

Advance Policy Questions for the Honorable Jessica L. Wright
Nominee for Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

Defense Reforms

The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 and the Special Operations reforms have strengthened the war-fighting readiness of our Armed Forces. They have enhanced civilian control and clearly delineated the operational chain of command and the responsibilities and authorities of the combatant commanders, and the role of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They have also clarified the responsibility of the Military Departments to recruit, organize, train, equip, and maintain forces for assignment to the combatant commanders.

Do you see the need for modifications of any Goldwater-Nichols Act provisions?

I do not see the need for any modifications. I believe that the Goldwater-Nichols Act has significantly contributed to the strong framework for today's joint warfighting capabilities. It has considerably improved inter-service and joint relationships, promoting greater effectiveness of the Military departments and Combatant Commands.

If so, what areas do you believe might be appropriate to address in these modifications?

Currently I am unaware of any areas where modifications are needed. If I am confirmed, I will continue to assess any further need to legislative modifications.

Qualifications

What background and experience do you have that you believe qualifies you for this position?

In October 2012, I was designated as the Acting Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. Further, in December 2012, I was named the Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. In both of these roles, I supported the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense in the areas of Total Force Management as it relates to readiness; National Guard and Reserve component affairs; health affairs; training; and personnel requirements and management, including equal opportunity, morale, welfare, recreation, and quality of life matter. I have been responsible for the recruitment, career development, pay and benefits of 1.4 million Active Duty military personnel, 1.3 million Guard and Reserve personnel, 680,000 DoD civilians, and was responsible for overseeing the overall state of military readiness. In addition, I served this country in uniform for over 35 years, a large part of that time in key leadership positions as an Active Guard Reserve officer as well as a traditional Reserve Component member. My last assignment for over seven years was as The Adjutant General of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and Commander of the

Pennsylvania National Guard where I worked with a wide variety of officials at the Federal, State and local levels. During that time, I was responsible for a vast array of programs including the personnel, equipping, training, mobilizations, deployment and demobilizations of over 20,000 guards men and women, the management and implementation of the PA National Guard responsibility for the National Special Security Event G-20, the role the PA National Guard played in providing support to Hurricane Katrina, and several aspects of the Presidential Inauguration in January 2009, to name just a few. I was also responsible for all of the Veterans programs within the Commonwealth as well as our Family support networks, Yellow Ribbon and Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) Programs.

Major Challenges

In your view, what are the major challenges confronting the next Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness?

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the all-volunteer force and it must remain our highest priority to maintain the quality and readiness of our Nation's Total Force. With shifting operational needs abroad and the difficult fiscal realities at home, we will need to rebalance, adapt and evolve our workforce to meet these challenges. We must do this also by providing commensurate compensation, benefits, support and medical care to our Service members and their families. As we face programmed reductions in military end-strength, civilian workforce, and contract services, we must be vigilant in order to sustain force readiness and retain our high quality military and civilian personnel that have made our military the strongest, most capable, and respected fighting force in the history of the world.

The Department leadership is collectively focused on eliminating sexual assault from the Total Force. Even one sexual assault is one too many and out of step with the core values of the American military. Likewise, P&R must keep, at the forefront, preventing suicide and addressing mental health as we complete our mission in Afghanistan and assist our transitioning Service members to be successful and productive in their civilian life.

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

If confirmed, I will continue to support the force readiness and personnel risk reduction priorities of Secretary Hagel and Deputy Secretary Carter. I will further assess range of challenges and issues confronting the Department in these areas. I fully recognize this is a team effort and that significant progress cannot be made without leadership and close partnerships. I intend to continue to work closely with the Congress; colleagues in the Office of Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, and the Military Departments and Services; as well as with critical partners across the inter-agency and advocacy groups to make progress on these challenges.

Duties

Section 136 of Title 10, United States Code, provides that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness shall perform such duties and exercise such powers as the Secretary of Defense may prescribe in the areas of military readiness, total force management, military and civilian personnel requirements, military and civilian personnel training, military and civilian family matters, exchange, commissary, and non-appropriated fund activities, personnel requirements for weapons support, National Guard and reserve components, and health affairs.

Assuming you are confirmed, what duties do you expect to be assigned to you?

If confirmed, I intend to carry out my responsibilities, functions, relationships, and authorities, in accordance with the law and consistent with DoD Directive 5124.2, "Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R))." I would be the Secretary of Defense's principal staff assistant and advisor in all matters relating to the management and well-being of military and civilian personnel in the DoD Total Force and for oversight of the readiness of this force. I would develop policies and provide oversight for the direction of plans and programs governing Total Force management as it relates to manpower; force management; planning; program integration; readiness; National Guard and Reserve component affairs; health affairs; training; personnel requirements and management; and compensation. This also includes equal opportunity, morale, welfare, recreation, and quality of life matters for both civilian and military personnel and their families.

In carrying out these duties, what would be your relationship with the following officials?

- **The Secretary of Defense**

If confirmed, I expect to serve the Secretary as his principal advisor and advocate for Total Force Management as it relates to readiness; National Guard and Reserve component affairs; health affairs; training; and personnel requirements and management, including equal opportunity, morale, welfare, recreation, and quality of life matters.

- **The Deputy Secretary of Defense**

If confirmed, I would expect my relationship with the Deputy Secretary to be fundamentally the same as that with the Secretary of Defense.

- **The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs**

If confirmed, ASD(HA) will be my principal advisor for all DoD health policies, programs, and force health protection activities.

- **The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs**

If confirmed, ASD(RA) will be my principal advisor for all Reserve component matters in the Department of Defense.

- **The Department of Defense General Counsel**

If confirmed, I would anticipate regular communication, coordination of actions, and exchange of views with the General Counsel and the attorneys assigned to focus on personnel policy matters. I would expect to seek and follow the advice of the General Counsel on legal and procedural matters pertaining to the policies promulgated from the offices of the USD(P&R) office.

- **The Department of Defense Inspector General**

The DoD Inspector General is in charge of promoting integrity, accountability, and improvement of Department of Defense personnel, programs and operations to support the Department's mission and serve the public interest. If confirmed, I will fully assist in any investigations or issues that relate to personnel and readiness.

- **The Service Secretaries**

If confirmed, I would hope to work closely with the Secretaries of the Military Departments on all matters relating to the management, well-being, and readiness of military and civilian personnel in the DoD Total Force structure.

- **The Service Chiefs**

If confirmed, I would hope to work closely with the Secretaries of the Military Departments on all matters relating to the management, well-being, and readiness of military and civilian personnel in the DoD Total Force structure.

- **The Assistant Secretaries for Manpower and Reserve Affairs of the Army, Navy, and Air Force**

If confirmed, I would intend to further strengthen the partnership with these officials in carrying out the human resource obligations of the Services for the Total Force.

- **The Deputy Chiefs of Staff of the Army and Air Force for Personnel, the Chief of Naval Personnel, and the Deputy Commandant of the Marine Corps for Manpower and Reserve Affairs**

If confirmed, I intend to partner in effective working relationships with these officers to ensure that DoD attracts, motivates and retains the quality people it needs.

- **The combatant commanders**

If confirmed, I would hope to work closely with the Combatant Commanders on all matters relating to the management, well-being, and readiness of the DoD Total Force.

- **The Joint Staff, particularly the Director for Manpower and Personnel (J-1)**

If confirmed, I intend to partner a close coordinating relationship with the Joint Staff regarding manpower and personnel policy issues.

- **The Chief of the National Guard Bureau**

The Chief, National Guard Bureau is a principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense, through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, on matters involving non-federalized National Guard forces and on other matters as determined by the Secretary of Defense. If confirmed, I look forward to a continued strong relationship, through ASD(RA), to ensure effective integration of National Guard capabilities into a cohesive Total Force.

- **Director, Defense Health Agency**

If confirmed, I plan to work closely with the Director of the Defense Health Agency (soon to be established), through ASD(HA), in all matter relating to the Military Health System and common medical services shared across all Services.

- **Director, Office of Personnel Management**

If confirmed, I intend to partner a close coordinating relationship with the Director, Office of Personnel Management on matters regarding civilian personnel policies.

Systems and Support for Wounded Warriors

Service members and civilians who are wounded or injured in combat operations deserve the highest priority from their Service and the Federal Government for support services, healing and recuperation, rehabilitation, evaluation for return to duty, successful transition from active duty if required, and continuing support after retirement or discharge. Despite the enactment of legislation and renewed emphasis over the past several years, many challenges remain.

What is your assessment of the progress made to date by the Department of Defense and the Services to improve the care, management, and transition of seriously ill and injured servicemembers and their families?

The Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) continue to make progress in this area. We have reduced the overall disability evaluation time from over 500 days to 400 days and are reducing the post-separation wait for VA disability determination. We are also actively collaborating on the establishment of joint DoD/VA policy guidance, processes, and metrics for coordination of case management and care coordination programs within the two Departments related to the delivery of care, benefits and services to wounded, ill or injured Service members and their families. Efficiencies we have made toward expediting the paperless transfer of medical, personnel and financial data to VA and the electronic exchange of information to the Veterans Benefits Management System have both contributed to elimination of the current backlog of disability benefit claims and will benefit future Veterans by enabling VA to process claims faster and more accurately, thereby allowing those Veterans to receive earned benefits more quickly

If confirmed, I will continue to ensure an electronic and seamless transition from recovery to reintegration for our wounded, ill or injured Service members. Additionally, I would continue the Department's collaborative efforts with the VA on compensation and benefits, transition assistance and care coordination.

What are the strengths upon which continued progress should be based?

The greatest strength is the DoD's commitment to take care of its wounded warriors and their families. That commitment will guide continued efforts by DoD and VA. Fine tuning case management and automation of certain aspects of the process will aid in reducing processing times.

What are the weaknesses that need to be corrected?

The DoD and VA have undertaken a total review and revamping of our approach to case management – policy, process and IT. For example, DoD, VA and the Military Departments Care Coordinators are piloting a case management tool in the National Capital Region and Texas. The goal is to gain insights, and use these insights; to integrate non-medical and medical case information to assist recovering wounded, ill and injured Service members obtain a new-normal life outcome; link data transfer between recovery care and disability evaluation; and ensure quality assurance across the continuum of care. The pilot is ongoing and will conclude by summer 2014.

If confirmed, are there additional strategies and resources that you would pursue to increase support for wounded service members and their families, and to monitor their progress in returning to duty or to civilian life?

If confirmed, working closely with Congress and the Military Departments, I will continue to evaluate what additional support, including resources and/or authority, is necessary to address the needs of the wounded Service members, their families and caregivers. For example, in addition to the above pilot, we are taking first steps to

expand our Operation Warfighter (OWF) and Education and Employment Initiative (E2I) opportunities beyond the government sector to include the private sector. Additionally, we have a robust adaptive sports and rehabilitation program, including such activities as gardening, arts, and team and individual sports.

Studies conducted as a result of the revelations at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in 2007 pointed to the need to reform the disability evaluation system. The Integrated DES (IDES) program was established to integrate the DOD and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability systems to improve and expedite processing of service members through the disability evaluation system. While the processing times under the IDES were initially encouraging, service members are now mired in long VA disability rating and case disposition wait times, and the VA's portion of the system appears to be overloaded.

What is your assessment of the need to further streamline and improve the IDES?

DoD has made great progress in increasing staffing and improving the performance of our portions of the IDES processes. DoD is completing its IDES core processes in 148 days against a 105-day goal. Our sustained improvement has resulted in moving a large case load downstream to VA increasing their IDES backlog. As a result, VA's inventory of cases awaiting preliminary rating has increased 46% since January 2013, to 9,192 cases and the VA IDES core process timeliness has increased to 272 days against a 100-day goal.

We are helping VA improve service delivery by ensuring the case files presented to them are as complete as possible. DoD is piloting an electronic case file capability to eliminate mailing and accounting of paper records by the VA and the Army has stationed 20 Service members at VA's Seattle rating site to help fill the gaps in DoD case files when they are identified. The intended affect is to help VA have cases "ready to rate" to allow them to adjudicate IDES cases more quickly. If confirmed, I plan to continue to look at all aspects of the system to see where opportunities exist for improvement.

If confirmed, how will you address any need for change?

DoD continues to work toward a more efficient IDES using senior- level work groups and leadership councils as well as capitalizing on the information presented to us by the Recovering Warrior Task Force, Government Accountability Office, and Military Department Inspector Generals. DoD is currently undertaking several Congressional Studies that will give us further opportunities to enhance IDES processes. Where there are efficiencies that can be achieved by changing policy, we will do so. Additionally, we will continue our work with our VA partners to align our programs and resources together to agree on the proper paperless IT system and streamlined process changes and appropriately address them across our Departmental boundaries.

If confirmed, what role would you expect to play in ensuring that the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs achieve the Administration's objectives in DoD and VA collaboration?

In my capacity as Acting Under Secretary, I have been personally involved with DoD and VA collaborative efforts to achieve the Administration's objectives and all other joint efforts with VA. If confirmed, I expect to continue to take a personal role. I will continue to provide oversight and strategic guidance, and require the staff to maintain constant contact with their VA counterparts at all echelons. I will continue to personally meet with my VA counterpart on a regular and frequent basis, formally and informally, and engage with the Secretary and the Congress, and the White House staff.

Repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"

What is your assessment of the effect on the force of the repeal of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy?

The repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" has had no impact on military readiness, effectiveness, unit cohesion, recruiting or retention of the Armed Forces. We attribute this success to our comprehensive pre-repeal training programs, combined with the discipline of our Service members and continued close monitoring and enforcement of standards by our military leaders at all levels.

What military benefits are currently being provided to same-sex spouses and to same-sex partners?

It is the Department's policy to treat all married military personnel equally. Therefore, the same benefits are available to all military spouses, regardless of whether they are in same-sex or opposite-sex marriages. No benefits are provided to domestic partners, regardless of whether they are in same-sex or opposite-sex domestic partnerships.

Are there any additional military benefits that should be considered for same-sex spouses and partners?

No, it is the Department's policy to treat all married military personnel equally. The same benefits are available to all military spouses, regardless of whether they are in same-sex or opposite-sex marriages.

What is your assessment of the current and projected future impact to resourcing that will be required to provide military benefits to same-sex spouses and partners?

The costs associated with same-sex benefits are not significant from a cost perspective and will be absorbed within the existing Department budget.

If confirmed, what actions, if any, would you pursue in this regard?

If confirmed, I will continue to ensure that all military personnel and their spouses are treated equally with access to the same benefits.

According to press accounts, two States—Texas and Mississippi—are refusing to allow same-sex spouses to apply for federal benefits in state-supported facilities, citing conflicts with State law.

If confirmed, what actions would you take to ensure that members of the National Guard of the United States will receive the federal benefits to which they are entitled?

Identification cards are currently available in all Federal facilities for all military spouses, regardless of whether they are in same-sex or opposite-sex marriages. The Department is currently examining the matter of those National Guard sites that are not issuing identification cards to same-sex spouses with our legal counsel and evaluating options to address the issue. In the meantime, we are asking same sex spouses desiring cards to go to the nearest federal facility.

On September 4, 2013 you signed a policy memorandum that authorized “administrative absence to obtain a legal marriage” when a member is part of a couple that desires to get married and is assigned to a duty station located more than 100 miles from a U.S. State, the District of Columbia, or other jurisdiction that allows the couple to get married. This memorandum revoked an August 13, 2013 change to Department of Defense Instruction 1327.06 that authorized uncharged leave for same-sex couples to travel from the area of a permanent duty station for the purpose of obtaining a legal marriage. The authority established in your September 4th memo, while neutral on its face, appears to only benefit same sex couples who want to be married and not heterosexual couples.

What is your understanding concerning whether there are any circumstances in which heterosexual members who want to obtain a legal marriage would be eligible for uncharged leave under the policy set forth in your September 4, 2013 memorandum?

We have identified several situations in which heterosexual members who want to obtain a legal marriage would be eligible for administrative absence under the current policy. The nature of military service often involves short notice deployments and temporary duty to far off or foreign locations. That service does not always allow a member to meet the requirements necessary to obtain a marriage license in the state in which the member is assigned. Some states have age restrictions which require that one or both members of a couple be of a certain age or to obtain a parent’s or guardian’s permission before marrying. This permission may not be obtainable within the limited timeframe that military service sometimes allows. Finally, several states impose a waiting period to obtain a marriage license which may not be achievable for a deploying member of the

Armed Forces. All of these are examples in which a commander may grant an administrative absence to facilitate a legal marriage.

In your view is the use of regular leave accrued by all members of the armed forces at the rate of 2 ½ calendar days for each month of active service, as authorized by title 10 U.S. Code Section 701(a), inadequate for the purpose of allowing leave for all service members who want to be married to be married?

The current accrual rate of annual leave is sufficient for most Service members who choose to obtain a legal marriage. This policy however, was crafted to allow flexibility for those members who cannot obtain a legal marriage within 100 miles of their assignment. Because laws differ around the globe, providing members time to ensure their relationships are recognized under law is a reasonable accommodation. In addition, the Department has committed to conduct annual reviews to determine if this policy remains necessary.

What is your understanding of the authority of the Secretary of Defense to create a new category of administrative absence, for 7 to 10 days in a paid status, for members of the armed services in circumstances where the member could otherwise use earned leave?

The authority for approved absences from duty already exists under current OSD policy (DoDI 1327.06), and there is long-standing precedent that commanders have discretionary authority to grant administrative absence to Service members. Examples of similar administrative absences include house hunting, attendance at professional meetings, and time off to officiate at a retirement ceremony.

How does the policy in your September 4th memorandum promote the express goal of treating all military personnel equally and making the same benefits available to all qualified members?

In an effort to treat everyone equally, and after careful consideration and consultation with the Chiefs and Secretaries of the Services, as well as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, our September 4th policy was expressly crafted so that it applied equally to both same sex and opposite sex couples.

Religious Guidelines

In your view, do Department of Defense policies concerning religious accommodation in the military appropriately accommodate the free exercise of religion and other beliefs, including individual expressions of belief, without impinging on those who have different beliefs, including no religious belief?

Yes, in my view, current DoD policies appropriately accommodate the free exercise of religion for all Service members in the pluralistic environment that is the U.S. military.

The Department of Defense does not endorse any one religion or religious organization, and provides free access of religion for all members of the military services. The Department respects (and supports by its policy) the rights of others to their own religious beliefs, including the right to hold no beliefs.

Under current law and policy, are individual expressions of belief accommodated so long as they do not impact good order and discipline?

Current law and policy ensure Service members' rights to observe the tenets of their respective religions, as well as to hold no specific religious conviction or affiliation. The Chaplaincies of the Military Departments advise and assist commanders in the discharge of their responsibilities to provide for the free exercise of religion in the context of military service as guaranteed by the Constitution, assist commanders in managing Religious Affairs and serve as the principal advisors to commanders to ensure these expressions of belief do not adversely impact mission accomplishment, including good order and discipline.

In your view, do existing policies and practices regarding public prayers offered by military chaplains in a variety of formal and informal settings strike the proper balance between a chaplain's ability to pray in accordance with his or her religious beliefs and the rights of other service members with different beliefs, including no religious beliefs?

Existing DoD policies provide military chaplains with sufficient guidance that allows them to balance to the extent their religious beliefs allow, in both formal and informal settings, their own faith practices with the rights of others who may hold different or no religious beliefs. The Chaplaincies of the Military Departments train and equip chaplains with the knowledge and skill to help them make this proper balance.

Section 533 of the FY13 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 112-239) protects rights of conscience of members of the armed forces and chaplains of such members, and prohibits, so far as possible, use of such beliefs as the basis of any adverse personnel action, discrimination, or denial of promotion, schooling, training, or assignment. Members of some religious denominations have sincerely held beliefs in opposition to same-sex marriage.

In your view, may a member of the armed forces who has a sincerely held belief in opposition to same-sex marriage be subject to adverse personnel action or similar other adverse action, if he or she shares those personal views on the subject in an official capacity?

The issue – a Service member expressing personal views when speaking in his/her official capacity, is significant. Service members speaking in their official capacities are expected to express official views, especially when dealing with subordinates. Expressing personal views while speaking in an official capacity can create confusion,

and may give the impression of encouraging disagreement with DoD policy or the law. Service members are entitled to have personal views and to express them in personal conversations; however, service members are not entitled to use their official capacity as a forum to express their personal views. Service members who express personal views when speaking in an official capacity may be held accountable for what they say.

Can he or she be subject to adverse personnel action if they express personal views on same sex marriage in their personal capacity?

Expressions of personal views by Service members in their private capacities generally are permissible because they are integral to the free speech and the free exercise of religion. Traditionally, private conversations in the barracks have included expressions of views contrary to DoD policy. However, personal expressions which disrupt the mission or have an adverse impact on good order and discipline may cause the member to be counseled by his/her chain of command, not for the views but for the disruption to the mission.

The Independent Review Related to Fort Hood observed that “DOD policy regarding religious accommodation lacks the clarity necessary to help commanders distinguish appropriate religious practices from those that might indicate a potential for violence or self-radicalization.” Recommendation 2.7 of the Final Recommendations urged the Department to update policy to clarify guidelines for religious accommodation and Recommendation 2.8 urged the Department to task the Defense Science Board to “undertake a multi-disciplinary study to identify behavioral indicators of violence and self-radicalization...”.

What action has the Department taken with respect to these recommendations?

Ensuring appropriate accommodations for the free exercise of religions and protecting Service members from violence and harm are both of vital importance. Pursuant to Recommendation 2.7, the Department updated its policy on religious accommodation to ensure religious freedoms and practices are accommodated to the fullest extent possible considering mission readiness, discipline and unit cohesion. This policy is in the final stage of revision to incorporate language from the FY 2013 NDAA, Section 533 which protects the rights of conscience of members of the Armed Forces and chaplains. Regarding Recommendation 2.8, the Department did task the Defense Science Board (DSB) to undertake a study.

Prevention of and Response to Sexual Assaults

What additional steps would you take, if confirmed, to address the problem of sexual assaults in the military?

We recognize there is no single solution to solving the problem of sexual assault and have adopted a multi-disciplinary approach that includes a variety of initiatives in prevention, investigation, accountability, victim assistance and assessments. If

confirmed, I will continue to work to ensure our program prevents crimes from occurring in the first place. But, when crimes do occur, we must have comprehensive, effective, accessible and responsive investigative and victim assistance services available. I will work to ensure that our program continues to educate all Service members, frontline commanders and leaders and hold them accountable in establishing a culture of dignity and respect; fully implements our DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Strategic Plan and the 16 recently-announced Secretary of Defense directives; and sustains our current level of attention, focus, and emphasis throughout the entire Department.

In 2012, for the fourth year in a row, there were more than 3000 reported cases of sexual assault in the military, including 2558 unrestricted reports, and an additional 816 restricted reports. Moreover, a recent survey conducted by the DOD indicates that the actual number of sexual offenses could be considerably higher, as 6.1 percent of active duty women and 1.2 percent of active duty men surveyed reported having experienced an incident of unwanted sexual contact in the previous 12 months. This survey has been criticized by some because its conclusions are extrapolated from an unscientific sample set and the questions asked in the survey were too imprecise.

What is your assessment of the scientific accuracy of the DoD survey?

The Defense Manpower Data Center's (DMDC) survey division has conducted surveys of the military and DoD community using stratified random sampling for over 20 years, subscribing to methodological best practices promoted by the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR). The scientific method of stratified random sampling is the principal method used by government statistical agencies and private survey firms that conduct surveys, such as the Army Research Institute (ARI), Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Gallup, RAND, WESTAT, RTI, Pew, and Roper.

For this survey, DMDC worked with DoD's legal experts here at Headquarters and in the field to ensure behaviors prohibited in the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) were appropriately captured in the unwanted sexual contact (USC) survey question. The behaviorally-based question includes a range of physical behaviors prohibited by the UCMJ (from unwanted sexual touching of the breasts or buttocks through completed sexual intercourse), but does not include unwanted touching of non-sexual areas of the body (e.g., the shoulder, back, legs, or arms) or offensive verbal remarks or gestures (these behaviors are captured separately).

What is your assessment of the scientific accuracy of the interpretation of the results of that survey in the 2012 report?

The accuracy of survey results are dependent on whether the sample used is randomly drawn and conforms to scientific "best practices" for sampling and weighting procedures. Criticism of the 2012 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members (WGRA) as "unscientific" and unreliable is uniformly false and based on a basic lack of

understanding of the scientific sampling and weighting methods employed by DMDC. DMDC uses state of the art scientific statistical techniques to draw conclusions from random, representative samples of the active duty population and can accurately generalize to the full active duty population using a complex, but precise, scientific weighting process that accounts for sampling error, nonresponse, and the necessary oversampling of smaller populations within the sample. In conducting this research, DMDC has a decided advantage over many public and private opinion pollsters since DMDC is the DoD repository for all military personnel data and is able to use demographic data to inform the sampling and weighting process. It also allows respondents the ability to answer sensitive questions without disclosing identifying demographic information -- a strategy strongly encouraged by experts in the field, but rarely available to other polling organizations.

If confirmed, what actions will you take to obtain better data on sexual assaults in the military?

DMDC is already working closely with the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO), the Services, and senior DoD leaders to look for ways to continue to improve the 2014 WGRA survey and refine the metrics and measures that scientifically and effectively evaluate sexual assault within the DoD. DoD is also working with other agencies, such as CDC, to help increase the comparability of DOD data to other sexual assault victimization data collected about civilians across the US.

I have also directed that DMDC and the Services coordinate their survey efforts to minimize burden on Service members and maximize the sharing of information from each survey effort. Coordination of survey efforts to minimize respondent burden is critical as we must recognize the adverse impact from over-surveying the same population, which has caused a decline in response rates across DoD surveys.

DMDC is also currently conducting a scientific review of non-response to these DoD surveys. This analysis will identify whether those who did not respond to the survey would have provided significantly different answers than those who did respond. Findings from this analysis may contribute to improving the sampling methodology for future WGRA surveys. If confirmed, I will continue to ensure we use the most scientific and effective survey methods to assess sexual assault in DoD.

What is your assessment of the current DOD sexual assault prevention and response program?

Our Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program is dynamic and we are consistently assessing it and striving to benefit from our lessons learned, best and promising practices, and inputs from stakeholders across our nation. When methods are identified that can advance our efforts to build trust and improve our response, we act to implement these upgrades when they are within the Department's authorities; when a best practice is identified, we work to make it a common practice throughout the Department. If

confirmed, I will continue to work closely with Members of Congress to assess current policy and identify needed changes.

What is your view of the provision for restricted and unrestricted reporting of sexual assaults?

When a victim makes the difficult decision to come forward and report, we need to provide multiple reporting options. I support offering victims two reporting options, based on previous studies and commissions that found that some victims choose to forgo reporting and support services for fear of automatically initiating a criminal investigation. To address this barrier, the Department instituted two reporting options: Restricted and Unrestricted Reporting. Initiated in 2005, the Restricted Reporting option allows victims to confidentially access medical care and advocacy services without initiating an official investigation or command notification. This differs from the Unrestricted Reporting option, in which when a victim makes an Unrestricted Report, it is referred for investigation, and command is notified. As with Restricted Reporting, victims may receive healthcare, counseling, and advocacy services. Since 2005, over 5,000 Service members have used the Unrestricted Reporting option.

What is your view of the adequacy of DOD oversight of military service implementation of the DOD and service policies for the prevention of and response to sexual assaults?

In my view, we are providing extensive oversight and accountability of this important mission, and are continuing to employ multiple accountability tools to assess the issue of sexual assault prevention and response (SAPR) in DoD. The Department publishes two accountability reports on sexual assault each year: the *DoD Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military* and the *Annual Report on Sexual Harassment and Violence at the Military Service Academies (MSA)*. These comprehensive reports serve as the Department's primary means for evaluating and communicating oversight of its SAPR program, and provide transparency and accountability for every report of sexual assault.

In addition, Department of Defense Inspector General (DoD IG) reviews are a valuable tool used to ensure accountability, integrity, and efficiency. To date, the DoD IG has conducted three separate reviews to assess different aspects of how the overall system responds to and handles sexual assault cases. Additionally, in 2011, the DoD IG formed a new Violent Crime Division focused on evaluating and improving the quality of the Department's violent crime investigations, including sexual assault. This unit evaluates the sexual assault investigation training and compliance with DoD policy in the Military Criminal Investigative Organizations (MCIOs).

The Secretary of Defense hosts weekly meetings of the senior leaders in this Department to hold the entire prevention and response system accountable. Also, the Director of the SAPR Office chairs an Executive Integrated Product Team consisting of General and Flag Officers and members of the Senior Executive Service from OSD, the Military

Departments, and the Services every other month providing detailed review and oversight of the SAPR program. Finally, OSD provides subject matter expertise and analysis to a quarterly SAPR Joint Executive Council convened by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and designed to review SAPR program performance and effectiveness across each of the Military Services.

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

As we have seen in other recent military culture changes, culture change starts at the top with commanders and leaders leading by example and enforcing standards of conduct. The role of the chain of command in changing the military culture is paramount. Central to our approach is requiring leaders at all levels to foster a command climate where sexist behaviors, sexual harassment, and sexual assault are not condoned or ignored; where dignity and respect are core values we live by and define how we treat one another; where victims' reports are treated with the utmost seriousness, their privacy is protected, and they are treated with sensitivity; where bystanders are motivated to intervene to prevent unsafe behaviors; and where offenders know they will be held appropriately accountable by a strong and effective system of justice. Commanders and leaders at every level are the key to eliminate and enforce standards and in achieving these goals as we have seen in other culture change in the military as the repeal of "Don't Ask Don't Tell."

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

Commanders and frontline leaders are responsible for mission accomplishment and for caring for the women and men assigned to their commands. This is a core axiom of leadership in the profession of arms. Commanders and leaders at all levels are responsible and must be held accountable for supporting victims' full range of timely and responsive care, as well as for establishing a command climate where victims are treated with the sensitivity and privacy they deserve. If confirmed, I will continue to emphasize these central elements of leadership.

In your view, what would be the impact of requiring a judge advocate outside the chain of command to determine whether allegations of sexual assault should be prosecuted?

In my view, taking the disposition decision in the administration of military justice from the commander would undermine readiness and leave the chain of command without the necessary tools to develop a cohesive fighting force by enforcing good order and discipline. I agree with Secretary Hagel that this authority must remain in the command structure and that we must continue to make it more accountable. We need commanders more involved not less involved to solve the issue of sexual assault. That said, we look forward to the report of the Response Systems Panel's review of this issue.

What is your view of the protections afforded to victims who are required to testify at Article 32, Uniform Code of Military Justice, investigations that are required before charges can be referred to a General Court-Martial?

In my view, we must continue to work on building victim confidence, and that includes process improvements to prevent potential re-victimization during the Article 32 process. Recently, the Secretary directed a number of changes that I support, including ensuring that Judge Advocates serve as investigating officers for all Article 32 hearings on sexual assault charges and providing legal representation to victims of sexual assault in an attorney-client relationship, similar to the Air Force pilot program begun in January of this year.

Service Academies

What do you consider to be the policy and procedural elements that must be in place at each of the service academies in order to prevent and respond appropriately to sexual assaults and sexual harassment and to ensure essential oversight?

Sexual assault has no place at the Military Service Academies and is antithetical to their core values and missions. Prevention and response to sexual assault must be completely integrated into the full spectrum of Service Academy life and learning. The Department will continue to assess the Academies efforts to develop and refine prevention and response programs in order to establish a culture free of sexual harassment and assault. If confirmed, I will review those programs and partner with the Academies to continue to better educate and train the cadets and midshipmen, and to ensure the Department provides appropriate response and support for the victim if a crime does occur.

What is your assessment of measures taken at the service academies to ensure religious tolerance and respect, and to prevent sexual assaults and sexual harassment?

The Academies continue to put considerable effort into the development and implementation of policies and procedures designed to address religious tolerance. The Academies do not endorse any one religion or religious organization, and provide free access of religion for all members of the military services. In the past few years, the Academies' leadership has emphasized the need for greater respect for the rights of others to their own religious beliefs, including the right to hold no beliefs.

While the Service Academies have made great efforts, more needs to be done to reduce the level of sexual harassment and sexual violence. It will require continued persistence and innovative measures at each institution. If confirmed, I will remain committed to ensuring that prevention efforts are strong, victims receive care, offenders are held appropriately accountable and proper support is offered to cadets and midshipmen throughout their academic career.

Assignment Policies for Women in the Military

As you know, the Department in January rescinded the policy restricting the assignment of women to certain units which have the primary mission of engaging in direct ground combat operations, and has given the military services until January 1, 2016, to open all positions currently closed to women, or to request an exception to policy to keep a position closed beyond that date, an exception that must be approved by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense. The services are working now to develop gender-free physical and mental standards for all military occupations, presumably with the goal of allowing individuals, regardless of gender, to serve in those positions if they can meet those standards.

If confirmed, what role will you play in the development of these standards?

The Services and U.S. Special Forces Command (USSOCOM) are working with various scientific and research agencies (Ex: U.S. Army Research Institute for Environmental Medicine, Center for Naval Analyses, Air Education and Training Command, and RAND) to review and validate occupational standards to ensure they are occupationally and operationally relevant and are applied gender-neutrally by September 2015.

Along with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Service Chiefs, I will monitor the progress the Services and USSOCOM are making toward integration of females into previously closed occupations and positions. The Department will provide notification to Congress before opening any additional positions.

If confirmed, will you ensure that the standards are realistic and preserve, or enhance, military readiness and mission capability?

The Department of Defense is aware of Public Law 103-160, Section 543, which prohibits the Department from changing an occupational performance standard for the purpose of increasing or decreasing the number of women in that occupational career field. We are working with RAND to ensure physical standards are gender neutral and accurately correlate with the requirements of the position or occupation

Do you believe that decisions to open positions should be based on bona fide military requirements? If so, what steps would you take to ensure that such decisions are made on this basis?

It is in the best interest of the Department to allow both men and women who meet the standards for military positions and units to compete for them. Rescission of the 1994 policy provides a way forward to fully integrate women without compromising our readiness, morale or war-fighting capacity. By removing gender as a disqualifier for certain positions, all service members will have the opportunity for assignment to positions for which they qualify.

Some family members have expressed concerns about assigning women to what are currently male-only combat units.

To what extent do you believe that this will be a problem in the implementation of this policy?

I understand, and appreciate, family members may have these concerns for their loved ones. I expect our commanders to select the best qualified personnel, male or female, and create a command climate that focuses on mission accomplishment and treat each person with dignity. We have had a number of women in newly opened units since mid-2012, and have already experienced successful integration of women into formerly male-only units. We will leverage this experience moving forward.

If it is a problem, what steps would you take to address it?

We require the Services to provide us feedback on their elimination of gender-restrictive policies, including the status of women in these newly opened positions. If problems are encountered, I will, if confirmed, examine the issue and address it considering all dimensions and all recommendations consistent with sustaining readiness.

Rising Costs of Medical Care

In testimony presented to Congress in February, 2009, the Assistant Director of the Congressional Budget Office asserted that “medical funding accounts for more than one-third of the growth projected for operations and support funding between 2009 and 2026.” In April, 2009, Secretary Gates told an audience at Maxwell Air Force Base that “health care is eating the Department alive.” In recent years, the Department has attempted to address this growth through fee increases for military retirees, while also attempting to identify and implement other means to ensure the viability of the military health system in the future.

What is your assessment of the long-term impact of rising medical costs on future Department of Defense plans?

I realize the health care benefit contributes to the retention of our men and women in service. But the reality is that health care costs are a serious problem for the Department, consuming nearly 10 percent of the budget. Simply stated, rising health care costs pose a real threat to our readiness and modernization efforts. If confirmed, I will continue to work with beneficiaries, advocacy groups, Congress and our medical establishment to find workable solutions to sustain the benefit in a realistic and affordable way without breaking faith with our troops and their families.

If confirmed, what actions will you initiate or recommend to the Secretary of Defense to mitigate the effect of such costs on the DOD top-line?

Managing health care costs is a shared responsibility among the government, providers and the beneficiary. In addition to seeking reasonable beneficiary cost share reforms, if confirmed I will work with key stakeholders to pursue promising cost saving initiatives such as emphasizing wellness and prevention and working with our medical leadership to capitalize on internal efficiency opportunities.

What reforms in infrastructure, benefits, or benefit management, if any, do you think should be examined in order to control the costs of military health care?

I firmly believe that we must adopt a holistic approach to addressing the rising costs of health care. Responsible benefit reform should be one part of the solution, but not the only solution. If confirmed, I will continue to look for ways to optimize our medical infrastructure to include leveraging the work of the recent Modernization Study. I see great opportunities to reduce overhead through the implementation of the Defense Health Agency and shared services. Finally, there are numerous cost saving opportunities in such areas as logistics, provider payment reform, and anti-fraud efforts, just to name a few.

Annual Increase in Rates of Basic Pay below the Employment Cost Index

The Department has requested an across-the-board pay raise for 2014 for military personnel of 1 percent, versus a 1.8 percent rise in the Employment Cost Index (ECI) benchmark, and has indicated that in order to restrain the growth of personnel costs, similar below-ECI pay raises may be necessary over the next several years.

What is your assessment of the impact a 1 percent pay raise would have on recruiting and retention for 2014? What would be the impact of a 1 percent pay raise in 2015 through 2017?

I recognize the sacrifices made by the men and women in our Armed Forces. A 1.0 percent military basic pay increase ensures their pay continues to compare favorably with that of American workers. The Department does not believe a 1 percent military basic pay raise will materially affect recruiting and retention in 2014. At this time, the Department does not have sufficient data to determine the long range impacts of a 1 percent pay raise beyond 2014 on retention and recruiting.

Some have suggested that the difference between the 1 percent pay raise requested by the administration, and the 1.8 percent increase based on the ECI could be paid for by realizing efficiencies within the DoD.

What is your assessment of the ability of the Department to fund the full 1.8 percent increase in basic pay through efficiencies?

The Department is continually searching for efficiencies, and the pay raise proposal was a tough decision reached by our senior leaders after carefully weighing other options and efficiencies for savings. The Department is working diligently to ensure our Service members receive fair compensation that recognizes the sacrifices they make for our country, while still adhering to our budgetary constraints.

Currently, military compensation compares favorably with compensation in the private sector. The Department believes a 1 percent military basic pay increase is preferable to having to reduce military end strength by thousands of additional troops on top of the drawdown already planned, or further cut funds for training and equipping our forces to achieve these savings.

The Department has traditionally compared Regular Military Compensation against comparable civilian salaries to devise a percentile as a way to assess the relative attractiveness of military pay versus civilian pay.

What is the current comparable percentile of military pay versus civilian pay for officers and enlisted personnel?

The Department's most recent study, performed by the 11th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, compared regular military compensation for officers and enlisted members with pay for civilians with comparable education and experience levels. Its report found that, on average, regular military compensation for officers was at the 83rd percentile and for enlisted members the 90th percentile.

How do these percentiles compare to the base level at which the Department feels military compensation must be to effectively recruit and retain the highest quality personnel possible for military service?

The Report of the 9th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation evaluated military compensation levels and found that compensation at approximately the 70th percentile of comparably educated and experienced civilians was necessary to enable the military to recruit and retain the appropriate quantity and quality of personnel. Measured against that benchmark, current military compensation compares favorably with private-sector compensation.

Mental Health Care

Senior military leaders have long recognized the need to reduce the stigma for military personnel and their families and veterans in seeking mental health care, yet we continue to hear from service members that the stigma persists.

If confirmed, what actions will you take to reduce the stigma associated with seeking mental health care by military personnel and their families?

If confirmed, I would support ongoing Department efforts to combat stigma and increase help-seeking behavior among Service members, their families, and affected civilians. Both the Department and the Services are currently heavily engaged in this effort. I am also prepared to provide the Service Chiefs with whatever resources are necessary to expand the breadth of the outreach efforts. I fully support the Department's efforts to improve health and mental healthcare services, and reduce the stigma of mental healthcare for our men and women in uniform, their families, and affected civilians.

In your view, are DOD's current mental health resources adequate to serve all active duty and eligible reserve component members and their families, as well as retirees and their dependents?

Yes, after making significant investments in infrastructure and capacity over the last decade, DoD's current mental health resources are adequate to serve our active duty, family and veteran populations. Within DoD, strategies for hiring and retention of mental health providers resulted in a 40 percent increase in mental health providers over the last three years. This includes a 40 percent increase in the number of psychologists, a 26 percent increase in the number of psychiatrists, a 42 percent increase in the number of social workers, and a 27 percent increase in the number of mental health nurses. This represents a fill rate of 99 percent of funded positions, which compares favorably to industry averages.

Suicide Prevention

The numbers of suicides in each of the services continue to be of great concern to the Committee, though military suicide rates appear to remain lower than suicide rates for the same age groups in the civilian sector.

If confirmed, what role would you play in shaping Department of Defense policies to help prevent suicides both in garrison and in theater and to increase the resiliency of all service members and their families?

If confirmed I will continue to collaborate with the Services, VA, and other public and private organization and experts to further foster best practices in the prevention of suicide and build resilience within our force. During my tenure as Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, the first DoD-wide comprehensive suicide prevention policy was issued. We recently established a Peer Crisis Hotline in Afghanistan to support our Service members in theater and expanded our Military Crisis line to Europe and Korea. I have ensured that the Vets4Warriors peer support program continued and was extended to all Service members and their families this year. I also implemented a program evaluation methodology aligning the DoD's suicide prevention strategy with the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention to ensure its effectiveness and efficiency. I will continue to work with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding our joint Suicide Data Repository, which now hosts mortality data on all who have served dating back to 1979.

Increasing the resiliency of all DoD Personnel – military and civilian – and their families remains one of the key factors in the prevention of suicide and one of the central tasks assigned to the newly established Defense Suicide Prevention Office under my purview.

Recent media articles have raised concerns about the possible role of Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (SGLI) proceeds to survivors as a contributing factor in suicide attempts by service members.

Has the Department examined whether SGLI proceeds, or other monetary benefits associated with the death of service member, could impact a service member's decision to commit suicide?

The Department has examined the issue and found that the research on the association between insurance coverage and suicide is not conclusive. The Department of Veterans Affairs, which oversees the SGLI program, adheres to a determination standard that suicide victims were not of sound mind and adjudicates insurance claims based on that policy. Hence, there should not be any restrictions on coverage to the survivors.

Readiness Responsibilities

Section 136 of title 10, United States Code, gives the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness certain responsibilities for military readiness. Some important issues that affect military readiness, however, such as logistics and materiel readiness, have been placed under the jurisdiction of the Under Secretary for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics.

What is your assessment of the impacts and challenges to DOD readiness as a result of sequestration?

Sequestration has significantly limited the Services' ability to generate ready forces to meet a broad range of mission requirements. We are meeting current operational requirements with well trained and equipped units, but this is getting more difficult. The brunt of the sequester effects is in our ability to generate forces to meet contingency surge requirements and this is a serious concern. Some of these effects will take considerable time and resources to reverse.

What is your assessment of how the recent DOD furloughs have impacted readiness?

A ready unit is the product of myriad personnel, training, and equipment pipelines. Our DoD civilian labor force keeps these pipelines moving. They are the technicians at our depots, the support for our training ranges, and the instructors at our schools—we cannot generate ready forces without them. We know that furloughs just completed increased maintenance backlogs at our depots and reduced the quantity and quality of our training. These effects will take time to resolve. We are concerned that as the budget uncertainty

persists, the most skilled of this workforce will simply leave federal service, thereby creating permanent degradations in critical skill areas.

What is your assessment of the current readiness of our Armed Forces to execute the National Military Strategy?

Today our forces are postured globally, conducting counter-terrorism, stability, and deterrence operations, maintaining a stabilizing presence, conducting bilateral and multilateral training to enhance our security relationships, and providing the crisis response capabilities required to protect U.S. interests. The investments made in our Armed Forces have helped maintain our military's standing as the most formidable force in the world.

We remain able to meet the most critical ongoing operational and presence requirements that the nation asks of us, however this is getting more difficult as the effects of sequester materialize. What is at risk is our ability to generate the surge required for a high-end emergent crisis and this is a serious concern.

In your view, what are the most significant challenges to the current readiness of our Armed Forces?

The defense strategy requires that our force meet a growing number of global security concerns as it recovers from 12 years of direct combat. We are concerned that current budget constraints will thwart the Services' efforts to regain full-spectrum readiness in order to successfully meet the tenets of the defense strategy. The Services made deliberate plans to shift from counterinsurgency (COIN) focused operations to address more globalized, full spectrum warfighter requirements. Those plans are at risk if sequestration remains in effect. Specifically, training opportunities and equipment condition are our primary concerns in preserving readiness across the force.

What is your understanding of the responsibilities of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and relationship to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Logistics and Materiel Readiness in ensuring military readiness, including materiel readiness?

The responsibilities of the USD (P&R) are to develop policies, plans, and programs for the Total Force to ensure efficient and effective support of wartime and peacetime operations, contingency planning, and preparedness. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Logistics and Materiel Readiness oversees materiel readiness. Force readiness and materiel readiness have a symbiotic relationship, and as such, I have actively sought to sustain and strengthen this relationship in my current capacity. If confirmed, I will continue to work closely with my Department counterpart in this area.

What are the most critical objectives to improve readiness reporting and monitoring of the military forces, and if confirmed, how would you work with the Military

Departments as well as other Office of the Secretary of Defense offices to achieve them?

The most critical element of readiness management is the ability to monitor not just the status of unit readiness, but the health of the pipelines that support it. These downstream metrics not only provide a more complete picture of readiness, but they are also the key to forecasting problems. In my current capacity, I have overseen dramatic improvements in the Department's ability to monitor readiness along these lines.

If confirmed, I will continue partnering with the Services, the Joint Staff, the Combatant Commanders and other OSD partners to systematically monitor these pipelines, articulate the likely operational consequences, and provide mitigation options.

Do you believe the current readiness reporting system accurately shows if our forces are not only "ready" but "ready for what"?

Yes. The Defense Readiness Reporting System directly addresses the "ready for what" question by focusing on mission capability. It assesses the readiness of all organizations throughout the Department to perform their assigned missions.

What is your understanding of the responsibilities of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness with respect to the Global Response Force?

The USD (P&R) provides policy guidance for monitoring the readiness levels of units assigned to the Global Response Force. USD (P&R) also collaborates with the Joint Staff to identify readiness deficiencies within the Global Response Force and recommends mitigation options for the Secretary's consideration. Finally, as the resource sponsor for the Department-wide joint training, exercise and engagement program, the USD(P&R) also facilitates the leveraging of Service or Combatant Command training events to exercise the Global Response Force.

End Strength Reductions

The Department last year laid out a defense strategy that proposes eventual end strengths of 490,000 for the Army and 182,000 for the Marine Corps over the next five years.

What is your understanding of the Army's and Marine Corps' ability to meet these goals without forcing out many soldiers and marines who have served in combat over the past 10 years with the implicit promise that they could compete for career service and retirement?

Based on the current rate of drawdown and projected losses, I am confident the Army and Marines Corps will meet their FY 2018 prescribed end strengths. Unfortunately, due to many years of war, the size of our personnel reductions, and deep budget cuts, it may be

difficult for the Services to properly shape their force without separating some of our combat veterans. Voluntary and involuntary separations may be necessary to ensure the military is postured correctly for mission readiness and to meet national security objectives during this time of budgetary constraints. As we become a leaner Force, it is imperative the Services have the best qualified individuals available to ensure mission success.

What programs are in place to ensure that separating and retiring service members are as prepared as they can be as they enter a struggling economy?

The 2011 Vow to Hire Heroes Act requires a pre-separation counseling assessment and counseling, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits briefing and Department of Labor employment workshop (with some exceptions). This has been in place since November 2012. An enhanced Transition Assistance Program (TAP), which will be completed in March 2014, provides a two day higher education track (complete college application); a two day technical track (complete technical training application); and a two day entrepreneurship and business plan education track.

How fast can the Army and Marine Corps responsibly and fairly reduce end strength while maintaining the integrity and readiness of combat units?

The Department expects a significant drawdown in Army and Marine Corps forces over the next several years. I understand that sequestration cuts will likely force the consideration of even steeper reductions than we've previously planned. Regardless of the actual target, my concern remains the same -- in making the forces leaner, the Department should take care to learn the lessons of previous drawdowns. Our military must remain able to respond to any large-scale contingency operation. This will require careful consideration by Services about their organizational structures and their ability to reconstitute and mobilize forces. These reductions must be done with an eye toward those who have already served in combat and for those with families who have experienced extended separations, by maximizing voluntary programs and using the full range of authorities provided by Congress.

If sequestration continues through 2018, what will be the impact on the active duty and reserve end strengths of all the services, and how would the mix between the active and reserve forces be affected?

Future rounds of sequestration will be devastating and will limit our ability to generate healthy, prepared forces especially in the near term. It is also forcing a difficult decision between a larger unready force, or a smaller ready force. Neither option is without concern. It is too soon to tell exactly how these decisions will manifest across capabilities or components.

I do know that a healthy Reserve force is an absolutely critical element of both homeland and overseas operations. We cannot revert back to past practices of gutting the

capabilities of our Reserves. If confirmed, this is a concern that I will follow closely.

What is your understanding of the need for additional force shaping tools requiring legislation beyond what Congress has provided the past two years?

The Department has been granted the Total Force shaping tools necessary to meet the drawdown in its current plan. However, continued budget reductions may make it necessary to revisit the size of all components of the Total Force—Active Duty military, Reserve Component military, DoD civilians and contractors. Future assessment may require requesting additional Congressional authorization for force shaping tools to meet reduced end strengths.

Medical Personnel Recruiting and Retention

The Department of Defense continues to face shortages in some critically needed specialty medical personnel in both the active and reserve components. A recent *USA Today* article asserts that over 3,000 civilian medical doctors, nurses, and other health workers decided to leave their jobs this year during the period of time when furloughs were either being threatened or being carried out.

What is your understanding of the current shortages of health care professionals in the Department of Defense, the true effects of sequestration on the retention of medical professionals, and the sufficiency of plans to meet recruiting and retention goals?

DoD is in the midst of evaluating ongoing requirements for medical professionals in the context of a military drawdown and a modernization study. Preliminary information from the Army indicates civilian losses may have increased to a rate of 2-3 times greater than expected during the period of sequestration-related furloughs. We are polling all of the Services to see whether this trend is more widespread, and plan to continue monitoring medical personnel losses as related to Military Health System needs.

What legislative and policy initiatives, including bonuses and special pays, do you think may be necessary to ensure that the military services can continue to meet medical support requirements?

With the Authority to Consolidate Special Pay provided by FY 2008 NDAA, we have adequate financial tools to improve retention and recruitment of our uniformed health professions officers. We have some flexibility to improve compensation for our uniformed providers, if needed, under current authorities. For non-uniformed military civilian physicians, we have the Physicians and Dentists Pay Plan (PDPP). The PDPP allows us to compensate our physicians and dentists at rates consistent with VA because we are allowed to use their pay table under delegation agreement by OPM. The agreement is not limited to physicians and dentists. We will closely monitor health

compensation trends and coordinate with other federal agencies, to see if we must make adjustments to our future pay plans.

Military Accessions Vital to National Interest Program

Under the Military Accessions Vital to National Interest (MAVNI) program, the Services may recruit non-permanent resident aliens who have certain high-demand medical or linguistic skills for service in the armed forces, and offer them an expedited path to citizenship. Although the Services have enjoyed extraordinary recruiting and retention in recent years, some specialties remain under strength. While limited in scope, the program appeared successful and worthy of expansion, but was halted after the initial quota was reached so the Department could assess its utility and perform a security review. The program was to restart last summer for two additional years.

What is the status of the MAVNI program?

The MAVNI program was reinstated in May 2012 following required security reviews by Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence. The pilot will continue through FY 2014.

How many individuals have been recruited under the program since its restart, and in what occupations?

Since the program reopened in May 2012, Army has recruited 43 healthcare professionals and 1,024 critical language speakers.

Medical Marijuana

What is your assessment on the need for legitimate scientific study of the efficacy of medical marijuana in alleviating the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by service members and veterans?

The Department of Defense does not have any plans to sponsor research on the use of marijuana to treat wounded, ill, or injured Service members. The Army Medical Research and Materiel Command, which leads our Defense Health Program PTSD research, has not reviewed any proposals to investigate the use of marijuana for the treatment of PTSD. However, it is important to understand that for research studies to be helpful, they must be rigorously designed, scientifically sound, and meet the requirements for the protection of human subjects. If research were proposed that met these criteria, was feasible, and was aligned with programmatic requirements, then the study would be considered. DoD is supportive of any scientifically rigorous, lawful research efforts that have the potential to help improve the lives of patients who have been adversely affected by PTSD.

Mobilization and Demobilization of National Guard and Reserves

Over the past 12 years, the National Guard and Reserves have experienced their largest and most sustained employment since World War II. Numerous problems arose in the planning and procedures for mobilization and demobilization, e.g., inadequate health screening and medical readiness, monitoring, antiquated pay systems, limited transition assistance programs upon demobilization, and lack of access to members of the Individual Ready Reserve. Reserve force management policies and systems have been characterized in the past as “inefficient and rigid” and readiness levels have been adversely affected by equipment stay-behind, cross-leveling, and reset policies.

What is your assessment of advances made in improving reserve component mobilization and demobilization procedures, and in what areas do problems still exist?

Over the past 12 years, the Department has implemented policy changes governing the utilization of the Guard and Reserves and expanded pre- and post- benefits for active duty periods which have served to enhance predictability and morale among Service members. Providing Reserve Component personnel the ability to anticipate and plan for periods of utilization as well as periods of inactive duty at home contributes to readiness and improves communication among Service members, their families and employers.

What do you consider to be the most significant enduring changes to the administration of the reserve components aimed at ensuring their readiness for future mobilization requirements?

Significant enduring changes include the new Title 10, section 12304b mobilization authority provided by the Congress in the FY 2012 NDAA, enabling continued focus on readiness and Reserve Component (RC) utilization for non-named contingencies. Other enduring features include the exceptional RC performance record and support of the American people and employers. In my opinion, the readiness for future mobilization by Reserve and National Guard members has its greatest support in the actions of the American people and employers. This willingness has been borne through the long term adoption of standardized policies and procedures governing reserve mobilization combined with adequate dwell periods that have served to increase confidence and overall morale on the part of service members and their families.

Do you see a need to modify current statutory authorities for the mobilization of members of the National Guard and Reserves?

Current authorities are appropriate, and enable effective National Guard and Reserve utilization. I appreciate the authorities and support this Committee has provided in this matter.

What is your assessment of the Department of Defense programs to assist members of the National Guard and Reserves as they transition from a mobilized status?

Predictability and open communications are two key elements in the sustainment of readiness and morale of Reserve Component Service members and their families. Since 2008, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) has provided invaluable deployment and reintegration support for the Reserve Components. Its efforts, in collaboration with partners like Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, Transition GPS (Goals, Plans, Success), the Department of Veterans Affairs and the community-based network of care, provide information, access, referrals and outreach to military members, their families, employers and immediate support network.

Enhanced Reserve Mobilization Authorities

In the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012, Congress authorized the Service Secretaries to mobilize units and individuals in support of pre-planned combatant command missions for up to 365 consecutive days. In the current defense strategy, the President and Secretary of Defense have stated that while conventional ground forces will be reduced, Special Forces will be increased over the next five years, and a key component of the new strategy seems to be the establishment of a rotational presence in Europe, the Middle East, and anywhere US interests are threatened. Some in the press have called this a “lily pad” approach, and it potentially dovetails with an operational view of the Reserve components.

What is your assessment of the operational Reserve and how it will fit into this paradigm of smaller, more lethal forces rotating into and out of many locations of strategic interest?

The Operational Reserve has a role in a paradigm of smaller, more lethal rotational forces. Services should fully leverage the new authorities that allow for planned Reserve Component mobilizations when making decisions on restructuring and employing their forces. Utilization of the Guard and Reserve in the rotational support to COCOMs will not only reduce the infrastructure required of a permanent presence in theater but also relieve stress on the Total Force, thereby making the Reserve Component an economical and viable partner in the force mix. I consider this critical to sustaining the readiness that we have achieved in the past 12 years.

What is your understanding of the appropriate size and makeup of the reserve components in light of the defense strategy?

The Department continues to coordinate closely with the Services to determine the correct/appropriate mix. Both Active and Reserve Component forces are essential to supporting the national defense strategy, and the Reserve Components continue to provide trained, ready and cost-effective forces that can be employed on a regular operational basis, while also ensuring strategic depth for large-scale contingencies or

other catastrophic national crises. The Department will further examine the appropriate size and makeup over the next several months during the Quadrennial Defense Review and the FY 2015 program reviews.

Military Quality of Life

The Committee is concerned about the sustainment of key quality of life programs for military families, such as family support, child care, education, employment support, health care, and morale, welfare and recreation services, especially as DOD's budget declines.

How do you perceive the relationship between military recruitment and retention and quality of life programs and your own top priorities for the armed forces?

The emphasis and resources the Department dedicates to our quality of life programs reflect the importance we place on our most valuable resource -- our people. If I am confirmed, the programs that support our people will remain one of my top priorities. If we do not care for our people, our ability to continue to recruit and retain the best America has to offer will become increasingly more challenging.

If confirmed, what military quality of life programs would you consider a priority, and how do you envision working with the Services, combatant commanders, family advocacy groups, and Congress to sustain them?

If confirmed, I will continue to focus on the well-being and resilience of our Service members, their families, and their survivors, including access to non-medical counseling programs such as Military OneSource and Military and Family Life Counselors aimed at preventing the development or exacerbation of mental health conditions that detract from military and family readiness. I will also promote Morale, Welfare and Recreation fitness opportunities and child care support to help minimize stress on the force. The Department leadership is working together with advocacy groups and Congress to efficiently close gaps and reduce overlaps in programs and to communicate effectively to ensure that families know how to access available support when they need it.

Family Readiness and Support

Service members and their families in both the active and reserve components have made, and continue to make, tremendous sacrifices in support of operational deployments. Senior military leaders have warned of concerns among military families as a result of the stress of deployments and the separations that go with them.

What do you consider to be the most important family readiness issues for service members and their families, and, if confirmed, how would you ensure that family readiness needs are addressed and adequately resourced?

The most important family readiness issue for Service members and their families is ensuring that we continue to deliver the support they need at the right time using the most effective method. Following 12 years of war and the impending surge of Service members transitioning from military to civilian life, it is critically important that Service members, their families and their survivors receive information about available support services and resources, when they need it, through communication vehicles they prefer and trust. Therefore, we must leverage technology as a means to communicate and engage our families. It is imperative that the Department continues outreach, education, awareness and engagement strategies to promote Service member and family readiness programs. If confirmed, I will continue to be a strong advocate to ensure family support programs are properly resourced and effectively managed in DoD.

How would you address these family readiness needs in light of global rebasing, BRAC, deployments, and future reductions in end strength?

I will continue to work closely with the Services to identify and deliver the right balance of family readiness programs and support when and where it is needed. Our ongoing mission is to enable services, staff, and resources to be surged or evolved, as needed, to respond swiftly and effectively to the changing needs of Service members and their families during peacetime, war, periods of force structure change, relocation of military units, base realignment and closure, crisis, natural disaster, and other emergency situations. Sharing information with the Services on family support needs and best practices to address them will ensure that we continue to provide timely support while finding the most effective and efficient ways of doing so.

If confirmed, how would you ensure support is provided to reserve component families related to mobilization, deployment and family readiness, as well as to active duty families who do not reside near a military installation?

If confirmed, I will continue to work with the Services and the National Guard Bureau to ensure that we continue to be responsive to the needs of geographically dispersed military families to include those who serve in the Reserve Component. The Joint Family Support Assistance Program that began in 2007 continues to lead our support efforts to this population. While the frequency and tempo of Reserve Component deployments may slow, we know that the needs of these families will continue to emerge and evolve. For that reason, part of our work through the Joint Family Support Assistance Program entails building capacity to identify and meet evolving needs at the local community level where these families live, work, and attend school, focusing on local institutions they naturally turn to for support when they need it. To augment and enable that local support, Military OneSource will continue to provide support to all military families, military leadership, and military and civilian service providers through delivery of information, referrals, and non- medical counseling.

If confirmed, what steps will you take to sustain family support programs, given current fiscal constraints?

If confirmed, I will continue to encourage the implementation of flexible family support programs that communicate and coordinate with interagency and non-governmental family services to meet the enduring needs of our Service members and their families whether they live on, near, or far from military installations.

In your view, does the U.S. Special Operations Command have unique family readiness and support requirements? If so, in your view, are those needs adequately being met by each of the military Services at this time? If they are not adequately being addressed, if confirmed, how would you address these unique needs?

We expect U.S. Special Operations Command's operating tempo will continue to be significant as their units continue to deploy throughout the world conducting joint missions. If confirmed, I will work with SOCOM to identify family support requirements that are unique to this community, offer an analysis of current support provided by the Services, and identify gaps in family support provided to the SOF community

Department of Defense Schools in CONUS

Some have questioned the continuing need for DOD-operated schools for military dependent children within the Continental United States.

In light of the Administration's request for additional Base Realignment and Closure authorities and fiscal constraints, should DOD establish or update its criteria for the continued operation of DOD schools within CONUS?

The President and the Department view preserving and strengthening military families as critical to our national security. Military families bear an extraordinary burden for our freedom and education is a critical quality of life factor affecting readiness and retention. DoD is committed to providing educational opportunities for all military children — balancing quality and cost while exploring all options and alternatives.

Therefore, the Department is in the process of commencing a study to evaluate the mission of continuing the operation of DoD schools within CONUS. The study will examine and provide alternatives that most effectively balance cost and quality considerations for the education of kindergarten through 12th grade students at 15 CONUS installations where the Department operates schools or contracts the education for military dependents. DoD Schools in Guam and Puerto Rico are not included in this study.

If so, and if confirmed, how would you approach this task?

The Department is currently evaluating the need to continue the mission of DoD Schools in the United States. This comprehensive, deliberate, and objective study will include input from all stakeholders. The study will consider the full range of options for meeting the elementary and secondary educational needs of military dependents. We owe it to our military families to ensure that the decisions concerning the education of our military-connected children are the result of sound research findings. The research findings and recommendations will be reviewed by OSD senior officials, in consultation with the Military Departments. If confirmed, I look forward to discussing the recommendations of the study with you.

Office of Community Support for Military Families with Special Needs

In the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010, Congress required the establishment of an Office of Community Support for Military Families with Special Needs within the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. The purpose of this office is to enhance and improve Department of Defense support for military families with special needs, whether educational or medical in nature.

In your view, what should be the priorities of this Office of Community Support for Military Families with Special Needs?

A key priority for the Office of Community Support for Military Families with Special Needs should be and is to strengthen personal readiness for military families with special needs through a comprehensive policy, oversight of programs that support military families with special needs, identification of gaps in services to such families, and the accessibility to appropriate resources. Presently, over 126,000 military family members are enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP). The EFMP supports military families with special medical and/or educational needs in three component areas: identification/enrollment, assignment coordination to determine the availability of services at a projected location, and family support to help families identify and access programs and services.

The Department has recently completed a detailed functional analysis of the EFMP to standardize the three components of the Program across the Military Services. Standardization will enable military families with special needs to have the same level of access to services in the three areas of the EFMP regardless of Service affiliation and location (for example, at a joint or sister Service installation).

If confirmed, how would you ensure outreach to those military families with special needs dependents so they are able to obtain the support they need?

Communication with military families with special needs and the provision of information about the EFMP is a major focus of DoD. If confirmed, I will continue ensure that we implement a comprehensive communication and marketing plan designed to deliver consistent information about the EFMP to families, service providers, and

leadership. We will also continue to solicit input from families through a variety of outreach methods.

Voluntary Education Programs

The Department continues to seek ways to improve oversight of its tuition assistance programs, including standardizing eligibility criteria among the Services and requiring all schools who accept tuition assistance funding, whether for online courses or on-post, to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department which will, among other things, subject online schools to Departmental audits.

What is your assessment of the tuition assistance program in light of the needs of the Services and the current budget environment?

The Tuition Assistance program is important to DoD because it enables the professional and personal development of our Service members and facilitates their transition to the civilian workforce when they are ready to leave the military. If confirmed, I will work with the Services to sustain the appropriate level of resources for this program.

What is your view of tuition assistance as a transition benefit for service members to obtain civilian licenses and credentials?

The Tuition Assistance program currently facilitates the transition of our Service members to the civilian workforce after they separate or retire. In 2012, over 47,000 Service members earned college degrees which are especially important to those Service members whose military specialty does not have a direct civilian counterpart. In addition, Tuition Assistance supports the academic coursework in preparation for any exams required of specific certifications or licenses, and over 1700 Service members earned certificates that were not related to a degree program. All of these were from institutions of higher learning accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the Department of Education.

What is your view of proposed changes to the so-called 90/10 rule that would require academic institutions to derive no more than 85 percent of their revenue from federal sources, including DoD tuition assistance and VA GI Bill funding?

I have no objection to the proposal to include Title 10 Tuition Assistance funds in the Federal portion of the 90/10 calculation. However, it is appropriate for technical assistance and oversight of any statutory changes to the proposed 90/10 rule to reside with the Department of Education.

Medical Research Programs

What do you see as the highest priority medical research investment areas for the Department of Defense?

The highest priority areas of medical research investments are: hemorrhage control and resuscitation; traumatic brain injury diagnosis and treatment; Post Traumatic Stress Disorder prevention, diagnosis, and treatment; suicide prevention and intervention; and rehabilitation and regenerative medicine.

How will you assess the amount of investment made in these research areas to determine if they are sufficient to meet DOD goals and requirements?

The Military Health System has implemented a plan to conduct annual reviews and analyses of the different research portfolios, ensuring research efforts are aligned to capability gaps and requirements, assessing the current state of research and science, and identifying research gaps and needs that require future funding strategies to achieve DoD goals.

How will you ensure that DOD medical research efforts are well coordinated with similar research programs within the private sector, academia, the Services, DARPA, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the National Institutes of Health?

Critical to the development of our medical research investment strategy is an understanding of the related research activities in other federal agencies. This is accomplished by annual joint reviews of federal-agency-specific research portfolios in which research investments and results are presented and shared to best inform future DoD research investments. Agency participation includes the DoD, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Education, and the National Institutes of Health.

How will you ensure that new medical technologies (including drugs and vaccines) are independently and adequately tested before their use by DOD organizations and personnel?

The DoD requires that products be used in a manner consistent with FDA rules and procedures. The ASD(HA), under the USD(P&R) direction, has the primary responsibility for the oversight of this policy's compliance.

There have been growing privacy and security concerns raised about the use of online social networks for medical research purposes.

How will you ensure that the increasing use of social networking media for medical research purposes will protect the privacy and security of patients?

The Department has policies in place that ensure that DoD conducted, contracted, sponsored, supported, or managed research involving human subjects is conducted in accordance with Federal, DoD, and international regulatory requirements. Research protocols, including internet research protocols, must be reviewed and approved by Institutional Review Boards, and privacy protection is a key element of that review. At present, there is no DoD policy regarding the protection of privacy for internet research

beyond the current privacy protections for human subjects of research. The ASD (Research & Engineering) who is the DoD lead for the human research protection portfolio intends to update the policy that governs human research protection to include a section on internet research (including recruitment of subjects as well as collection of data).

What are your biggest concerns related to the DOD medical research enterprise?

The biggest concern is the impact of instability of medical research funding due to budget uncertainty. Stability and thoughtful management in medical research funding are necessary to maintain a robust scientific community to improve health care outcomes in the vital areas of hemorrhage control and resuscitation, traumatic brain injury, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, suicide prevention, extremity injury and amputee care and rehabilitation.

Morale, Welfare, and Recreation

Morale, welfare, and recreation (MWR) programs are critical to enhancement of military life for members and their families, especially in light of deployments. These programs should be relevant and attractive to all eligible users, including active duty and reserve personnel, retirees, and their families.

What challenges do you foresee in sustaining MWR programs, particularly in view of the current fiscal environment and, if confirmed, are there any improvements you would seek to achieve?

Changes in our basing, deployment patterns and force structure will continue to have a significant impact on our ability to deliver quality of life programs to our military families. With more than 75% of military families now living off installation, there is an increasing need for partnerships and support from local governments, school systems and businesses to ensure we continue to provide comprehensive, accessible, and affordable quality of life programs. Additionally, we are conducting a major assessment of Morale, Welfare, and Recreation programs to ensure they are being operated in as efficient and cost-effective manner as possible.

The continued vitality and relevance of MWR programs depend on sound management, meeting command and customer needs, a predictable stream of nonappropriated revenue and solid appropriated fund support of mission essential and community support programs. We must develop and maintain a strong network of community-based providers and maximize our information and referral resources through internet and social networking avenues. We also have the opportunity to improve the effectiveness of outreach programs, to better meet military families where they live. If confirmed, I will evaluate these opportunities, and how we can better coordinate efforts among the various entities providing support to our military members and their families.

Commissary and Military Exchange Systems

Commissary and military exchange systems are significant quality of life components for members of the active and reserve forces, retirees, and their families.

What is your view of the need for modernization of business policies and practices in the commissary and exchange systems, and what do you view as the most promising avenues for change to achieve modernization goals?

Both the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) and the military exchanges are progressive organizations seeking to reduce costs within their respective businesses. DeCA, for example, has a proven history of reducing the costs of the commissary system without decreasing the value of the benefit provided. Since its beginning in 1991, efficiencies have allowed DeCA to reduce its workforce by 6,700 full time equivalent positions and operating costs by approximately \$1.4 billion in constant FY 1992 dollars, which include savings due to BRAC closures and inventory reduction. In fact, when measured in constant dollars, DeCA's operating costs are only slightly more than one-half of what they were when the Agency was created.

Today's exchanges have gone beyond the traditional brick and mortar environment, embracing e-commerce and mobile retail channels to satisfy customer demands. The exchanges continue to exceed the DoD Social Compact on savings for Service members. For the Exchanges, there are mechanisms for modernization through the Cooperative Efforts Board. Promising areas for change include non-resale procurement, logistics and distribution, exchange select/ private label, and seasonal and one time buys. If confirmed, I will continue to look for ways to modernize business policies and find efficiencies in the commissary and exchange systems.

What is your view of the proposals by some to consolidate or eliminate Commissaries and Exchanges in certain areas where they are underused or duplicative of services readily available at reasonable cost in the community?

If confirmed, I would review any proposals aimed at reducing overhead, which may include closing underutilized locations or eliminating duplicative services. I recognize that commissary and exchange programs are an important element of the Service members' compensation package and contribute to the quality of life of military personnel and their families. In fact, commissaries are repeatedly rated by military personnel as one of their most valued non-pay benefits. Selling groceries at cost means that the customer pays the same price DeCA pays its supplier plus a 5% surcharge which pays for replacing, maintaining, and renovating commissaries.

There are currently 247 commissaries; 55% of these commissaries are small stores located in remote or overseas locations, but they account for only 20 percent of sales. These stores are often the most appreciated stores because there are generally limited options available outside the gate of the military installation. With over 98 million

shopper visits annually and approximately \$6 billion in sales it is evident that people are using this benefit. Eliminating commissaries in some areas may be possible but we must fully appreciate the impacts on the Service members and the community

In the Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005, Congress required the Secretary of Defense to establish an executive governing body for the commissary and exchange systems to ensure the complementary operation of the two systems.

What is your understanding of the purpose and composition of the executive governing body?

To fulfill the requirement of the law, the Department established the DoD Executive Resale Board as the governing body to provide advice to the USD(P&R) regarding the complementary operation of the commissary and exchange systems. The Board reviews and advises on cross-functional matters important to the military resale system. The Board is invaluable in leading cooperative efforts and resolving issues of concern resulting in increased efficiency and effectiveness of the overall system.

The Board is chaired by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness and Force Management, and members include both the senior military officers and civilians who oversee and manage the commissary and exchanges systems.

If confirmed, what would your role be with respect to the governing body, and what would your expectations be for its role?

If confirmed, I would ensure the Board meets regularly to review operational areas of mutual interest to the military resale system.

Civilian Personnel Systems

Section 1113 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 provides DOD with extensive personnel flexibilities for its civilian employees that are not available to other agencies. In particular, section 9902(a) of title 5, U.S. Code, as added by section 1113, directs the Department to establish a new performance management system for all of its employees. Section 9902(b) directs the Department to develop a streamlined new hiring system that is designed to better fulfill DOD's mission needs, produce high-quality applicants, and support timely personnel decisions.

What is your understanding of the current status of the Department's efforts to implement the authority provided by section 1113?

The Department's plans for the performance management system, workforce incentives, and hiring flexibilities were informed by recommendations developed by DoD employees, supervisors, and managers representing labor and management from across

the Department and submitted to the Armed Services Committees at the end of March 2013. The collaborative labor-management pre-decisional recommendations for the personnel authorities were widely adopted by the Department.

The Department continues to make good progress on the personnel authorities. We are developing the new appraisal system, which will be a multi-level rating pattern characterized by a uniform appraisal period for covered employees, and the ability to make meaningful distinctions in levels of performance. If confirmed, I will continue to support the work that is underway to comply with statute.

If confirmed, will you make it a priority to implement these flexibilities in a manner that best meets the needs of the Department and promotes the quality of the Department's civilian workforce?

Yes, if confirmed, I will make it my priority to implement those flexibilities that would promote the quality of the Department's civilian workforce to ensure accomplishment of the Department's missions.

Section 1112 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 directs the Department to develop a Defense Civilian Leadership Program (DCLP) to recruit, train, and advance a new generation of civilian leaders for the Department. Section 1112 provides the Department with the full range of authorities available for demonstration programs under section 4703 of title 5, U.S. Code, including the authority to compensate participants on the basis of qualifications, performance, and market conditions. These flexibilities are not otherwise available to the Department of Defense.

Do you agree that the Department needs to recruit highly qualified civilian personnel to meet the growing needs of its acquisition, technical, business, and financial communities?

I completely agree that recruiting highly qualified civilian personnel both in mission critical occupations, such as acquisition, information technology, and financial management, and in leadership positions across the Department is essential to mission success.

In your view, has the existing civilian hiring process been successful in recruiting such personnel and meeting these needs?

Although I believe the Department currently has a highly talented workforce, I wholeheartedly support the initiatives to streamline the civilian hiring process. The Department embraces a simplified, transparent hiring system that meets the needs of stakeholders, attracts quality candidates, and reduces fill-time. We are making progress, but there is still work to be done in this area. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department continues to actively engage in aggressively pursuing continued improvements in the civilian hiring process.

If confirmed, will you make it a priority to implement the authority provided by section 1112 in a manner that best meets the needs of the Department and promotes the quality of the Department's civilian workforce?

If confirmed, I will make it a priority to implement the authority provided by section 1112. The Department recognizes the need for a sound leader-development model to attract, retain, and develop civilian leaders to support pipeline readiness, enhance bench strength, and promote the quality of the Department's civilian workforce. The Department has successfully completed two pilot cohorts under the authority provided in section 1112 from which approximately 240 leaders have graduated, and who are now credentialed to lead teams and projects. If confirmed, I will continue implementing the authority provided to ensure a successful framework for developing the next generation of innovative leaders to meet the Department's future needs.

Human Capital Planning

Section 115b of title 10, United States Code, as added by section 1108 of the National Defense Authorization Act for 2010, requires the Secretary of Defense to develop and update in every even-numbered year a strategic human capital plan that specifically identifies gaps in the Department's civilian workforce and strategies for addressing those gaps. Section 115b requires that the plan include chapters specifically addressing the Department's senior management, functional, and technical workforce and the Department's acquisition workforce.

Would you agree that a strategic human capital plan that identifies gaps in the workforce and strategies for addressing those gaps is a key step toward ensuring that the Department has the skills and capabilities needed to meet future challenges?

Yes. I believe such planning would well position the Department to acquire, develop, and maintain the workforce it needs to meet current and future mission challenges.

Do you see the need for any changes in the requirements for a strategic human capital plan under section 115b?

At this time we appreciate the help of past legislation that put the Department on a biennial reporting cycle. We continue to progress on meeting the requirements for a strategic human capital plan under section 115b, and will continue to institutionalize our processes and assess the need for any changes as we continue in this important endeavor.

If confirmed, will you ensure that the Department of Defense fully complies with these requirements?

Yes, if confirmed, I will continue to work toward ensuring the Department fully complies with statutory strategic workforce planning requirements.

Since the time that the Department's most recent strategic human capital plan was issued, its civilian workforce plans have been significantly altered by the changed budget environment and extensive efficiencies initiatives.

What role do you believe human capital planning should play in determining where reductions in the civilian workforce can be taken with the lowest level of risk?

Any reductions in the civilian workforce should be informed by the Department's long-term strategic workforce plan to determine where reductions can be taken with the lowest level of risk, with the understanding that short-term exceptions may be necessary due to emerging dynamics in the budget environment. Forecasts for the Department's workforce must be based on validated mission requirements and workload, both current and projected, and any reductions in the civilian workforce must be made in the context of the Total Force and directly linked to workload so as to not adversely impact overall mission capabilities.

Would you agree that the strategic human capital plan required by section 115b should be updated to more accurately reflect the Department's current workforce plans and requirements?

Yes. The plan should be updated to be more aligned and integrated with the Department's programing and budget process, and meet the requirements for a total force mix and competencies assessments. In preparing for FY 2013 through 2018, we conducted a pilot study that examined the total force mix based on the workforce requirement and relationships in high risk mission critical occupations. We are also testing and preparing to launch a tool to collect competency gap information that will lead to strategies to mitigate identified gaps. These processes will take several planning cycles, and functional communities are preparing for further assessment and implementation.

What steps if any will you take, if confirmed, to ensure that civilian workforce levels are determined on the basis of careful planning and long-term requirements, rather than by arbitrary goals or targets?

If confirmed, I will continue to emphasize that civilian workforce levels must be planned based on long-term strategic planning requirements. Forecasts for the Department's workforce must be based on validated mission requirements and directly linked to workload so as to not adversely impact overall mission capabilities.

DOD Civilian Personnel Workforce

Section 955 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 required the Secretary of Defense to develop a plan to reduce the size of the civilian personnel workforce by 5 percent over the next five years. The plan developed by the Secretary does not meet this objective. Since the time that Section 955 was enacted, the Department has implemented hiring freezes and furloughs as a result of sequestration. As a result, the DOD civilian personnel workforce is substantially smaller than it was on the date of enactment or at the time the plan was submitted.

Do you agree that DOD's civilian employee workforce plays a vital role in the functioning of the Department?

Yes, the DoD's civilian employee workforce plays an instrumental role in the functioning of the Department as part of the Total Force across a range of missions. The civilian workforce performs key enabling functions for the military, such as critical training and preparation to ensure readiness, equipment reset and modernization. Civilians also provide medical care, family support, and base operating services -- all vital to supporting our men and women in uniform. Additionally, civilians are on the "front lines" supporting missions such as intelligence, cyber, reconstruction, and security force assistance.

Do you agree that if sequestration continues through Fiscal Year 2014 and beyond, the Department will need to further reduce the size of its civilian workforce?

While there is some flexibility afforded the Department in managing the steep reductions to the budget required by sequestration, the across the board impact of those reductions would likely require the Department to further decrease the size of its civilian workforce. If confirmed, and to the extent allowed by the sequester, I will work to ensure that any reductions to the civilian workforce are balanced and executed in the context of the Department's Total Force management principles, ensuring the appropriate and most cost effective alignment of work.

In your view, would it be preferable for the Department to make planned, prioritized reductions to its civilian workforce, or to continue with arbitrary reductions based on hiring freezes and workforce attrition?

Planned and prioritized reductions to the civilian workforce are preferred, such as those reflected in the Department's budget request for FY 2014. Those proposed reductions were based on a comprehensive workforce to workload analysis. Unfortunately, the across the board impact of the sequester along with continued budget uncertainty surrounding the Department's annual appropriations request has resulted in the need to take extraordinary actions, such as the implementation of hiring freezes and furloughs.

Balance Between Civilian Employees and Contractor Employees

In recent years, the Department of Defense has become increasingly reliant on services provided by contractors. As a result of the explosive growth in service contracts, contractors now play an integral role in the performance of functions that were once performed exclusively by government employees, including the management and oversight of weapons programs, the development of policies, the development of public relations strategies, and even the collection and analysis of intelligence. In many cases, contractor employees work in the same offices, serve on the same projects and task forces, and perform many of the same functions as federal employees.

Do you believe that the current balance between civilian employees and contractor employees is in the best interests of the Department of Defense?

I believe the Department must have a properly sized and highly capable civilian workforce that guards against an erosion of critical, organic skills and an overreliance on contracted services, particularly in such areas as acquisition program management, information technology, and financial management. If confirmed, I will continue to support the Administration's and Department's focus on reducing inappropriate or excessive reliance on contracted support, particularly for work that is critical in nature or closely associated with inherently governmental functions.

What steps if any will you take, if confirmed, to ensure that the Department of Defense is not excessively reliant on contractors to perform its basic functions?

If confirmed, I will continue to support the Administration's and Department's focus on gaining a better accounting of contracted services. We will review such services annually and reduce inappropriate, excessive, or more costly reliance on such services. This is of particular importance in instances where contractors are found to be performing work that is critical in nature or closely associated with inherently governmental functions.

Section 2330a of title 10, United States Code, requires the Department of Defense to maintain an inventory of contract services. Section 321 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011 amended this provision to give the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness a key role in implementing this provision.

What is your understanding of the current status of the Department's efforts to implement the requirements of section 2330a?

Since 2011, the Department has made significant improvements to its Inventory of Contracts for Services to implement the requirements of 10 USC 2330a. Specifically, we have improved the accuracy of the required data set by directing cross-functional (acquisition, financial management, manpower and requiring activities) involvement in the process. We have issued data collection guidance and, as recommended by the Congress and deployed the Army's proven Contractor Manpower Reporting Application

software across the entire Department. We have also issued specific guidance on how Components are to review their inventories in order to reduce inappropriate, excessive, or more costly reliance on contract services. Also, beginning in FY 2014, contractors supporting all Components will be able to report their labor dollars and related cost information, as required by law. We still have more to do. If I am confirmed, in order to make the best use of our resources, we will continue working with AT&L to improve visibility and accountability of contracts for services.

What additional steps if any will you take, if confirmed, to ensure that the Department fully implements the requirements of section 2330a?

If confirmed, I will continue working with my colleagues in AT&L and Comptroller to improve visibility and accountability of our contracted services as required by 10 USC 2330a. We will soon finalize a governing instruction for managing contract services as a part of the Total Force, and, as requested by the Congress, implement across the Department of Defense the Army's standardized service contract approval process to be used when considering funding contract support. I will also continue to work, as requested by Congress, on implementing the Army's automated Contract Manpower Reporting Application across the Department, which will help ensure a comprehensive inventory review and permit Component heads to make greatly improved budget projections for contracted services.

Acquisition Workforce

Section 852 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 established an Acquisition Workforce Development Fund to help the Department of Defense address shortcomings in its acquisition workforce. The fund provides a continuing source of funds for this purpose.

Do you believe that the DOD acquisition workforce development fund is still needed to ensure that DOD has the right number of employees with the right skills to run its acquisition programs in the most cost effective manner for the taxpayers?

The acquisition workforce development fund has been instrumental in the Department's efforts to recapitalize its acquisition workforce and improve oversight, management, and accountability in the procurements of goods and services. The fund is still necessary to further enhance and sustain the training and expertise of our dedicated acquisition workforce.

If confirmed, what steps if any will you take to ensure that the money made available through the workforce development fund is spent in a manner that best meets the needs of the Department of Defense and its acquisition workforce?

While the management and execution of the acquisition workforce development fund is a joint responsibility of AT&L and Comptroller, if confirmed, I will work with those

offices to ensure that the application of resources is done in a manner that is consistent with the training, development, and sustainment needs of the acquisition workforce.

Section 872 of the Ike Skelton National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011 codifies the authority for the Department of Defense to conduct an acquisition workforce demonstration project and extends the authority to 2017.

Do you believe it would be in the best interest of the Department to extend and expand the acquisition workforce demonstration project?

DoD components have expressed a strong interest in an expansion of the acquisition workforce demonstration project to better meet the workforce challenges they are facing under current budget constraints. Testing alternative personnel authorities and processes under these difficult conditions will be a true test of their effectiveness and I believe there is value in extending and expanding this demonstration project. Our role in P&R is to provide the warfighter and support staffs with the manpower and personnel authorities, processes and tools they need to enable them to carry out their missions. If confirmed, I will continue to work with and support AT&L in ensuring the demonstration project supports the needs of the Components and mission of the Department.

What steps would you take, if confirmed, to implement section 872?

If confirmed, I will continue to work closely with the USD(AT&L) and other Department Components to ensure the Department is effectively positioned to appropriately extend and expand the Acquisition Demonstration project.

GI Bill Benefits

Congress passed the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act in 2008 (“Post-9/11 GI Bill) that created enhanced educational benefits for service members who have served at least 90 days on active duty since 9/11. The maximum benefit would roughly cover the cost of a college education at any public university in the country. One purpose of the Act was to recognize and reward the service of those who served voluntarily after 9/11, particularly those who do not serve full careers and qualify for retirement benefits.

What is your assessment of the impact of the Post-9/11 GI Bill on recruiting and retention, including the provision of transferability for continued service?

While the Post-9/11 GI Bill program is only four years old, there are strong indications the program has already had a profound, positive impact on recruiting and retention. In fact, as of September 4, 2013, over 368,875, career Service members have transferred their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to over 795,000 family members.

Personnel Policy Implementation

What is your understanding of your responsibility, if confirmed, to inform and consult with this Committee and other appropriate Committees of Congress on the implementation of policies directed by law?

I understand that I must comply with all requirements to inform and consult with requisite Congressional Committees on the implementation of personnel and readiness policies as directed by law.

What is your understanding of the Department's obligation and authority to implement personnel policies to improve efficiency within the Department?

I understand that the Department, under the direction of the Secretary, has both the authority and obligation to evaluate and implement personnel policies to improve efficiency within the Department. And that these policies must not compromise mission readiness or essential support of the Total Force.

What is your understanding on the timeframe in which personnel policies directed by law must be implemented by the Department?

I understand that personnel policies directed by law must be implemented by the Department in the timeliest manner possible given the available resources and while ensuring the most effective and efficient outcome for the Total Force.

Congressional Oversight

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

Do you agree, if confirmed for this high position, to appear before this Committee and other appropriate committees of the Congress?

Yes.

Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear before this Committee, or designated members of this Committee, and provide information, subject to appropriate and necessary security protection, with respect to your responsibilities as the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness?

Yes.

Do you agree to ensure that testimony, briefings, and other communications of information are provided to this Committee and its staff and other appropriate Committees?

Yes.

Do you agree to provide documents, including copies of electronic forms of communication, in a timely manner when requested by a duly constituted Committee, or to consult with the Committee regarding the basis for any good faith delay or denial in providing such documents?

Yes.