

Senate Armed Services Committee
Advance Policy Questions for Mark Ditlevson
Nominee to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for
Homeland Defense and Americas Security Affairs

Duties and Qualifications

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas Security Affairs (ASD(HD&ASA)) is responsible for the overall supervision of the homeland defense activities of the Department of Defense, as well as Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA), defense continuity and mission assurance (DC&MA), Arctic and Global Resilience policy, Western Hemispheric Affairs, and other matters.

1. What is your understanding of the scope and breadth of the duties and functions of the ASD(HD&ASA)?

The ASW(HD&ASA) is the principal civilian advisor to the Secretary of War and the Under Secretary of War for Policy (USW(P)) for all matters regarding the formulation of national security and defense strategy related to homeland defense (HD) activities; defense support of civil authorities (DSCA); engagement with national security forces of partner countries on select transboundary threats; defense relationships with countries in the Western Hemisphere; and issues pertaining to the Arctic region. The ASW(HD&ASA)'s responsibilities also include the development and oversight of DoW strategy, policy, plans, and capabilities for DoW HD activities; DSCA; defense continuity; mission assurance (MA); Arctic and global resilience; Western Hemisphere affairs; critical infrastructure security and resilience; support to domestic counter-terrorism activities; and general matters related to the overall supervision of HD activities.

2. What background and experience do you possess that qualify you to perform these duties?

If confirmed, I would bring a range of relevant management and leadership experience to ASW(HD&ASA). For the last ten months, first as the acting Assistant Secretary of War and later as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, I led the Department's effort to reestablish Homeland Defense as the nation's top priority, and led national-level interagency implementation of the Department's role in the government's effort gain operational control of the southern border. My previous experiences as senior advisor to the Secretary of the Navy, and as a senior leader within the Office of the Under Secretary of War for Policy and the Secretariat for Special Operations also provided me with further experience working with and leading organizations across the national security enterprise.

- 3. If confirmed, what additional duties and functions would you expect the Secretary of Defense and the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy to prescribe for you?**

The Department has published a charter directive for the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Hemispheric Affairs. If confirmed, I will work closely with Secretary Hegseth and Under Secretary Colby to review the duties, responsibilities, and functions of the position, and consider if the duties and functions should be updated.

Conflicts of Interest

Federal ethics laws, to include 18 U.S.C. §208, prohibit government employees from participating in matters where they, or certain family members or organizations with which they have certain relationships, have a financial interest.

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

Major Challenges and Priorities

- 7. In your view, what are the major challenges that will confront the next ASD(HD&ASA)?**

I believe that the 2026 National Defense Strategy accurately captures that the United States faces one of the most dangerous strategic environments in our Nation's history. The latest security environment is characterized by the vulnerability of the U.S. Homeland from years of unsecured borders, increasingly capable air and missile threats; China's unprecedented military buildup and its intent to seize control of the Indo-Pacific region; and a range of other threats, including Russia, Iran, North Korea, and terrorists. Each of these threats impacts the Assistant Secretary for Homeland Defense and Americas Security Affairs, and, if confirmed, I look forward to informing and working with Congress to address these major challenges.

8. What priorities and plans do you have, if confirmed, for addressing each of these challenges, and on what timeline?

The National Security Strategy and the National Defense Strategy make clear that the United States will no longer cede access to, or influence over, key terrain in the Western Hemisphere. This includes securing our borders and ensuring that trafficking in humans, drugs, and other illicit activities by designated terrorist organizations including cartels and other trans-national criminal organizations in this hemisphere, are eliminated. If confirmed, working to implement the National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy will be my top priority.

Relations with Congress

9. If confirmed, what actions would you take to sustain a productive and mutually beneficial relationship between the Congress and the Office of the ASD(HD&ASA)?

My team and I have proactively engaged with Congress since I arrived at the Department in 2025. I intend to continue this cooperation. As part of my relationship with Congress and in support of congressional oversight responsibilities, I will continue to provide information to Congress, whether in requested briefings or reports that may be required by law.

Key Relationships

10. Please describe your understanding of the relationship between the Department of Defense (DOD), the ASD(HD&ASA), and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), particularly with respect to DOD's homeland defense activities and DSCA.

DoW and DHS have a very close working relationships on many issues as it relates to the defense of the homeland and homeland security. DoW stands ready to support our interagency partners with short-term support in response to domestic disasters, emergencies, and cyber incidents.

11. If confirmed, what role would you play in the direction and coordination with DHS of DOD homeland defense activities and DSCA?

If confirmed, I would take an active role to ensure our homeland defense policies complement DHS efforts. I appreciate our key areas of collaboration and coordination to include working with the U.S. Coast Guard on maritime domain awareness, Customs and Border Protection and Immigration and Customs Enforcement on support to immigration enforcement and border security, and the Secret Service on Presidential and dignitary protection. If confirmed, my goal would be to continue to ensure a close relationship between DoW and DHS continues and advances our mutual efforts in this critical mission space.

12. Please describe your understanding of the relationship between the

ASD(HD&ASA) and the Joint Staff.

The ASW(HD&ASA) is responsible for close coordination both formally and informally, on a daily basis, with the Joint Staff regarding the roles, capabilities, and readiness of the Services and Combatant Commands to support the homeland defense mission. The Joint Staff coordinates the operational implementation of homeland defense policies with the combatant commanders. If confirmed I will work to bolster those relationships in support of the defense of the U.S. homeland.

13. Please describe your understanding of the relationship between the ASD(HD&ASA) and the Secretaries of the Military Departments.

The ASW(HD&ASA) is responsible for close coordination with the Secretaries of the Military Departments to ensure that the Joint Force has the necessary capabilities and resources, and is trained and mission ready, to support the execution of combatant command homeland defense, defense support of civil authorities (DSCA), Arctic resilience, defense continuity and mission assurance, and Western Hemisphere security missions. If confirmed, I will coordinate with the Secretaries of the Military Departments on matters under their purview to ensure that policies are possible and can be effectively implemented.

14. Please describe your understanding of the relationship between the ASD(HD&ASA), the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and The Adjutants General of the states and territories, particularly with respect to DOD's homeland defense activities and DSCA.

The ASW(HD&ASA) is responsible for close coordination with the Chief of the National Guard Bureau (CNGB), and the Directors of the Army National Guard and Air National Guard, particularly regarding the roles, capabilities, and readiness of the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard to support the execution of combatant command homeland defense and defense support of civil authorities (DSCA) missions. The ASW(HD&ASA) is also the principal DoW representative on homeland defense and DSCA policy matters with State and territorial governments, including – through the NGB – State and territorial Adjutants General.

15. Please describe your understanding of the relationship between the ASD(HD&ASA) and the District of Columbia National Guard, particularly with regard to activities in the District, including responding to civil disturbances and support to national security special events (NSSE)?

The Secretary of War is the approval authority for all requests for D.C. National Guard (DCNG) support to law enforcement when DCNG support is requested on short notice (48 hours or less) or when the support requested would involve DCNG personnel in direct participation in civilian law enforcement activities. The ASW(HD&ASA) plays a leading role in developing a response to these requests for the Secretary's consideration.

With guidance from the ASW(HD&ASA), staff draft and coordinate the decision package for the Secretary of War with options for how to respond to a request for assistance. This package

is staffed by the ASW with key leaders, including the Secretary of the Army; Chief NGB; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Comptroller; and General Counsel, before being sent to the Secretary of War for decision. When the Secretary of War decides to deploy the DCNG, DCNG service members remain under the operational and administrative command and control of the Commanding General of the DCNG, who reports to the Secretary of War through the Secretary of the Army. A key component of the decision package drafted by the ASW(HD&ASA) is employment guidance for the Secretary of the Army that provides guidelines for the roles and missions of the DCNG service members who will be deployed and provide the support.

When an event has been designated a National Special Security Event (NSSE), the ASW's staff participates in planning meetings and represents DoW on the Executive Steering Committee (ESC) chaired by the United States Secret Service (USSS). NSSE planning and ESC meetings typically generate a USSS request for DoW assistance to help the USSS with safety and security at the event. The ASW's staff works with the Department of the Army, NGB, Joint Staff, and Office of General Counsel to develop options and recommendations for the Secretary of War's decision on how to respond to the USSS NSSE request.

National Defense Strategy (NDS) and Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance

The Trump administration is currently drafting its National Defense Strategy (NDS). It is expected to shift strategic priorities to prioritize national security threats to the homeland.

16. Do you believe the direction of the NDS accurately assesses the current security environment, including the most critical and enduring threats to the national security of the United States and its allies?

Yes. The NDS recognizes that the United States faces one of the most dangerous strategic environments in our Nation's history, characterized by the vulnerability of the U.S. Homeland from years of unsecured borders, increasingly capable air and missile threats; China's unprecedented military buildup and the need for a U.S.-favorable balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region; and a range of other threats, including Russia, Iran, North Korea, and terrorists. This strategy also recognizes that not all threats are equal and that American resources are not unlimited. The Department must prioritize addressing the most important, consequential, and dangerous threats to Americans' interests. The Department's foremost priority is defending the Homeland and America's interests throughout the Western Hemisphere.

17. In particular, do you believe the NDS will accurately assess current threats to the U.S. homeland and Western Hemisphere? Please explain your answer.

The NDS assessed that the Department's foremost priority is defending the Homeland and, by extension, America's interests throughout the Western Hemisphere. The Department has prioritized sealing our borders and repelling any form of invasion in concert with the efforts of the Department of Homeland Security. The Joint Force has taken deliberate action to counter narco-terrorism and to degrade narco-terrorist organizations across the Americas. DoW is

guaranteeing U.S. military and commercial access to key terrain from the Arctic to South America to secure core American interests throughout the Western Hemisphere.

18. In your view, are there developments since the Biden administration's 2022 NDS relating to matters under the purview of the ASD(HD&ASA) that should be addressed as part of a new NDS?

The 2026 National Defense Strategy's foundational principle is an America First, commonsense approach to defending the Homeland and America's interest throughout the Western Hemisphere. The new National Security Strategy, and the 2026 NDS, implement a flexible, realistic approach with clarity about our priorities, discipline about commitments, resolve about follow-through, and seriousness about deterrence.

Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA)

The ASD(HD&ASA) has primary responsibility within DOD for DSCA. DOD has provided DSCA in response to numerous requests over the last few years. This has included: requests from DHS for support to Customs and Border Patrol along the southwestern border; requests from DHS for support to Immigration and Customs Enforcement in cities throughout the United States; requests from DHS and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for support in addressing adverse weather and man-made disasters; supporting law enforcement in response to civil unrest; and supporting DHS, FEMA and the Department of Health and Human Services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

19. Please describe your general understanding of DOD's roles and responsibilities in providing DSCA, particularly vis-à-vis the roles and responsibilities of other federal agencies in responding to domestic situations.

As the President has emphasized, our military's primary mission is to fight and win our nation's wars. DoW does not size or shape the force to support DSCA, nor does DoW have a lead role in response to domestic homeland security needs. However, DoW is responsible for the defense of the homeland and has unique capabilities and capacity that can be leveraged when requested to support domestic homeland security issues when directed by the President, or when the Secretary has approved a request for assistance under the Stafford Act, the Economy Act, or other applicable statute.

20. What is your understanding of the role of the Responsible Federal Agency with respect to DSCA?

The Responsible Federal Agency (or Lead Federal Agency) is the primary owner of a mission set. This structure is fundamental to ensuring proper civilian authority is maintained. If needed, the Responsible Federal Agency may request support from other Federal Departments or Agencies. DSCA, is the Department's primary policy mechanism to streamline support to those Responsible Federal Agencies to support lifesaving, life-sustaining, and short-term mission

requests. The DSCA Execute Order (EXORD) documents the Secretary's preapproval for the Commander, USNORTHCOM, and Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, to expedite on specific DSCA mission assignments to ensure the Department is supporting, as best we can the Responsible Federal Agency.

21. Do you believe that the Department's current policies and guidance ensure proper use and oversight of DOD resources for DSCA? Please explain your answer.

Yes, all interagency requests for support undergo a thorough review process, including the legality, risk, cost, appropriateness, and impact to readiness. Utilizing this evaluation methodology for DSCA, DoW's current policies and guidance are efficient, effective, and ensure DoW's efforts through DSCA have been proper and instrumental in saving and sustaining lives in response to emergencies and in the aftermath of disasters. This framework is sufficiently robust to accommodate different types of support—from short-term disaster relief to sustained, multi-year missions that support our partners in securing our nation's borders. These missions enable our civilian partners to execute their own legal authorities and responsibilities more effectively.

22. Do you believe that DOD has in place the policies and processes to generate an accurate accounting of, and to secure full and timely reimbursement for, the incremental costs of DSCA provided pursuant to "The Stafford Act"? If not, what steps would you take, if confirmed, to ensure both the accurate accounting of DOD's incremental costs and proper and full reimbursement for such costs?

Yes, I believe, DoW policies and processes are efficient and effective for ensuring reimbursement for mission assignments associated with the Stafford Act. Recently, DoW has gone to great lengths to improve the processes and procedures for interagency reimbursement. My own team and Comptroller are finalizing Memoranda of Agreement with DHS and DOJ to ensure a structured and sustainable process for reimbursement.

23. Do you believe that DOD has in place the policies and processes to generate an accurate accounting of, and to secure full and timely reimbursement for the actual costs for DSCA provided pursuant to "The Economy Act"? If not, what steps would you take, if confirmed, to ensure both the accurate accounting of DOD's actual costs and proper and full reimbursement for such costs?

Yes, I believe, DoW policies and processes are efficient and effective for ensuring reimbursement for services provided under the Economy Act. If confirmed, I will work with the DoW Comptroller and other DoW stakeholders to ensure DoW policies and guidance secures reimbursement for DoW DSCA support, as appropriate and consistent with law. As mentioned previously, my team and the Comptroller staff have gone to great lengths to improve this process in recent months. I am confident DoW in a stronger position as a result.

24. In your view, under what circumstances should DOD Support of Civil Authorities be provided on a non-reimbursable basis? Please explain your answer.

DoW should consider DSCA on a non-reimbursable basis when non-reimbursable support is required by law or when non-reimbursable support is requested, authorized by law, and approved by the appropriate DoW official.

25. What is your understanding of a military commander’s “immediate response authority” for the conduct of DSCA? If confirmed, how, if at all, would you seek to modify the scope and breadth of this authority, and the process for using it?

The immediate response authority for the conduct of DSCA permits military commanders, Heads of DoW Components, and responsible DoW civilian officials to provide an immediate response by temporarily employing the resources under their control to save lives, prevent human suffering, and mitigate greater property damage. This authority is explained in DoD Directive 3025.18. To utilize the immediate response authority DoW must receive a request for assistance from a civil authority, the circumstances must be imminently serious, and there must not be time to seek approval from a higher DoW authority. Where appropriate or legally required, support provided under the immediate response authority is provided on a reimbursable basis; however, support will not be delayed or denied based on a question over reimbursement. I understand the immediate response authority does not permit the military to conduct law enforcement actions.

26. As crossings at the southern border have declined over 99%, what types of DSCA activities do you envision being requested by DHS? In your view, what factors should DOD consider in evaluating such requests for additional DSCA support along the southern border? How do you assess the effectiveness of DOD’s support mission at the southern border since January 2025?

The historic reduction in southern border crossings is a monumental achievement for our nation’s security and a direct result of the President’s decisive leadership. DoW has been an essential partner to DHS in this success. We are engaged with DHS to determine future requests based on variety of variables and capabilities. This includes advanced intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets to detect and deter new methods of illegal entry; engineering support to permanently secure physical barriers; and logistical expertise to ensure our civilian partners can maintain their forward presence efficiently.

In evaluating any future requests, we evaluate a number of criteria including:

1. The request should be directly linked to the national security mission of defending our nation’s sovereignty.
2. Must call for a unique military capability that our civilian partners do not possess.
3. The impact on warfighting readiness must be a primary consideration, and where possible, the mission should be structured to provide realistic training for our forces.

By these measures, our support mission at the southern border since January 2025 has been an unqualified success. The 99% decline in crossings is the ultimate metric of effectiveness. Our involvement provided DHS with the critical, force-multiplying capabilities they needed to enforce our laws and restore integrity to our border. We helped our partners achieve a historic victory for our nation's security, and if confirmed, I will ensure we are prepared to continue providing that essential, lawful support as needed.

27. In your view, what is the nature and extent of the current threat of terrorism to the U.S. homeland, both from outside the United States and from within the United States, potentially with the support of foreign malign actors or their proxies?

The U.S. homeland faces a complex and dynamic terrorism threat from both foreign and domestic actors. The threat is characterized by a mix of foreign terrorist organizations seeking to orchestrate attacks from abroad, and domestic violent extremists and homegrown violent extremists radicalized within the United States, such as ANTIFA. Foreign terrorist organizations, such as ISIS and al-Qa'ida, maintain a persistent intent to attack the U.S. homeland. These groups leverage online platforms to inspire and radicalize individuals in the United States to carry out attacks. The rapid proliferation and ease of access to unmanned systems, especially unmanned aerial systems, present the U.S. homeland with amplified threats from acts of terrorism. Iran remains the primary state sponsor of terrorism, using groups such as the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) and its proxy, Lebanese Hizballah, to maintain a global terrorist capability.

28. What is your understanding of the nature and scope of counterterrorism and antiterrorism roles and responsibilities vested in the ASD(HD&ASA)?

I understand that the ASW(HD&ASA) is responsible for developing and overseeing implementation of the policies related to the Department's support to domestic Federal law enforcement agencies in response to incidents of terrorism that might involve weapons of mass destruction, hostage rescue, or other areas in which the Attorney General requests support.

I also understand that the ASW(HD&ASA) is responsible, in coordination with the ASW for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, for developing and overseeing implementation of policy related to global counterterrorism activities, and in coordination with the Under Secretary of War for Intelligence and Security for overseeing the development, coordination, and maintenance of DoW policy for security of DoW personnel abroad.

29. In your view, how do the responsibilities of the ASD(HD&ASA) for combatting terrorism relate to the counterterrorism roles and responsibilities of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations & Low Intensity Conflict (ASD(SO/LIC))?

National Security Presidential Memorandum – 36 reaffirms the U.S. Government's policy for responding to terrorist threats and incidents both domestically and affecting U.S. interests overseas and assigns certain roles and responsibilities to the Secretary of War. I understand that

the Under Secretary of War for Policy is the principal civilian advisor to the Secretary of War for development and supervision of policy, program planning and execution, and allocation and use of resources for these matters. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict is the official with primary responsibility within Policy for matters related to counterterrorism, while the ASW(HD&ASA) is the official with primary responsibility within Policy for the Department's support to domestic law enforcement, when requested by the Attorney General of the United States.

30. If confirmed, what specific steps would you take to ensure that policies, plans, and programs for the prevention and disruption of terrorist attacks on the homeland are fully aligned, both within DOD, and across the federal interagency?

If confirmed, I will work closely with my partners within the Department, in the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and in other domestic law enforcement agencies to ensure we have the right policies, procedures, and readiness exercises to ensure we are sufficiently postured and structured to support the FBI's response to in any incident in which they request the Department's support. Within the Department, we have learned many lessons over the years from attacks at Fort Hood, the recruiting facility in Chattanooga, and the Naval Station in Jacksonville, and we will continue to apply those lessons to ensure the safety and protection of our forces, our installations, and our facilities.

Detainee Treatment and Guantanamo Bay

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

DoW is supporting the Department of Homeland Security by making holding facilities available and by providing basic support for the sustainment and transportation of illegal aliens in ICE custody at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay (NSGB). I understand that the ASW(HD&ASA) plays an important role in helping coordinate and facilitate DoW support through U.S. Southern Command as the Combatant Command responsible for NSGB. The ASW(HD&ASA) is also the conduit to proactively engage DHS and other departments and agencies on a variety of matters pertaining to NSGB and DHS's holding of illegal aliens at NSGB facilities.

32. What role would you expect to play, if confirmed, in regard to the operation, management, and oversight of migrant operations in support of the Department of Homeland Security at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and in formulating and implementing policies applicable to the facility's migrant detainee population?

I would approach the issue of migrant operations at Guantanamo Bay with a clear understanding of DoW's supporting role to DHS. I would be guided by a commitment to the preserving the safety and security of Americans, the responsible use of our military resources, and the unwavering defense of our national security. DoW remains postured to support DHS and ICE

illegal alien removal operations by providing temporary holding facilities for them onboard NSGB.

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

As I understand it, HD&ASA is not involved in the law-of-war detainee transfer process. DHS is responsible for all transportation of Illegal Aliens. Joint Task Force – Southern Guard (JTF-SG) will support with transportation security to protect DHS personnel if requested by DHS, but all JTF-SG support will be under the supervision of DHS when transporting Illegal Aliens by land. All reasonable precautions will be taken to protect the lives, safety, and welfare of Illegal Aliens, staff, other personnel, and the public during ground transportation. Illegal Aliens will be transported in a safe and humane manner under the supervision and custody of DHS personnel, assisted by trained JTF-SG personnel when requested by DHS.

34. Do you believe that the detention center at Guantanamo Bay should be closed? Please explain your answer. If so, how would you propose to ensure national security against the threats posed by the detainees in law of war detention there?

If confirmed, I will occupy an office the Secretary of War has identified as eligible to perform certain duties of convening authority under the Military Commissions Act of 2009 (MCA). If I were able to perform those duties, I may be called upon to review, affirm, or reduce a sentence to confinement of a convicted law of war detainee at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Therefore, I limit my response to my view regarding the use of the detention facility known as Camp VI, and DoW's support of DHS at Guantanamo Bay.

I will support the continued operations of the detention facility at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba in support of DHS and its immigration mission. DoW's support is necessary to help contribute to the increased safety and security of American citizens. If confirmed, my commitment is to ensure that the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay continues to operate in a manner that is safe, secure, humane, and fully aligned with ICE detention standards and our national security interests. Further, service members providing support to DHS within the facility will have the resources they need to support the DHS mission.

Torture and Enhanced Interrogation Techniques

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

Yes, I support the standards directed towards detainee treatment in the Army Field Manual on Interrogations, FM 2-22.3, issued in September 2006, and in DoD Directive 2310.01E, DoD Detainee Program. Individuals in the custody or control of the U.S. Government may not be

subjected to any interrogation technique or approach, or any treatment related to interrogation, that is not authorized by and listed in the Army Field Manual.

Defense Critical Infrastructure Protection

The ASD(HD&ASA) is responsible for overseeing DOD efforts and programs to protect defense critical infrastructure in the United States.

36. What is your understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the DOD under Homeland Security Presidential Directive 7: Critical Infrastructure Identification, Prioritization and Protection, both as a Federal Department and as the designated Sector-Specific Agency for the defense industrial base?

I understand that Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)-7 has largely been superseded by PPD-21 and now National Security Memorandum-22, shifting focus from countering terrorism towards nation state threats. I understand that the Department remains responsible for sector oversight of the Defense Industrial Base (DIB), which includes collaboration with other Sector Risk Management Agencies and state and local governments. Risk management of the DIB also includes conducting vulnerability assessments and building processes and strategies to reduce and manage risk. NSM-22 also has shifted SRMA focus to defense critical infrastructure (DCI) and relies on DoW to provide DCI prioritization and guidance to other Federal departments and agencies.

37. What do you view as the major challenges in the protection of defense critical infrastructure?

I believe that resource availability is the major challenge to the protection of the Defense Critical Infrastructure, or DCI. Infrastructure resilience and redundancy improvements are costly, limiting risk reduction measures to only the most critical vulnerabilities. Most of the DCI the Department relies on to execute its plans is not owned or operated by the Department. Despite its investments in understanding dependencies and vulnerabilities, the Department has limited insight into “civilian” DCI, and my understanding is that there is no way to comprehensively understand the residual DCI risk Combatant Commanders accept based due to dependence on non-DoW infrastructure. If confirmed, I will work with Congress to ensure that enough resources are available to address these critical challenges.

38. If confirmed, what risk management strategies, to include cyber, would you employ to mitigate the effects of attacks against defense critical infrastructure and other key resources?

If confirmed, I will work with other DoW Components, including the Secretaries of the Military Departments, to incentivize additional investment in civilian DCI resilience. I will also collaborate with the appropriate DoW Components to address operational technology cybersecurity standards and assessments, and I will continue to prioritize regular Mission Assurance Coordination Board Executive Steering Group meetings to set priorities to manage strategic DCI risk.

Defense Continuity and Mission Assurance (DC&MA)

The ASD(HD&ASA) exercises primary responsibility for DOD programs for Defense Continuity and Mission Assurance (DC&MA) in the United States.

39. What is your understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the ASD(HD&ASA) with respect to the DC&MA mission?

I understand that the ASW(HD&ASA) is responsible for developing and overseeing implementation of policy related to defense continuity, continuity of government, mission assurance, resilience and risk management of defense critical infrastructure, and force protection. These are critical, technical, and no-fail mission areas.

40. The focus on DC&MA missions tends to be most acute after a crisis. If confirmed, what would be your approach to prioritizing the DC&MA missions on a routine and regular basis?

The responsibility of DC&MA is to prepare for the worst day, and to work with all Components to ensure the resilience of their warfighting capabilities and capacities to guarantee that operations and functions can continue. If confirmed, I will regularly consult with DC&MA to ensure that office has the resources and support necessary to execute its critical functions.

41. In your view, to what extent do the cybersecurity aspects of the DC&MA mission overlap and require coordination with each of the following: cybersecurity capability and capacity to ensure that combatant commanders' Operational Plans can be securely executed; the cybersecurity of Defense Critical Infrastructure; the cybersecurity of the Defense Industrial Base; and the Strategic Weapons Systems cybersecurity programs?

I understand that cybersecurity is one critical area of overlap between the ASW(HD&ASA) and ASW(Cyber). I understand that the ASW(HD&ASA) co-chairs with the Director, Joint Staff, the Mission Assurance Coordination Board to identify and mitigate DCI vulnerabilities, including cyber vulnerabilities, that could jeopardize the successful execution of our plans and capabilities.

If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that the Mission Assurance Coordination Board appropriately prioritizes these areas to ensure the success of the Department's missions. While ASW(Cyber) has the lead for cybersecurity capability and capacity issues, if confirmed I look forward to helping with DCI priorities as needed to scope efforts to critical warfighting requirements. Similarly, if confirmed, I commit to working with the CIO on cybersecurity for the Defense Industrial Base, which underpins all the Department's warfighting capabilities.

Relationship with U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM)

U.S. Northern Command has the mission of conducting operations to deter, prevent, and defeat threats and aggression aimed at the United States, its territories, and interests

within the Command's assigned area of responsibility, and as directed by the President or Secretary of Defense, to provide defense assistance to civil authorities, including consequence management operations.

42. If confirmed, how do you anticipate you would coordinate homeland defense and DSCA roles and responsibilities with the Commander, NORTHCOM?

If confirmed, I view the bond between my office and the Commander, USNORTHCOM as a vital partnership of complementary roles: civilian policy lead and military operational expert. My position serves as the Secretary's primary civilian advisor, shaping DoW policy for homeland defense and Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA). This requires intentional synchronization with Congress, DHS, and other parts of Federal, state, and local governments. I recognize the critical mission USNORTHCOM plays in implementing Policy requirements as it relates to homeland defense and DSCA. I will continue to utilize traditional and established coordination methods to ensure we stay in sync and that there are avenues available for discussions to ensure we stay in sync.

43. How do you anticipate that the ASD(HD&ASA) and the NORTHCOM Commander will coordinate with other federal and state entities in planning for responses to events that might require DOD support?

There are established communication and coordination paths between USNORTHCOM and ASW(HD&ASA) to ensure DoW messaging to Federal and State entities for response planning to events is timely and effective. I will continue to ensure our support to our partners is a priority and we are supporting effectively. My priority is to provide effective DoW support while maintaining a strategic view to allow the Commander, USNORTHCOM to set a plan for operational success.

Use of Active Duty and Reserve Personnel for Homeland Defense/Posse Comitatus

44. What is your understanding of the legal issues associated with using military personnel—both active and reserve component forces—in law enforcement and security roles within the United States?

My understanding is that our legal framework, anchored by the Posse Comitatus Act, establishes a strong and clear firewall between our military forces and domestic civilian law enforcement. This legal separation, however, is not absolute. There are carefully defined statutory and constitutional exceptions for the direst national emergencies. There is also a critical distinction between direct participation in civilian law enforcement—such as search, seizure, and arrest—and more indirect support of civilian law enforcement partners. This is the principle that governs our vital support to agencies like Customs and Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement at the border, where our personnel provide capabilities like surveillance and logistics, enabling law enforcement agents to directly execute the law themselves. I am also keenly aware of the different legal statuses of our National Guard forces, who, when under state control, operate under a different legal framework and under the command and control of their governors.

45. In your view, does the Posse Comitatus Act (PCA), enacted in law in 1879, retain its relevance in the present day? Should the PCA be amended in some way to make it more useful in the current environment? Please explain your answer.

The Posse Comitatus Act is a foundational statute that remains highly relevant today. This principle protects the liberties of our citizens and, just as importantly, preserves the warfighting culture and apolitical nature of our armed forces. Its relevance endures, and its core tenets should be respected.

46. Under what circumstances do you believe it is appropriate for the Department of Defense to provide assistance to civilian law enforcement authorities investigating or responding to acts of domestic extremism?

My view is that the Department of War's involvement in any domestic law enforcement matter, including those related to domestic extremism, must be exceptionally rare and always in support of a civilian law enforcement agency and circumscribed by and consistent with law. The investigation and prosecution of domestic crimes are, and must remain, the responsibility of civilian law enforcement agencies, led by the Department of Justice, including the FBI.

Arctic and Global Resilience

47. What is your understanding of the responsibilities of the ASD(HD&ASA) with respect to Arctic and global resilience policy?

The ASW(HD&ASA) is responsible for oversight of two offices that have taken on the portfolios of Arctic and global resilience policy. The first of these is the office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of War for Americas Security Affairs, which has the Arctic policy portfolio. The other is the office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of War for Defense Continuity and Mission Assurance, which handles energy resilience and critical minerals policy issues.

48. What, in your view, are U.S. strategic objectives in the Arctic? What should DOD's role be in supporting the attainment of those objectives?

At the national level, the United States has several key strategic objectives regarding the Arctic, as reflected in the 2025 National Security Strategy and the 2026 America's Maritime Action Plan's Arctic Waterways Security Strategy. These objectives are protecting U.S. citizens, sovereignty, territory, and the economy; maintaining full control over our borders; building resilient national infrastructure, fielding the world's most powerful military; accessing Arctic waterways and seabed for commercial use, undersea cables, and resource extraction; and securing economic growth and prosperity. DoW's role in attaining those objectives is outlined in the 2026 National Defense Strategy, which directs DoW to defend the U.S. Homeland and guarantee U.S. military and commercial access to key terrain, such as Greenland. To do so, DoW will operate forces and infrastructure that can project power and counter space, missile, air,

maritime, undersea, land, and cyber threats to the U.S. Homeland. The Arctic, including Alaska, is critical to this mission.

49. In your view, what are the strategic objectives of China and Russia in the Arctic?

The strategic objectives of China in the Arctic are to use the region as a vector to hold the U.S. Homeland at risk from conventional and nuclear forces. Additionally, China seeks to increase its presence and influence in the Arctic to build national prestige and secure future access to potentially lucrative resources and waterways. Russia's strategic objectives for the Arctic are also to continue using the region as a route to threaten the U.S. Homeland with conventional and nuclear forces. Russia relies on its Arctic territory for most of its energy extraction, which fuels its economy. Moscow's key Arctic objective is to secure and defend continued access to the Arctic and expand it, for example through excessive maritime claims along the Northern Sea Route.

50. In what ways, if any, do those strategic objectives conflict with the strategic objectives of the United States broadly, and the Department of Defense specifically?

China and Russia seek to continue holding the United States at risk from strategic attack. This strategic objective directly conflicts with the U.S. national objectives of securing the Homeland and U.S. citizens, sovereignty, territory, and the economy.

51. In your view, do these remain the correct strategic priorities for DOD in the Arctic? If not, what modifications would you suggest to DOD's strategic priorities?

The 2026 National Defense Strategy supersedes all prior strategic guidance for the Department of Defense. The phrase "monitor-and-respond" does not describe DoW's current approach to the Arctic. The 2026 National Defense Strategy lays out goals that pertain to the Arctic region, stating that DoW will defend the U.S. Homeland and guarantee U.S. military and commercial access to key terrain, such as Greenland. DoW will enhance its warfighting capabilities and readiness, including those that are Arctic-relevant. DoW will also work with Allies to ensure they shoulder their fair share of the burden, including in the Arctic.

52. In your view, does the U.S. military currently have the appropriate capabilities and assets to support its strategic interests in the Arctic?

The National Defense Strategy makes defending the U.S. Homeland our top priority. Alaska is part of the Homeland, and the Arctic region is critical for defending North America. While the U.S. military currently has effective capabilities to secure U.S. Arctic-related strategic interests, the National Defense Strategy states that we will rebuild the Joint Force so that America's enemies never doubt our resolve or ability to respond decisively to those threats.

Latin America and the Caribbean

53. In your view, what are the U.S. national security interests in Latin America and the Caribbean?

The President and Secretary have made it clear that hemispheric security is national security. We must ensure we are advancing America's interests in the Western Hemisphere by securing critical infrastructure and strategic waterways, from the Arctic through Argentina. This includes countering adversaries, such as major cartels, foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs) and other malign actors present throughout the region. We must ensure critical infrastructure, such as the Panama Canal, is secured and free of foreign interference.

54. In your view, what would be the appropriate role for DOD in addressing the sources of instability in the region, including corruption, drug and human trafficking?

For the first time in decades, at the President and Secretary's direction, the Department is taking a forward-leaning approach to counter designated terrorist organizations in this hemisphere and to stop them from poisoning Americans. If confirmed, I will work with our interagency partners to ensure the Department is acting on the President's direction to position the United States to conduct the full spectrum of military activities to support U.S. national security objectives and defend the homeland.

55. What is your assessment of the malign influence threat from Russia, China, Iran and other actors in Latin America and the Caribbean, and what should be the appropriate role for DOD in countering that threat?

I believe it is imperative we work to deter encroachment by our adversaries, such as China, Iran, and Russia throughout Latin America and the Caribbean to ensure hemispheric security, which directly protects the homeland. China has a two-fold strategy to expand economic, engagement and diplomatic and military influence in the region. Russia seeks to expand its influence in the region through malicious cyber activities, disinformation campaigns, and security force projection through its traditional partners that share fraught relations with the United States, including Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.

56. What is your assessment of the threat in this region to critical infrastructure, such as ports, mines, and telecommunications networks, from adversaries like Russia and China? Does DOD have any role in combating malign foreign influence in this area?

The Department plays an essential role in whole-of-U.S. Government (USG) efforts to counter foreign malign influence, including against critical infrastructure. If confirmed, I will work within our interagency partners to ensure the Department of War is acting on the President's direction to position the United States to conduct the full spectrum of military activities to

support U.S. national security objectives and defend the homeland, while also ensuring no additional ground is ceded to our adversaries.

57. What is your assessment of the threat of Chinese space cooperation with South American partners—both commercial and military?

I understand that China is pursuing several space cooperation initiatives across Latin America. While many of these sites are described as civilian projects for space exploration and scientific research, these sites could also support China's military activities, enhancing China's strategic capabilities in space and intelligence gathering.

The Secretary has made it clear that hemispheric security is national security. I believe it is imperative we work directly with our Latin American partners, including Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, to deter space cooperation with China that threatens the national security of the United States. If confirmed, I will work to ensure the Department is aligning its space cooperation activities with other U.S. departments and agencies to protect our hemisphere from Chinese malign activities.

58. What is your assessment of Venezuela's threat to the United States and our allies and partners?

Venezuela's uncertain stability and precarious economic state is something we must continue to monitor to ensure it does not cause further destabilization in our hemisphere. An unstable Venezuela would have a destabilizing effect on the region, including to our allies and partners. The lack of economic opportunities, combined with endemic corruption among Venezuelan security services offers FTOs ample opportunities to exploit the highly permissive environment to engage in drug trafficking and other illicit activities threatening the homeland. If confirmed, I will continue to monitor this issue closely.

59. Please characterize the threat of drug trafficking organizations and transnational criminal organizations to the United States?

The presence of drug trafficking narco-terrorist and transnational criminal organizations in the hemisphere directly threatens the homeland. These organizations operate throughout the region, transiting borders without care, moving drugs and other nefarious illicit goods that arrive at the United States. If confirmed, I will work at the guidance of the President and Secretary to make sure the Department is addressing these threats.

60. The State Department's Foreign Terrorist Organization designation of an organization does not confer any authorities to the DOD. What is your assessment of the impact of those designations on the military-to-military relationships with our partners in the region?

For the first time in decades, at the President and Secretary’s direction, the Department is taking a forward-leaning approach to countering designated terrorist organizations in this hemisphere and to stop them from poisoning Americans. These actors have been the primary concern of many of our partners in the region, who welcome our leadership on this issue. The presence and illegal activities of these groups will no longer be tolerated and will be addressed head on.

61. In some countries in Latin America, DOD plays an important role in training, equipping, and providing assistance to partner nation militaries. How should DOD coordinate its security cooperation activities with security assistance efforts in those countries led by other U.S. agencies, such as the Department of State?

The Department plays an essential role in whole-of-U.S. Government security cooperation. If confirmed, I will work to ensure the Department is acting on the President’s direction to align security cooperation activities with overall U.S. Government efforts.

62. In your view, what conditions, if any, should the Defense Department place on its security assistance to countries such as Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador to ensure that it is training local security forces to respect human rights and the rule of law, and not exacerbating the violence in those countries?

The Department makes clear that our security assistance is conditional on partners upholding the rule of law, civilian control of the military, and human rights—and that these are not “extras,” but core to hemispheric security.

Practically, that means tying our assistance to real standards: credible vetting, adherence to human rights norms, and accountability when abuses occur. It means focusing our support on professionalization, paired with oversight mechanisms that reduce civilian harm and corruption.

This approach reflects Secretary Hegseth’s call to “build those bonds of partnership to defeat the challenges to our security and our sovereignty.” It ensures that our support strengthens the capacity and long-term security of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, helping them advance stability and create conditions that reduce the influence of violent actors.

Colombia

U.S. assistance to Colombia over the past several years has facilitated the marginalization of the FARC and other violent revolutionary groups. More recently, however, violence has escalated, and the Trump Administration decided to remove Colombia’s certification as a fully cooperating partner in the fight against drug trafficking.

63. How do you define U.S. national security interests in Colombia? What means of U.S. security assistance are appropriate for the Colombian government, given the challenges it faces?

U.S. national security interests in Colombia are focused on Colombia's ability to effectively control its borders and counter transnational criminal and narco-terrorist organizations, as well as diminishing Colombian cooperation with extra-hemispheric actors seeking to gain inroads in Colombia and the region. Title 10 security cooperation efforts and Title 22 security assistance programs like International Military Education and Training (IMET) allow Colombia to continue to increase its capacity and bolsters its capacity to defend Colombia's sovereign borders.

64. In your view, what steps, if any, should the United States take to address increased violence in Colombia, and to reduce other risks to implementation of the Colombian peace accord with the FARC?

Colombia-based designated terrorist organizations remain the principal threat to Colombia's sovereignty and security. We must continue to emphasize to Colombia at all levels that going after the threat from cartels and narco-terrorists is paramount to regional security.

65. In your view, what further security cooperation should the Department of Defense offer to assist Colombia to become a better partner in the fight against drug trafficking?

If confirmed, I will make sure the Department is aligned with the President and Secretary's guidance, especially in Colombia. However, the deteriorating security situation in Colombia, especially the increases in cocaine production and trafficking in recent years, needs to be addressed. Working with our interagency partners, I commit to exploring options to adjust security cooperation programs and activities to ensure alignment with our interests and our desired end-states in Colombia.

66. What is your assessment of DOD efforts to promote human rights and respect for the rule of law among Colombian security forces?

The military-to-military relationship between the armed forces of Colombia and the United States remains strong and collaboration is ongoing, which includes the promotion of human rights and respect for rule of law.

67. The Colombian military has become a security exporter throughout the region due to its capabilities and expertise. In your view, how should the United States work with Colombia regarding its efforts as a source of stability, both regionally and internationally?

My understanding is that Colombia has become a key exporter of security to the region, and the Colombian military now trains, including through the U.S.-Colombia Action Plan, partner militaries throughout the region. We must continue to reinforce with Colombia that prioritizing efforts against cartels and narco-terrorists is a fundamental way of ensuring stability, both within Colombia and our hemisphere.

Panama

The Panama Canal remains vital to the United States for securing economic trade routes, maintaining U.S. presence in Latin America, and supplying troops to the Indo-Pacific, should conflict break out.

68. In your view, what are the biggest threats to U.S. access to the Panama Canal?

The Panama Canal is a key strategic asset in the Western Hemisphere, which makes it susceptible to a wide range of threats from actors seeking to disrupt global shipping and obstruct U.S. interests. These threats range from gaps in the Canal's security infrastructure to the presence of malign state actors in and around the Canal Area. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues at USSOUTHCOM to ensure these threats are neutralized and that this critical terrain is fully secured.

69. What steps should the United States take to maintain commercial and military access to the Canal? How would you prioritize protection of this critical maritime choke point?

Chinese malign influence in and around the Panama Canal represents a significant threat to U.S. interests and our access to this critical maritime asset. From its first day, the Trump Administration has worked closely with the Government of Panama to harden the Canal's security infrastructure and to counteract China's influence at the Atlantic and Pacific openings of the waterway. If confirmed, I will continue to work with reputable partners like Panama, to ensure the United States maintains its free and unfettered access to the Canal.

Congressional Oversight

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

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

Yes

71. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to provide this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs such witnesses and briefers, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information, as may be

requested of you, and to do so in a timely manner? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes