynamic than the private sector.

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

The current evaluation system is good at identifying unperforming or counterproductive service members. The U.S. military's ability to remove or exclude underperforming servicemembers is significantly constrained by the health and size of an officer's or NCO's career field and year group. When the services have a surplus of servicemembers of a specific rank, promotion rates are lower. When recruiting and retention are challenging, promotion rates are higher. For example, in 2005, during the surge in Iraq, 97% of eligible Army Captains were promoted to Major. Historically, that percentage was closer to 80%.

What should be done to improve military talent management?

The Department of Defense should work with Congress to continue to refine elements of the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act to make promotion schedules more flexible. It should also make better use of its direct commissioning programs to introduce different perspectives into the force.

I also believe that the Department should ease transfer between reserve and active service. Permitting service members to more easily transition between statuses will improve access to talent across the breadth of the total force and introduce flexibility in military service in a manner that improves retention.

As the Department fights for talent, it must continue to improve its efforts to place the right person

in the right place to maximize the contributions of each service member to the mission of restoring lethality and deterrence to the Department and our country.

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?

Every service member, regardless of gender, 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.

When the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” was announced, I was preparing to mobilize to Afghanistan. I personally knew soldiers impacted by the repeal and I was unconcerned by the policy change. I have always focused on whether my fellow soldiers could do their job. Military service should be open to all Americans who can meet its high standards and maintain readiness.

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.

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

There is no place in our military for sexual assault or sexual harassment. Sexual assault is a crime within and outside of the military. It destroys unit cohesion and readiness and deters both men and women from serving. Congress and the Department have taken a series of helpful actions to reduce the incidence of sexual assault in the military, but more must be done.

If confirmed, I will continue to refine policies and programs implemented over the last four years to reduce the incidence of sexual assault and improve support to victims. I anticipate ensuring high-level focus on this issue; including appointing a high-level position dedicated to ensuring a focus on ending sexual assault in the military. Every servicemember deserves the opportunity to serve their nation without fear of harassment or assault. If the worst happens, the process for justice must be fair and swift, perpetrators brought to justice, and victims have both the services they need and are ensured the ability to continue their serve without sanction or setback to themselves or their careers. As well, the Department must do better to train and ingrain the fact that sexual abuse and assault is not tolerated in the force.

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

If confirmed, I will initiate a review of the Department's existing authorities, and the implementation status of the recommendations made in the 90-day Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military to determine if my existing authority is sufficient.

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 take a leadership role in prioritizing prevention and effective responses to sexual assault and harassment. I will place a high-level official in charge, and will oversee implementation of the Department's campaign plan to prevent sexual assault and harassment across the military and empower subordinates to recommend and enact additional reforms and programs to further deter harmful behaviors in our ranks. We must ensure that our training, measures of accountability, and programs to provide victims support remain adaptable and become increasingly effective.

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?

I think that the decline in end strength since 2021 is due to recruiting challenges rather than a conclusion that our military needed fewer forces. This has occurred during an era of increasing security challenges. Therefore, it is likely that the military's current end strength is insufficient to accomplish its mission. I will need additional data, including wargame outputs, analysis, and

opinions from senior leaders, before I can verify that conclusion or recommend where and how a growth in end strength should occur.

If confirmed, I will assess end strength levels in concert with the Services, the OSD staff, and the Joint Staff against appropriate defense planning scenarios. Any growth in the military services' end strength should have the full support of Congress. I would only ask for that support after reviewing service plans for force structure, modernization, training, and logistical requirements in line with an updated National Defense Strategy.

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?

Any change to the aggregate military end strength should be informed by a thorough review of existing operational plans, service force structures, and predicted resourcing. I look forward to sharing my recommendations with Congress once I have completed that review and appropriate collaboration inside the incoming administration.

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?

As a veteran who proudly served in the National Guard, I greatly value the incredible contributions that the reserve components make to the Department and the nation. Reserve forces oscillate between operational and strategic roles based on the tenor and tempo of the operational environment. During the War on Terror, the nation required reserve forces to serve an operational role to preserve readiness in the active force. During the Cold War, reserve forces played a strategic role. Today, the geopolitical and U.S. commitments require something in-between those two roles. Some reserve units must stay at a higher state of readiness because the capabilities they provide do not exist in quantity in the joint force. Other reserve formations offer a strategic reserve.

If confirmed, I will work with our military services, the Reserves, and the National Guard to ensure that resources flow to the units with the highest operational priorities. I will also strive to

modernize policies and streamline training and readiness requirements for reserve components to increase their readiness for war.

The nation demands a lot of its reserve soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen. If confirmed, I will welcome opportunities for the Department of Defense to work with Congress to improve the quality of life and readiness of the reserve service members and components.

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?

I fully support reducing barriers for members of all components to transition between active and reserve components. If confirmed, I will carefully examine whether existing legislative authorities are sufficient to accomplish that objective. If they prove insufficient, I will share any appropriate and cleared legislative requests with Congress and work together to accomplish that goal.

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, the military’s operational tempo remains high. If confirmed, I will work with the Undersecretary of Personnel and Readiness and the military services 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.

I will also be frank with Congress concerning our military’s capabilities and capacities to ensure that commitments of U.S. forces are made with as full an understanding of the resulting impacts as possible.

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?

The low percentage of Americans eligible to serve and interested in serving in our nation's military causes me great concern. The current recruiting climate appears to have directly led to a reduction in our military's end strength. If the percentage of young people eligible, qualified, and willing to serve in our nation's military continues to decline, our military will face an even greater challenge in maintaining the end strength necessary to meet operational requirements.

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?

Many individuals in this age range are disqualified from military service due to medical conditions, including obesity. Some are disqualified for minor conditions they had as children or teenagers, but they have since overcome. If confirmed, I will task the Undersecretary for Personnel and Readiness to determine whether the military's current medical standards for enlistment unnecessarily exclude young Americans who desire to serve our nation and are capable of doing so.

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

The U.S. military has become increasingly isolated from the rest of society. Previous generations learned of the virtue of military service from coming into contact with our large veteran population. Today, that population is smaller and decreasing in size as we lose the brave generations who served in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. Military services and the Department must do more to increase interactions between the U.S. population, servicemembers, and veterans to dispel negative misperceptions about serving in uniform.

Moreover, the U.S. military needs to confront the reality and perception that it has become too focused on political issues of social justice, political correctness, critical race theory, climate change, etc. The military is an a-political institution that should be focused only on lethality, equality, meritocracy, and readiness. When we return to those basics, I believe young people will be attracted to that.

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?

If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department and the Military Services maintain high standards. I will not accept any lowering of standards, as that would endanger the readiness of our military. However, maintaining high recruitment and retention standards is not incompatible with achieving authorized end strength levels.

The Department and the Military Services must play a role in inspiring America's young people to serve, ensuring they meet the high standards of enlistment, and developing them so that they continue to meet those high standards during their careers.

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?

Regularly evaluating the military compensation system is necessary to ensure that pay and benefits for service members remain competitive with the private sector. We must work to effectively convey our exciting and unique value proposition to the American public.

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

The United States military is more racially and ethnically diverse today than at any other time in its history. Race, however, is just one component of diversity: The military services have been less successful in recruiting proportionately from each region of the United States over time. If confirmed, I will work with the Undersecretary of Personnel and Readiness and the Military services to develop strategies to appeal to young people all across the country.

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, and our military does a fantastic job of developing that ability in our young people. Our nation's military has required servicemembers from a rich variety of backgrounds to work with one another since the American Revolution.

Service members embrace that an individual's value is based on what you bring to the fight, not on your race, religion, or creed.

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 morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) services.

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

If confirmed, I will conduct a review of existing quality of life and MWR programs to identify those most essential to supporting military communities and maintaining the readiness of the force.

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?

Congress and the Department of Defense have both been active in attempting to improve the availability and quality of childcare on military installations. If confirmed, I will work to implement the childcare reforms passed in the FY2025 National Defense Authorization Act. As a department, we will continue to seek out ways to make compensation for childcare employees more competitive and to increase our capacity in CDCs.

Additionally, if confirmed, I will encourage the Department to actively collaborate with Congress to develop new ideas about how DoD can provide childcare to military families outside of the CDC model.

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?

If confirmed, I will ensure that service members who are non-deployable for more than 12 consecutive months will receive an individualized review that weighs whether or not their continued service is in the nation's best interest. If not, they should be considered for separation from service or referral into the Disability Evaluation System 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 million beneficiaries.

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

Keeping our military personnel and their families healthy and training medical providers to care for our operating forces are both essential tasks. We must resource both and provide quality healthcare to service members and their families in peacetime and war. If the MHS lacks the capability and capacity to perform all three of those tasks, I would clearly convey to Congress that the Department needed additional resources or authorities to ensure it could accomplish all three.

The MHS was recently reorganized to increase focus on combat casualty care while maintaining 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?

If confirmed, I will work with the Undersecretary of Personnel and Readiness and the Director of the Defense Health Agency to ensure that the Department's requirements for medical personnel adequately staff military treatment facilities and deployable formations. Collectively, we will explore innovative solutions to attract civilian and military medical professionals to provide quality healthcare.

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

As Secretary of Defense, I would ask the Undersecretary of Personnel and Readiness to continue to seek out efficiencies from the creation of the Defense Health Agency and to appropriately revise policy to balance the amount and types of care of beneficiaries and servicemembers receive at non-Department facilities compared to military treatment facilities. I would also encourage staff to actively engage with Congress to devise new ideas to make military healthcare more efficient and effective.

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 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?

Generally, I believe that the complexity of personnel regulations and processes is a large impediment to effectively and efficiently managing the Department's vast civilian workforce. As with the Department's acquisition system, despite the existence of numerous personnel management authorities, it is difficult to develop and retain personnel with sufficient expertise in managing such a complex system.

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?

I would support assessing the potential of a new "title 10" civilian workforce and concomitant authorities. Any new authorities should simplify personnel management processes and provide hiring managers with clear discretion to recognize private sector experience as equivalent to federal civilian experience.

What recommendations do you have to improve DOD's management of its civilian workforce?

If confirmed, I will work with Congress and Department experts to evaluate methods to invest in our talent management workforce and modernize our hiring practices.

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

Department of Defense civilians form an important part of our team. They provide continuity and expertise to our armed forces, and many of them are veterans themselves.

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?

As close collaboration between the Department and the Intelligence Community is vital to national security, I believe that the Department should always be working to improve the effectiveness of that collaboration. Some of the most critical areas of collaboration include intelligence priorities, resource management, and information sharing.

While DoD coordination and collaboration with the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) and broader Intelligence Community has improved, we can do better. If confirmed, I will work closely with the DNI to ensure that the Department deploys its intelligence assets in a manner that most effectively supports the National Security Strategy. Specifically, DoD will work closely with Congress and the ODNI to identify and address authorities (Title 10 and Title 50) that are ambiguous and confusing.

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.