

**Senate Armed Services Committee**  
**Advance Policy Questions for Mr. Christopher Maier**  
**Nominee to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for**  
**Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict**

**Duties and Qualifications**

**Section 138(b)(2) of title 10, U.S. Code, establishes the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (ASD(SOLIC)) as one of 15 Assistant Secretaries of Defense in the Department of Defense (DOD).**

**Q1. What is your understanding of the duties and responsibilities of the ASD(SOLIC) as prescribed in current law, DOD issuances, and by practice?**

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD(SO/LIC)) is the principal civilian advisor to the Secretary of Defense on special operations and low-intensity conflict matters. The ASD(SO/LIC)'s principal duty is overall supervision (including oversight of policy and resources) of special operations and low-intensity conflict activities of the Department of Defense. The ASD(SO/LIC) also is the principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense on special operations capabilities and authorities, counternarcotics efforts and resources, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, strategies for building partner capacity, and stability operations in accordance with the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy's priorities and guidance. Additionally, the ASD(SO/LIC) is in the administrative chain of command between the Secretary of Defense and the Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), performing a "service secretary-like" function for the special-operations peculiar administrative matters relating to organization, training, and equipping of special operations forces (SOF).

**Q2. What background and experience do you possess that qualify you to perform the duties and responsibilities of the ASD(SOLIC)?**

I have spent more than two decades focused on counterterrorism, special operations, and low-intensity conflict issues, with positions across DoD, the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), and the National Security Council (NSC) staff. I led DoD's Defeat-ISIS Task Force from its inception until disestablishment, charged with policy and strategy development, international negotiations, and oversight. I have previously served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for Special Operations and Combating Terrorism (SOCT), where I oversaw the Department's policies, plans, authorities, and resources related to special operations and irregular warfare, counterinsurgency, unconventional warfare, information operations, and sensitive special operations. Prior to that position, I held a number of positions at the NCTC, including Senior Advisor to the Director, Chief of Strategic Assessments and Regional Planning, and Chief of Staff in the Directorate of Strategic Operational Planning, and I served as a Director for Counterterrorism on the NSC staff. Prior to my government service, I also spent five years as a strategy and management consultant to a variety of commercial, government, and nonprofit organizations, after beginning my government career as an analyst in the Intelligence Community.

**Q3. What leadership and management experience do you possess that you would apply to your service as ASD(SOLIC), if confirmed?**

If confirmed, I would bring a broad range of relevant leadership and management experience to the position of ASD(SO/LIC). As the Director of the Defeat-ISIS Task Force, I led national-level interagency implementation of the U.S. Government's campaign to achieve an enduring defeat of ISIS, working closely with dozens of Coalition partners across the globe. As DASD SOCT, I led a team of more than 50 senior government civilian and military personnel in conducting special operations, counterterrorism, and irregular warfare policy development and implementation, as well as oversight of much of USSOCOM's man, train, and equip programs. My experience as a senior leader at NCTC and working with the President's national security leadership while on the NSC staff also provides me with further experience in leading organizations, in different roles, across the national security enterprise.

**Q4. If confirmed, what recommendations, if any, would you make regarding changes to the organization, management, and resourcing of the Office of the ASD(SOLIC), so as better to execute its responsibilities for oversight of and advocacy for Special Operations Forces?**

If confirmed, I look forward to assessing the organizational structure, management, and resourcing of the Office of the ASD(SO/LIC) to ensure it is appropriately resourced and staffed to fulfill its statutory roles of overseeing Special Operations administrative matters and assisting the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy in policy-related matters.

**Q5. Are there any additional authorities or resources that, in your view, would enhance your ability to perform the duties and functions of the ASD(SOLIC), if confirmed?**

The Department has recently approved a new charter for ASD(SO/LIC), which details the office's authorities, roles, and responsibilities within the Department, consistent with the ASD's Title 10 authorities. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of Defense and the Deputy Secretary of Defense to carry out these responsibilities effectively. If confirmed, I will also work with the Secretary of Defense and the Congress on changes to existing authorities or resources that would enhance the ASD(SO/LIC)'s ability to fulfill each of these responsibilities.

**Relationships**

**Q6. If confirmed, what would be your relationship with, and on what issues would you expect to engage with:**

**The Secretary of Defense**

If confirmed, I will perform the duties as the principal staff assistant and civilian advisor to the Secretary of Defense for all special operations, low-intensity conflict, and special operations-peculiar administrative matters, reporting directly to the Secretary as I exercise authority, direction, control, and oversight responsibilities related to organizing, training, and equipping of

the SOF enterprise. I will advise and assist the Secretary, and work with the Deputy Secretary of Defense, on sensitive special operations, operational preparation of the environment, crisis response, counterterrorism, information operations, and the use of the instruments of irregular warfare.

### **The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy**

If confirmed, I will assist the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy on ASD(SO/LIC)-related equities and policy matters, including the development and supervision of policy, program planning and execution, and allocation and use of resources for Information Operations, Irregular Warfare, combating terrorism, and special operations activities. I will keep the Under Secretary informed of major developments within the ASD(SO/LIC) portfolio, including operational matters that may have an effect on policy development or outcomes.

### **The Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security (USD(I&S))**

If confirmed, I will partner and coordinate with the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security on matters related to sensitive special operations, operational preparation of the environment, irregular warfare, and other sensitive efforts to achieve U.S. strategic objectives and improve the SOF enterprise. I would envision collaborating as well to ensure sufficient intelligence support to priority special operations disciplines, to include Information Operations and Irregular Warfare.

### **The Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering**

Technology development and advanced technologies are critical enablers to keep pace with our adversaries and reduce cost without sacrificing mission capabilities. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering to accelerate the adoption of Artificial Intelligence, machine learning, unmanned systems, smart munitions and weaponry, new communications modalities, and other revolutionary technologies into the SOF enterprise.

### **The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment**

Section 138 of 10 U.S.C. authorizes the ASD(SO/LIC) to “exercise authority, direction, and control of all special-operations peculiar administrative matters relating to the organization, training, and equipping of special operations forces.” If confirmed, I will establish a close working relationship with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment to ensure special operations acquisition programs, projects, and priorities are delivered in accordance with Department priorities, on-time and within budget, to meet mission needs to best serve our USSOCOM warfighters.

### **The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness**

Talented people are the foundational component of SOF, so ensuring the SOF enterprise is optimizing the way it recruits, trains, promotes, and retains talent that is reflective of our Nation's rich diversity, is critical to SOF's mission success. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to ensure SOF personnel programs and policies enable the force to deliver ready and lethal SOF capabilities.

### **The Secretaries of the Military Departments and the Service Chiefs**

SOF relies on Service support in many areas, including resourcing of Service-common requirements, personnel policies, recruiting, education, promotion, and force design. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Secretaries of the Military Departments and the Service Chiefs in these cross-cutting areas and to ensure adequate support to SOF.

#### **Q7. If confirmed, specifically what actions would you take to develop and sustain an open, transparent, and productive relationship between your office and Congress, and the Senate Armed Services Committee, in particular?**

The Senate Armed Services Committee and the Congress provide important oversight for the special operations enterprise and have been critical in establishing the roles and authorities of the ASD(SO/LIC). If confirmed, I will work with the ASD for Legislative Affairs to engage the Committee regularly to ensure a transparent and effective relationship on all issues within the purview of the ASD(SO/LIC), in addition to providing testimony, briefings, reports, and other information to help the committee fulfill its oversight and legislative responsibilities.

### **Major Challenges and Priorities**

#### **Q8. In your view, what are the major challenges that you would expect to confront if confirmed to be the ASD(SOLIC)?**

The ASD(SO/LIC) and the special operations enterprise must be prepared to meet simultaneously the challenges of great power competition, counterterrorism, modernizing our forces, enhancing readiness, and taking care of our people. If confirmed, I will work to support SOF in adapting to strategic competition with China and Russia, while balancing the ongoing requirements for counterterrorism operations through more cost-sustainable methods. If confirmed, I would also expect to confront continued readiness challenges in overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic and reducing the strain of high rates of SOF overseas deployments. The ASD(SO/LIC) and USSOCOM must also continue to focus on key moral and operational imperatives to address sexual assault and extremism, implement ongoing reforms related to SOF culture and ethics, and increase the diversity of SOF.

#### **Q9. If confirmed, specifically what management actions would you take to address each of these challenges?**

Strong civilian oversight will be critical in leading the SOF enterprise to address these challenges. If confirmed, I will work closely with Department of Defense leadership and the Congress in implementing the ongoing reforms to strengthen ASD(SO/LIC) oversight of these critical issues. I will also partner closely with the Commander, USSOCOM to ensure that SOF

has the necessary authorities, resources, and capabilities to meet these challenges. Finally, if confirmed, I would look to strengthen our relationships with our allies and partners, their SOF contingents and more broadly, to leverage the force multiplier effect of their strengths and capabilities to address today's increasingly complex global threat environment.

### **National Defense Strategy**

**The 2018 NDS prioritized “great power competition and conflict” with China and Russia as the primary challenges with which the United States must contend, together with the imperative of deterring and countering rogue regimes like North Korea and Iran. Finally, the framework emphasizes the consolidation of gains in Iraq and Afghanistan, while moving to a “more resource sustainable” approach to counterterrorism.**

**Q10. In your view, does the NDS accurately assess the current strategic environment, including the most critical and enduring threats to the national security of the United States and its allies? Please explain your answer.**

I agree that the NDS's assessment of the strategic environment was accurate when written. I also agree with Secretary Austin that China represents the Department's pacing threat, and that Russia, Iran, and North Korea represent advanced, persistent threats. Finally, I believe that foreign terrorist organizations pose an enduring, threat to our national security. If confirmed, I would help ensure that the SOF enterprise continues to transform to address the Department's top priorities, provide options to address the full range of threats, and becomes more sustainable in its approach to enduring CT challenges.

**Q11. Are there aspects of the NDS you believe should be updated or reassessed?**

I understand that the Department has begun a deliberate process to develop a new NDS. The Administration's priorities, changes in the security environment, and other factors should drive that process. I believe the next NDS should continue to emphasize the critical shaping role that information operations and irregular approaches play as part of an integrated national approach against our highest priority security threats. By imposing costs in competition and raising the costs of adversaries' malign activities, SOF-led and enabled approaches can prevent conflict, ensure advantage in competition, and manage escalation dynamics so that if required, we enter into conflict on the most favorable terms.

**Q12. In your view, are the plans and programs of the Commander, USSOCOM appropriately focused, scoped, and resourced to counter the threats and achieve the national security objectives identified by the NDS?**

I understand that the Commander, USSOCOM, is actively engaged in ensuring USSOCOM personnel and resources are aligned against the security objectives identified in the NDS. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Commander, USSOCOM, to ensure plans and programs are in alignment with the NDS as well as with national and Departmental strategies and guidance.

**Q13. What is your assessment of the risk the Commander, USSOCOM has accepted regarding the readiness of Special Operations Forces to execute the operational plans associated with the NDS?**

From my understanding, the Commander, USSOCOM, works closely with both the military and civilian chains of command within the Department of Defense to mitigate risk and ensure USSOCOM forces are ready to execute assigned plans in furtherance of the NDS.

**Q14. If confirmed, what changes or adjustments would you advise the Commander, USSOCOM to make in the command's implementation of the NDS?**

If confirmed, I will engage with the Commander of USSOCOM to ensure SOF strategy is nested under the NDS and establishes a long-term framework to develop and deliver the necessary SOF capabilities and resources, to include enabling key capabilities of the Joint Force, to maximize the Department's effectiveness in implementing the NDS.

**Q15. Are the Special Operations Forces of each of the Military Services appropriately sized, structured, and postured to implement the NDS and the associated operational plans? Please explain your answer.**

It is my understanding that each Service's SOF are responsible to their Service, to USSOCOM, and to the ASD(SO/LIC) to ensure they are poised to execute the NDS and associated operational plans. If confirmed, I will review their force generation, structure, and readiness to execute their assigned tasks.

**Civilian Control of the Military**

**In its 2018 report, *Providing for the Common Defense*, the National Defense Strategy Commission cautioned, "there is an imbalance in civil-military relations on critical issues of strategy development and implementation. Civilian voices appear relatively muted on issues at the center of U.S. defense and national security policy."**

**Q16. What is your view of the essential role of the ASD(SOLIC) in promoting civilian control over the military?**

The ASD(SO/LIC) is in the administrative chain of command to exercise authority, direction, and control of the Commander, USSOCOM, for special operations-peculiar administration including the readiness and organization of special operations forces, resources and equipment, and civilian personnel. Accordingly, the ASD must clearly articulate strategic priorities and policies for those matters. As a Principal Staff Assistant reporting directly to the Secretary of Defense, the ASD(SO/LIC) must also ensure that the Secretary of Defense has all the necessary, resource-informed, policy recommendations to exercise his control of the military, including SOF. It is therefore essential to maintain a collaborative and cooperative relationship with the Commander, USSOCOM to ensure the best possible civilian-military advice is provided to the Secretary on the resourcing and employment of SOF. If confirmed, I intend to exercise my statutory authorities to further this objective.

**The National Defense Strategy Commission report also states, “. . . allocating priority—and allocating forces—across theaters of warfare is not solely a military matter. It is an inherently political-military task, decision authority for which is the proper competency and responsibility of America’s civilian leaders.”**

**Q17. Do you agree with the Commission’s recommendation that “the Secretary of Defense and USD(P) . . . [must] fully exercise their responsibilities for preparing guidance for and reviewing contingency plans?” Please explain your answer.**

I agree with this recommendation. To me, clear DoD-wide guidance improves effectiveness and unity of effort within the Department and with our interagency and international partners during operations and activities supporting both deliberate and contingency plans. The Secretary and the USD(P) have a vital role to ensure that political risks—including the risk of inaction—are weighed by the United States’ civilian leadership. Doing so also enhances effective civil-military relations throughout the U.S. Government, which is essential for our national security.

**Q18. Specifically what would you do, if confirmed, to prepare guidance for and review contingency plans involving Special Operations Forces and capabilities and what would you perceived to be the appropriate role of the USD(P) in this regard?**

If confirmed, I would align with the USD(P)’s process for contingency plan review and ensure that the ASD(SO/LIC) is fully invested and participates in reviewing contingency plans. I would emphasize that the Department should look holistically at the competitive landscape and not just focus on high-end war contingency plans. I endorse a deliberate approach to competition and crisis at all levels and in close coordination with diplomatic and other interagency partners. SOF have an important role in this space, and I would provide my best advice and recommendations to the USD(P) to account for those areas, prior to armed conflict, where the Department can achieve outsized effects in the competition and low-intensity conflict arenas.

### **Civilian Oversight of the U.S. Special Operations Command**

**Section 922 of the FY 2017 NDAA, as amplified by section 902 of the NDAA for FY 2021, empowered the ASD(SOLIC) to serve as the “service secretary-like” civilian official with responsibility for the oversight of and advocacy for Special Operations Forces. Among other reforms, the law defined the administrative chain of command for USSOCOM as running through the ASD(SOLIC) to the Secretary of Defense for issues impacting the readiness and organization of Special Operations Forces, special operations-peculiar resources and equipment, and civilian personnel management, mirroring the relationship between the Secretaries of the Military Departments and their service chiefs, and placing ASD(SOLIC) immediately subordinate to the Secretary of Defense in such “service secretary-like” matters. The law also makes plain that otherwise directed by the President, no officer below the Secretary of Defense may intervene to exercise authority, direction, or control over the ASD(SOLIC) in the discharge of such responsibilities.**

**Q19. What is your understanding of the administrative chain of command specified by Section 922 of the FY 2017 NDAA, as amplified by section 902 of the NDAA for FY 2021?**

Section 922 of the NDAA for FY 2017 codified the administrative chain of command for USSOCOM as running from the President to the Secretary of Defense, from the Secretary of Defense to the ASD(SO/LIC), and from the ASD(SO/LIC) to the Commander of USSOCOM. Section 902 of the NDAA for FY 2021 reinforced and strengthened this role by making the ASD(SOLIC) an immediate subordinate of the Secretary of Defense. The Department further reinforced this role by designating the ASD(SO/LIC) as a Principal Staff Assistant reporting directly to the Secretary of Defense for special operations, low-intensity conflict, and special operations-peculiar administrative matters.

**Q20. If confirmed, how would you seek to exercise the administrative chain of command and under what circumstances?**

The Department published an updated version of Department of Defense Directive 5111.10, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, on May 5, 2021, which prescribes the roles, responsibilities, and functions of the ASD(SO/LIC). The Secretary of Defense also emphasized the ASD(SO/LIC)'s role in the administrative chain of command through a memorandum published on May 5, 2021. If confirmed, I will seek to exercise the ASD(SO/LIC)'s role in the administrative chain of command as prescribed by both the Secretary and the DoD Directive through consistent, constructive, and transparent communication with the Secretary of Defense and the Commander, USSOCOM.

**Q21. If confirmed, how would you distinguish between and balance the duties and responsibilities associated with the ASD(SOLIC)'s "service secretary-like" role with the ASD(SOLIC)'s duties and responsibilities related to special operations policy and operational issues?**

I see extensive synergy between the administrative chain of command responsibilities and the policy oversight responsibilities of the ASD(SO/LIC). If confirmed, I will endeavor to balance these duties, prioritizing as necessary relative to pressing requirements, in close coordination and collaboration with the Secretary of Defense, the USD(P) and the Commander, USSOCOM.

**Q22. What is your understanding of the role of the ASD(SOLIC) in:**

- **The formulation and submission of USSOCOM's annual budget request.**

I understand that the ASD(SO/LIC) receives fiscal guidance from the Director, Cost Analysis and Program Evaluation (CAPE), and provides fiscal guidance to USSOCOM. In addition, the ASD(SO/LIC) reviews and approves the USSOCOM Program Objective Memorandum and President's Budget submissions.

- **Approving programs of record and the acquisition of special operations-peculiar capabilities by USSOCOM.**

USSOCOM has statutory authority for development and acquisition of special operations-peculiar equipment. I understand that the ASD(SO/LIC) participates in the USSOCOM budget and requirements processes to establish acquisition programs.

- **Overseeing the organization of USSOCOM headquarters and service components.**

The ASD(SO/LIC), as the principal civilian advisor to the Secretary of Defense on special operations matters, must work in partnership with the Commander, USSOCOM, to implement a shared vision for a SOF enterprise that meets the nation's special operations requirements. If confirmed, I will participate in strategic engagements and processes shaping the organization of USSOCOM and the SOF Service components to sustain and advance the SOF enterprise.

- **Ensuring the readiness of Special Operations Forces.**

The ASD(SO/LIC) is responsible for the readiness of SOF, as stated in Section 167 of Title 10. If confirmed, I would work closely with the Commander, USSOCOM, to conduct regular reviews of the readiness of SOF to meet current, emergent, and future national security requirements.

- **Actions relating to the culture, ethics, and accountability of Special Operations Forces.**

The ASD(SO/LIC), in partnership with the Commander, USSOCOM, is responsible for ensuring SOF conduct themselves in a manner commensurate with the level of trust the public places in them in the performance of their duties, and consistent with their oath. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Commander, USSOCOM, to strengthen further the ethics and accountability of SOF. I also will support the swift implementation of the recommendations of the Comprehensive Review of SOF Ethics and Culture to ensure that ethics and accountability are institutionalized across the SOF enterprise.

**Q23. In your view, do existing law and DOD policy and guidance provide sufficient clarity regarding how and in whom responsibility and accountability vest for all matters affecting Special Operations Forces? If not, what further changes would you recommend?**

I believe that Title 10 is clear on the ASD(SO/LIC)'s role as the principal civilian advisor to the Secretary of Defense on special operations and low-intensity conflict matters and the role in the administrative chain of command of the Commander, USSOCOM. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Secretary of Defense, the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, and the Commander USSOCOM to fulfill these statutory requirements. If confirmed, I will evaluate potential changes required to existing law that could clarify responsibility and accountability for special operations matters.

**Q24. In your view, does the extant administrative chain of command allow for any official below the Secretary of Defense to exercise authority, direction, and control over the ASD(SOLIC) with regard to his/her “service secretary-like” responsibilities?**

In my view, the law is clear: Unless otherwise directed by the President, the administrative chain of command to USSOCOM for the specific purposes set forth in 10 U.S.C. 167(f)(2) runs (A) from the President to the Secretary of Defense; (B) from the Secretary of Defense to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict; and (C) from the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict to the Commander of USSOCOM. This chain was also reinforced by the new chartering directive for the ASD(SO/LIC).

### **Use of Military Force**

**Q25. If confirmed, what factors would you consider in making recommendations to the Secretary of Defense and the USD(P) on the operational use of Special Operations Forces?**

If confirmed, I will focus on validating and, as needed, updating the capabilities and authorities necessary for SOF to confront our global challenges. It is my belief we need to have SOF positioned to disrupt threats to the United States and our partners in a more sustainable manner, and we need to provide Department and national security leadership with options that enable flexibility, manage escalation, and provide high return on investment

If confirmed, I look forward to working across the Department, with the leadership at USSOCOM, with my counterparts in other U.S. Government departments and agencies, and with our international partners to ensure the SOF enterprise is postured and able to execute our national defense strategy, to include our nation’s most challenging military missions.

I remain concerned about the health of the SOF enterprise, in particular the hidden impacts that sustained combat deployments have had on our warfighters and their families. If confirmed, I will champion the efforts of the Preservation of the Force and Family program and will seek to identify other ways that we can support USSOCOM’s most important asset—its people.

**Q26. Do you believe that current legal authorities, including the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force, enable the Department to carry out counterterrorism operations and activities at a level you believe to be necessary and appropriate?**

The 2001 AUMF remains the key domestic legal authority for ongoing U.S. counterterrorism activities against al-Qa’ida, the Taliban, and their associated forces. The Department has operated under these current legal authorities for nearly 20 years, but the threats we face and the operating environments in which SOF operate continue to evolve. I support President Biden’s support for replacing the current AUMFs with a narrow and specific framework that will ensure our forces have the authority they need to protect the United States from continuing terrorist

threats. If confirmed, I would expect to work closely with counterparts in other departments and agencies, and with the Congress in updating those authorities.

**Q27. What groups are currently assessed to be associated forces of al Qaeda for purposes of the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force, and in what countries are U.S. military direct action operations against such groups authorized?**

The 2001 AUMF is the legal basis for currently authorized operations against the following groups or individuals: al-Qa'ida; the Taliban; certain other terrorist or insurgent groups affiliated with al-Qa'ida and the Taliban in Afghanistan; al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula; al-Shabaab; al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM); al-Qa'ida in Syria; and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

It is my understanding that the United States has used military force for counterterrorism direct action operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, and Libya.

**Q28. In your view, is a new authorization for the use of military force needed at this time? Please explain your answer.**

I agree with President Biden's support for replacing the current AUMFs with a narrow and specific framework that will ensure our forces have the authority they need to protect the United States from continuing terrorist threats. The scope or terms of any "new" authorization should be informed by an in-depth review of the current authorities, and by the facts and circumstances to which the authorities apply. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Department's General Counsel to conduct that evaluation.

**Q29. What factors would you consider, if confirmed, in recommending to the Secretary of Defense and USD(P) which forces of other nations should be eligible for collective self-defense by U.S. Special Operations Forces, and under what conditions?**

If confirmed, I would consider the degree to which collective self-defense would support achieving U.S. national security and specific mission objectives when operating by, with, and through our partners. The use of collective self-defense should also seek to bolster the protection of U.S. forces and facilities abroad and maintain the resolve of our partners. Rules of engagement authorizing U.S. forces to defend foreign partner forces should clearly identify the particular partners eligible for such protection and whether limits exist on the groups or individuals against which such force may be used. Any use of force in defense of foreign partner forces must adhere to the law of armed conflict and also be necessary and proportionate to address the particular attack or threat of imminent attack against the partner force.

**Civilian Casualties**

**Section 936 of the NDAA for FY 2019 required the Secretary of Defense to develop a comprehensive policy for accounting for and responding to allegations of civilian casualties resulting from U.S. military operations.**

**Q30. If confirmed, what would be your role in developing and implementing the policies resulting from Section 936?**

If confirmed, I would support the efforts of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, who is designated under Section 936 as the civilian official responsible for developing, coordinating, and overseeing compliance with DoD civilian casualty policy. For example, I would help oversee on-going efforts within the Department to complete the drafting and coordination of a forthcoming DoD instruction on civilian harm mitigation and response.

**Q31. What role do you believe public transparency plays with respect to accounting for and responding to allegations of civilian casualties resulting from U.S. military operations?**

Public transparency about U.S. military operations helps improve the public's understanding of what the President and the Secretary of Defense have directed U.S. forces to do, as well the results of their actions. Although the type of information that can be made public will inevitably depend on operational and security requirements, transparency efforts can help the public better understand the human suffering that is inevitably part of war as well as the extent to which U.S. forces' go to minimize civilian casualties.

**Q32. Do you believe DOD has achieved a sufficient level of transparency on such matters? If not, what additional steps do you believe are necessary?**

I understand that DoD and its leaders regularly consider new, more effective ways to communicate with the public on important issues, including matters related to civilian casualties. If confirmed, I would actively support these efforts and fulfill any related responsibilities that may be assigned to the ASD(SO/LIC) in the forthcoming DoD instruction on civilian harm mitigation and response.

**Special Operations Missions**

**Q33. Do you believe the special operations activities identified in section 167 of title 10, U.S. Code, remain relevant and appropriate?**

Yes, I do. SOF are uniquely manned, trained, and equipped to undertake these activities.

**Q34. What changes, if any, would you recommend?**

At this time, I would not recommend any changes to Section 167 of Title 10.

**Q35. Are there special operations missions or activities that you believe should be transferred to conventional forces or, otherwise divested by USSOCOM, and, if so, why?**

I believe that the decision to employ SOF should be based on the following criteria, that a mission or activity: is politically sensitive; conducted in an austere or remote location without

significant support infrastructure; requires a small footprint; demands a higher level of precision execution; and there is significant delegated decision authority to the lowest level of command. SOF have unique training and capabilities to execute missions under those criteria. If those criteria are not present, then it may be more appropriate for conventional forces to conduct the activity or mission.

**Q36. Are there any additional missions or activities that you believe should be assigned to USSOCOM? Please explain your answer.**

Not at this time. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Commander, USSOCOM, as well as with the USD(P) and the CJCS, to ensure USSOCOM is assigned appropriate missions and activities.

**Future of Special Operations Forces**

**Q37. In your view, what are the major challenges facing U.S. Special Operations Forces in the near-, mid-, and long-term?**

I believe the major challenge for SOF is balancing the demands of sustainable counterterrorism while increasing readiness for crisis response and strategic competition with China and Russia. I do not believe that SOF should be prioritized to focus on longer-term challenges that do not require their unique skills, capabilities, and attributes.

**Q38. In your assessment, are U.S. Special Operations Forces appropriately organized, trained, and equipped to address these challenges? What changes, if any, would you recommend to the organization, training, and equipping of U.S. Special Operations Forces?**

From my current understanding, I believe SOF are actively adapting to ensure they are ready to meet these existing and emerging challenges. If confirmed, I would work closely with the Commander, USSOCOM, to ensure SOF are organized, trained, and equipped to the levels necessary to meet these challenges.

**Q39. In your view, what should be the role of the ASD(SOLIC) in identifying and implementing efforts regarding the organization, training, and equipping of U.S. Special Operations Forces?**

In my view, the ASD(SO/LIC) should ensure that SOF are organized, trained, and equipped in alignment with national and Departmental strategic guidance. I believe that the role of the ASD(SO/LIC) is to provide appropriate civilian oversight, to include advocacy within the Department and with Congress, to ensure SOF are optimally organized and receive the necessary training and equipment to carry out their assigned missions and activities.

**Combatting Terrorism**

**Q40. What is your view of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy and the role of USSOCOM in supporting that strategy?**

The U.S. National Strategy for Counterterrorism is a comprehensive, whole-of-government approach for integrating military and non-military efforts to combat the threat of terrorists at home and abroad. The strategy recognizes that today's terrorist landscape is more fluid and complex than ever. The United States must be adaptive in its approach in countering and preventing terrorism. I understand that USSOCOM plays a key role in this process as the Department's Coordinating Authority to unify counterterrorism planning across DoD. If confirmed, I will work to ensure we are focusing on the appropriate lines of effort and are aligned with the whole-of-government effort.

**Q41. How would you assess the effectiveness of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy in addressing the threat posed by Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs)?**

The National Strategy for Counterterrorism provides a framework that has proven effective guiding U.S. action to degrade ISIS and al-Qa'ida. Our goal must be to evolve to most cost-effective approaches to degrade the terrorist threats to the United States and our citizens. If confirmed, I would advocate for establishing clear policy objectives and effective assessment metrics that make it easier to review progress and measure success, in close consultation with interagency partners.

**Q42. What changes, if any, would you recommend to the strategy or associated measures of effectiveness?**

If confirmed, I would focus on how the strategy is being implemented, and whether the existing measures of effectiveness are precise and being used in adjusting our CT approaches across the Department. A standardized assessment methodology and metrics could enable a more proactive and deliberate approach to CT, which could enable the Department to put in place more cost-effective and sustainable approaches enduring terrorism threats.

**Q43. What is your assessment of the threat posed by Al Qaeda, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and other VEOs, to the U.S. homeland, and western interests, more broadly? Which group or groups, in your view, currently present the greatest threat to the United States?**

Al-Qa'ida and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) present an enduring threat to U.S. citizens at home and abroad. Our national interests, and those of our partners and allies, will remain threatened until these groups are no longer able project power from their operating areas, or inspire others to carry out violence in their name.

**Q44. In your view, what does a "more resource sustainable" approach to counterterrorism, as directed by the NDS, mean?**

In my view, a "more resource-sustainable" approach would entail prioritizing effective operational actions against the groups that pose the greatest threat to Americans, efficient and

flexible employment of limited resources, and wherever possible working by, with, and through enabled partners to build the capacity of local authorities to increasingly confront the threats on their own

**Q45. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to promote a “more resource sustainable” approach to counterterrorism?**

If confirmed, I will lead a collaborative and transparent effort, in coordination with the leadership of the Joint Staff; Commander, USSOCOM; and other key officials, to develop Departmental guidance and priorities for counterterrorism operations, activities, and investments. I also will work to integrate military counterterrorism operations into the whole-of-government approach and with the efforts of allies and partners.

**Q46. If confirmed, how would you endeavor to manage risk under this “more resource sustainable” approach?**

If confirmed, I would manage strategic risk through a whole-of-government evaluation of what terrorist entities pose the greatest threat to the United States, when compared to U.S. and coalition efforts to disrupt their activities. We need to look carefully at our terrorism efforts to ensure they are applied against the most important threats we face, in the context of our regional and global national security objectives. .

**Detention Operations**

**Q47. If confirmed, what role would you expect to play in addressing matters regarding detention under the law of armed conflict?**

If confirmed, I will engage directly on all matters regarding policy and guidance on detention under the law of armed conflict.

**Q48. 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?**

Yes, I support the current standards for detainee treatment in the Army Field Manual on Interrogations, FM 2-22.3. 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. Any and all detainees must be treated humanely.

**Q49. If confirmed, what role would you play in the ongoing triennial review and revision of FM 2-22.3 mandated by the NDAA for FY 2016?**

If confirmed, I will work with my DoD and Army counterparts on the triennial review of FM 2-22.3 to ensure that it meets all applicable legal requirements, and that the practices for interrogation described in the Army Field Manual do not involve the use or threat of force in

accordance with Section 1045 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 (Public Law 114-92). I understand that the USD(I&S) is currently reviewing interrogation techniques and may publish a DoD manual on the same. I fully support the elevation of interrogation techniques to a DoD-level manual. If confirmed, I will work with USD(I&S) to ensure detention operations are synchronized across DoD.

**Q50. Are there certain policies or processes set forth in FM 2-22.3 that in your view are in particular need of revision? Please explain your answer.**

If confirmed, I will carefully review the policies and processes outlined in FM 2-22.3 to determine if any revisions may be required.

**Intelligence Operations**

**Q51. How are responsibilities for the oversight of the intelligence activities and programs of Special Operations Forces delineated between the Office of the USD(I&S) and the Office of the ASD(SOLIC)?**

DoD Directive 5111.10, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, designates the ASD(SO/LIC) as the Principal Staff Assistant (PSA) to the Secretary of Defense charged with exercising authority, direction, and control of all special operations-peculiar administrative matters, and assisting the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy to develop overall policy pertaining to special operations, low-intensity conflict, and irregular warfare.

In that context, I believe close coordination with the USD(I&S), as well as the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Intelligence Oversight (ATSD(IO)) official charged with performing independent oversight of DoD intelligence and intelligence-related activities pursuant to DoD Directive 5148.11, Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Intelligence Oversight (ATSD(IO)), is valuable and necessary for the proper oversight of such SOF activities. If confirmed, I look forward to partnering with the USD(I&S) and the ATSD(IO) to ensure that support for SOF is collaborative and coordinated in accordance with all applicable law and policy.

**Q52. In your view, how are intelligence operations carried out by Special Operations Forces different from those carried out by others in the Intelligence Community?**

In my view, special operations missions require immediate and detailed intelligence to support operations that are executed on rapid timelines and in high-risk environments. In light of those requirements, the key difference is that these intelligence operations are conducted in direct support of authorized SOF missions supporting specific Combatant Commander requirements. In contrast, I understand intelligence operations carried out by others in the intelligence community typically serve a more strategic purpose and reflect national priorities.

As such, I believe the main difference is that intelligence collected and assessed by SOF directly supports special operations task forces conducting operations in support of the Combatant

Commanders. When select SOF elements carry out intelligence operations in support of strategic collection requirements, those requirements are fully coordinated within the IC.

**Q53. If confirmed, how would you ensure that intelligence activities carried out by Special Operations Forces are properly coordinated with activities carried out by the Intelligence Community?**

I understand that SOF sensitive activities are closely coordinated with the Intelligence Community (IC) as required by applicable laws, policies, and arrangements. If confirmed, I would ensure that SOF units comply with all applicable laws, policies, and directives for the coordination of intelligence activities with the IC.

**Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)**

**Q54. What is your assessment of the threat posed by WMD to the United States?**

Weapons of mass destruction (WMD) continue to be a significant threat to the homeland and U.S. forces, allies, partners, and interests abroad. Specifically related to terrorists, I understand that a few groups have expressed intent and taken action seeking to acquire, develop, and use WMD against the United States and its allies.

**Q55. What is your understanding of USSOCOM's responsibilities under the Unified Campaign Plan for synchronizing the Department's efforts to counter weapons of mass destruction?**

I understand that the responsibilities of the Commander, USSOCOM, include providing the Secretary of Defense with recommendations on priorities and the allocation of resources to counter weapons of mass destruction. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Commander, USSOCOM, to support him in meeting those responsibilities and ensure he receives the support needed to undertake this important mission.

**10 U.S.C. 127e Operations**

**Section 127e of title 10, United States Code, authorizes the provision of support (including training, funding, and equipment) by U.S. Special Operations Forces to regular forces, irregular forces, and individuals supporting or facilitating military operations to combat terrorism.**

**Q56. What is your assessment of this authority?**

In my experience, Section 127e authority provides a cost-effective means for the United States to advance our security interests by supporting and enabling partners and allies in pursuing shared objectives against high-risk terrorist groups. If confirmed, I will evaluate this authority, including how it supports U.S. strategic goals, and ensure activities supported by this authority are in alignment with NDS priorities.

**Q57. What modifications, if any, would you recommend to this authority?**

The Section 127e authority is a proven and effective tool for U.S. SOF to conduct counterterrorism operations by, with, and through foreign and irregular partner forces. If confirmed, I will seek to maintain the efficacy and efficiency of the programs utilizing Section 127e support and to identify areas where we can improve the authority, or its application, to achieve U.S. national security objectives and support the needs of Combatant Commanders.

**Irregular Warfare**

**Nation states are becoming more aggressive in challenging U.S. interests through the use of asymmetric means that often fall below the threshold of conventional conflict, commonly referred to as irregular warfare and “gray zone operations.”**

**Q58. What is your understanding of the threat to U.S. interests posed by adversaries in the domain of irregular warfare?**

It is my understanding that, because of U.S. conventional overmatch, adversaries of the United States increasingly rely on indirect and asymmetric approaches to competition in an attempt to enhance their influence and avoid our advantages. This approach bypasses our conventional overmatch because state competitors are able to achieve many of their objectives without needing to cross the thresholds that would lead us to respond militarily. If confirmed, I would advocate for carefully calibrated actions that impose costs on adversaries’ destabilizing efforts and support a more integrated approach to deterring their undesired behaviors.

**Q59. What should be the guiding principles of any DOD strategy to counter threats in the “gray zone,” in your view?**

Consistent with the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, I believe that diplomacy should be our tool of first resort. DoD’s approach to the “gray zone” should focus on three key principles in support of diplomatic efforts: persistent engagement with allies and partners to demonstrate our commitment and maintain situational awareness of adversaries’ destabilizing efforts; prioritizing the information space, to seize the initiative and shape conditions, increase our influence and legitimacy, and combat harmful disinformation; and bolstering resilience across DoD and among allies and partners against the subversive and coercive challenges that are endemic to “gray zone” competition.

**Q60. What do you perceive to be the appropriate role for Special Operations Forces in executing such a strategy?**

In my view, SOF have a critical role to play in DoD’s approach to the “gray zone,” where strategic and conventional deterrence are insufficient to counter adversaries’ strategies. However, I believe it is important to understand that SOF provide far more than the direct action and counterterrorism (CT) portfolios that have dominated the past 20 years. SOF provide a wide range of capabilities below the threshold of armed conflict that can complement our traditional deterrent capabilities. If confirmed, I would work to ensure that the capabilities and mission sets

associated with irregular warfare provide the Department with a suite of options to mitigate our adversaries' malign influence, and also I would factor in a whole-of-government approach to sustain our interests in competition.

**Q61. What is your assessment of the status of implementation of the Irregular Warfare Annex to the 2018 NDS, including efforts to institutionalize and operationalize irregular warfare as an enduring, core competency of the entire Joint Force?**

My understanding is that the Department has made significant strides since the Irregular Warfare Annex to the 2018 NDS was signed. The Department released an unclassified summary of this document to increase awareness among our allies, partners, and the U.S. public of how it is working to understand the strategic environment and achieve unity of effort. I also understand that an implementation plan was developed to maintain accountability of implementation across the Joint Force—and not just SOF—to institutionalize IW as part of its approach to strategic competition and armed conflict. If I am confirmed, I would carefully review this process and advocate for continued momentum in areas where emphasis on IW can create lasting strategic impact and operational advantages.

**Q62. Do you agree with the Department of Defense's public summary of the Irregular Warfare Annex to the NDS that states "we are unprepared for irregular war?"**

My assessment is that the Department has traditionally prepared for deterrence of armed conflict or to win a high-intensity war, but that the lower-intensity conflict associated with "gray zone" activities is more difficult for DoD, and the U.S. Government more generally, to understand and to deal with effectively. If confirmed, I would work to ensure that the Department continues to make progress in addressing this issue.

**Q63. What do you see as the role of the ASD (SOLIC) in implementing the objectives described in the Irregular Warfare Annex to the NDS?**

I understand that the office of the ASD(SO/LIC) is the OSD lead for the Department's effort to implement the strategic guidance provided by the IW Annex to the 2018 NDS. If confirmed, I would work with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to provide continued direction and oversight of the Department's efforts to institutionalize IW into Joint Force campaigning in both strategic competition and armed conflict. I would also ensure that the long-standing, necessary reforms identified in that document are incorporated appropriately in successor guidance and strategic documents as they are developed.

**Q64. What is your assessment of the value of the "Section 1202" authority for support of special operations for irregular warfare? What modifications, if any, would you recommend to the "section 1202" authority?**

I believe the Section 1202 authority is an important tool in SOF's arsenal for competition by, with, and through foreign and irregular forces supporting our IW efforts. If confirmed, I would

work with USSOCOM to make sure that geographic Combatant Commands understand the unique value of this authority to achieve effects in competition within their AORs, and that USSOCOM's subordinate commands have the necessary resources to utilize Section 1202 authority fully and continue to mature the program. I would engage with Congress to advocate for responsible and effective growth in this authority's availability to DoD to help meet growing demand from Combatant Commanders.

**Q65. Do you believe that Special Operations Forces have the appropriate authorities and capabilities to operate effectively in this domain of warfare? Please explain your answer.**

SOF have a range of authorities, including Section 1202 of the NDAA for FY 2018 and 10 USC Sections 127e and 127f, which enable the conduct of IW-related and other sensitive activities as part of strategic competition. It is my understanding that SOF have appropriate IW capabilities that employ those authorities effectively. If confirmed, I would closely monitor the employment of these authorities to assess their sufficiency and would continuously evaluate SOF IW capabilities for effectiveness. I would work to demonstrate SOF's responsible use of these authorities and ensure the valuable return on investment in their use, and would look forward to working with Congress on these important matters.

**Q66. In your view, do Special Operations Forces require additional authorities and capabilities to provide support of irregular warfare? Please explain your answer.**

I believe the Department does not require additional authorities or capabilities to provide support of irregular warfare at this time. If confirmed, I would closely review the existing authorities and provide my recommendations on where additional support or increased authorities may be essential for our continued irregular warfare activities.

### **Special Operations Enabling Capabilities**

**Special Operations Forces rely extensively on enabling capabilities provided by Military Service general purpose forces to ensure mission success.**

**Q67. What is the role of the ASD(SOLIC) in ensuring that the special operations requirements for enabling capabilities are properly articulated to and provided by the Military Services?**

Major Force Program-11 only funds SOF-unique requirements. I understand that USSOCOM currently relies on the Military Services and Defense-Wide organizations to provide \$9.0 - \$10 billion of support annually in areas including military personnel, material, and base operating support. The ASD(SO/LIC) must continue to be the senior advocate for support to SOF within the Office of the Secretary of Defense. If confirmed, in coordination with Commander, USSOCOM, I will continue to integrate my staff into Department-level relevant processes to ensure adequate support to SOF by general purpose forces.

**Q68. In your view, should Special Operations Forces further develop organic**

**enabling capabilities, in addition or in place of those currently provided by general purpose forces?**

I believe that it is necessary and preferable for most enabling capabilities to be provided by the Military Services; however, there are requirements derived from SOF's unique missions where I believe that it is necessary for the enabling capability to be organized within USSOCOM. The decision to do so must be weighed carefully within the context of the SOF-peculiar requirement and the sustainment burden assumed by USSOCOM.

### **Information Operations**

**Q69. In your view, are the Department and the broader interagency appropriately organized to compete with state and non-state adversaries in the information environment? If not, what recommendations would you make?**

I understand that the Department is engaged, working within assigned portfolios, and collaborating with other relevant U.S. Government departments and agencies, to compete in the information environment. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for the proper structure responsible for the synchronization of all information-related capabilities across the Department to achieve U.S. strategic objectives. I also would make the advancement in the capabilities and application of information operations a top priority key focus.

**Q70. What is the appropriate role of the Department and, specifically, Special Operations Forces, in the broader information operations and strategic communications efforts of the U.S. Government?**

I understand the Department has a variety of capabilities to conduct military operations in the information environment, including public affairs (PA), military information support operations (MISO), electromagnetic spectrum operations (EMSO), and cyberspace operations. When these activities are executed effectively and in combination with each other and other tools, DoD can achieve its mission more affordably, and with reduced risk to our operating forces. If confirmed, I will strive to integrate these capabilities further into Department activities and in support to our interagency and foreign partners.

**Q71. What role should the USSOCOM's Joint MISO WebOps Center play in supporting these efforts?**

I understand that USSOCOM organized the Joint MISO WebOps Center to host the capability to support MISO activities that are funded and conducted by individual geographic Combatant Commands. I understand that the Center is working and growing, and, if confirmed, I will continue to support this important capability.

**Q72. Should Special Operations Forces develop any additional military capabilities to enable the DOD and the United States to compete more effectively in the information environment? Please explain your answer.**

Success in the information environment requires an integrated approach among a broad spectrum of participants. If confirmed, I will assess USSOCOM's capabilities in this area and ensure it continues to be a meaningful part of the effort to create and deliver timely solutions to warfighters. I will continue to focus on needs, speed of delivery, effectiveness, and efficiency.

### **Counternarcotics**

**The ASD(SOLIC) is responsible for coordinating and overseeing plans, programs and policies pertaining to counternarcotics (CN).**

**Q73. What is your assessment of the threat posed to the United States by drug trafficking and related activities of transnational criminal organizations?**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 81,000 drug overdose deaths occurred in the United States in the 12 months ending in May 2020, the highest number of overdose deaths ever recorded in a 12-month period. More than 80 percent of drug overdoses involved opioids, primarily fentanyl and fentanyl analogs. The Drug Enforcement Administration has stated that Mexican-based transnational criminal organizations remain the greatest criminal drug threat to the United States. Transnational criminal organizations engaged in drug trafficking to the United States are a serious threat to the health and safety of the American people and are a destabilizing force globally.

**Q74. What do you view as the proper role of the Department in supporting interagency partners tasked with counternarcotics missions, such as the Department of State, Department of the Treasury, Department of Justice, and Department of Homeland Security?**

From what I understand, DoD has a role supporting other Departments' counterdrug efforts. DoD is the lead Department for detection and monitoring of potential drugs headed to the United States by maritime or aerial means. DoD provides capabilities and expertise to other departments and agencies, when requested, to help reduce the national security threat posed by illicit drug trafficking to the United States.

### **Special Operations Command Acquisition Authorities**

**Section 167(e)(4) assigns to the Commander, USSOCOM the authority to develop and acquire special operations-peculiar equipment, and to acquire special operations-peculiar material, supplies, and services. The Commander, USSOCOM is advised and assisted in these matters by a command acquisition executive.**

**Q75. If confirmed, what criteria would you apply in validating a determination that a particular requirement for equipment, materiel, supplies, or services is "special operations-peculiar"?**

My understanding is that “special operations-peculiar” is applicable to any equipment, material, supplies, or services funded by MFP-11 and required by and unique to SOF to accomplish their missions or activities.

**Q76. If confirmed as the ASD(SOLIC)—**

- **What actions would you take to improve each of the three aspects of the special operations-peculiar acquisition process—requirements, acquisition, and budgeting?**

If confirmed, I will work closely with USD (A&S) and USSOCOM on special operations-peculiar acquisition, requirements, and budgeting processes. I would draw on the annual Planning, Programming, and Budget Execution (PPBE) process to ensure that USSOCOM’s priorities and resource allocation are in alignment with the Department’s strategic objectives.

- **What actions would you propose, if any, to ensure that special operations-peculiar requirements are realistic, technically achievable, and prioritized?**

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Commander, USSOCOM to ensure that there is a vigorous, disciplined, and systematic review process to prioritize special operations-peculiar requirements in alignment with the Department’s strategic objectives and continue to deliver capabilities to the warfighter at the speed of relevance.

**Q77. Are there other roles or responsibilities in the acquisition process that should be assigned to the ASD(SOLIC) or the Commander, USSOCOM, in your view?**

10 U.S.C. Section 138 authorizes the ASD(SO/LIC) to “exercise authority, direction, and control of all special-operations peculiar administrative matters relating to the organization, training, and equipping of special operations forces.” If confirmed, should I identify any changes to authorities or processes that would improve the functions of the office, I will engage within the Department and with Congress to make appropriate recommendations.

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

**Q78. What are the respective roles of the ASD(SOLIC) and the Commander, USSOCOM in the test and evaluation of special operations-peculiar acquisition programs? How would you exercise the responsibilities of the ASD(SOLIC) in this regard, if confirmed?**

I understand USSOCOM has a number of test and evaluation programs that support special operations-peculiar acquisitions and evaluation. If confirmed, I will ensure that USSOCOM appropriately develops test and evaluation strategy to support the acquisition process, as well as ensure speed of delivery to the warfighter. I will also work closely with the Under Secretary of

Defense (Acquisition and Sustainment), Office of the Director, Operational Test and Evaluation, and the USSOCOM Acquisition Executive.

**Q79. How has the Commander, USSOCOM made use of rapid acquisition, spiral acquisition, and other evolutionary acquisition processes?**

I understand that the Commander, USSOCOM, and the USSOCOM Acquisition Executive leverage a wide range of acquisition processes to facilitate rapid prototyping of special operations-peculiar hardware. In particular, USSOCOM has been very effective in its use of the Middle Tier of Acquisition pathway and the non-traditional acquisition tools such as Other Transaction Authorities.

**Ethics and Accountability**

**In January 2020, USSOCOM completed a Comprehensive Review of Special Operations Forces Culture and Ethics. Among other things, the Comprehensive Review found that “selective implementation” of recommendations from four previous reviews related to the culture and ethics of Special Operations Forces since 2011, including two such reviews mandated by Congress, have resulted in continued challenges related to the assessment and selection of Special Operations Forces, leader development, and force structure and employment.**

**Q80. What are your views on the current culture of ethics and accountability in U.S. Special Operations Forces?**

I understand that the Comprehensive Review identified factors contributing to instances of bad decision-making. If confirmed, I will continue to monitor the enterprise-wide institutional changes recommended in the Comprehensive Review to ensure they continue to be implemented, and I will work closely with Commander, USSOCOM, to ensure a long-term commitment to and focus on ethics and accountability.

**Q81. If confirmed, what would be your role in implementing the recommendations of the USSOCOM Comprehensive Review?**

If confirmed, I will work closely with Commander, USSOCOM, to ensure the special operations enterprise continues to implement the Comprehensive Review’s recommended actions with the same speed and discipline as are the hallmarks of SOF operations. I also will keep this Committee informed of progress until completed.

**Q82. What is your understanding of the actions required to complete full implementation of the 16 recommendations provide by the Comprehensive Review?**

My understanding is that the CR Implementation Team, which includes an ASD(SO/LIC) representative, has completed 7 of the 16 recommended actions and is on track to complete all 16 recommended actions by the end of calendar year 2021.

**The USSOCOM Comprehensive Review found that “a USSOCOM culture overly focused on force employment and mission accomplishment creates the contexts or situations allowing for misconduct and unethical behavior to develop within the SOF enterprise.”**

**Q83. What role, if any, should past mission accomplishment play in decisions relating to misconduct by Special Operations Forces?**

I believe that decisions on SOF misconduct and unethical behavior should be evaluated independently from any past mission accomplishments and commendable actions. Leaders must set the example, lead by example, maintain the highest standards of moral and ethical behavior, and hold their personnel accountable for their actions.

### **Health of Special Operations Forces**

**High operational tempo and demand for special operations capabilities have contributed to enormous strain on Special Operations Forces, which is challenging readiness, resilience, and retention.**

**Q84. What is your assessment of the health and readiness of Special Operations Forces?**

SOF face unique challenges that directly impact readiness, resiliency, and retention, most notably the stress of repeated combat deployments and the long-term effects of mild traumatic brain injuries. If confirmed, I will advocate for continuing studies and programs to address the effects of the stress of repeated combat deployments and the long-term effects of mild traumatic brain injuries on the health of military members and the readiness of the force.

**Q85. If confirmed, what will be your priorities in addressing the stress on Special Operations Forces?**

USSOCOM’s Preservation of the Force and Family (POTFF) program provides embedded behavioral health providers that are vital in the continuing effort to promote preventative stress management and reduce suicides in the SOF community. If confirmed, I will advocate for the POTFF program and work with the Secretaries of the Military Departments to sustain support for the well-being of SOF and their families.

**Q86. If confirmed, what steps will you undertake to address suicides in Special Operations Forces?**

USSOCOM has been implementing proactive SOF-specific suicide prevention programs. If confirmed, I will work with the Commander, USSOCOM, and the DoD Suicide Prevention Office to help USSOCOM adopt best practices and innovative research and technologies to continue strengthening its suicide prevention efforts.

**Q87. What is your understanding of the USSOCOM's Preservation of the Force and Families program?**

The Preservation of the Force and Families (POTFF) program is designed to help Service members and their families cope with SOF-unique challenges that cannot be addressed through the Service-sponsored support programs. The POTFF program takes a holistic approach to the wellbeing of SOF members and their families. It has been influential in strengthening SOF readiness and resiliency and reducing suicides. The program focuses on five domains: human performance, psychological health, cognitive performance, family readiness, and spiritual wellbeing.

**Command Climate Survey**

**Q88. If confirmed, would you plan to administer a command climate survey to the workforce under your leadership and management?**

If confirmed, I will capitalize on the ongoing DoD-wide effort to conduct the Defense Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS) at all military units and consider administering this or a similar survey to the personnel assigned to the immediate office of the ASD(SO/LIC). Also, the Commander, USSOCOM and I will encourage commanders to take advantage of DEOCS results to help promote positive command climate, and will hold leaders accountable for promoting a positive command climate.

**Sexual Harassment**

**In responding to the 2018 DOD Civilian Employee Workplace and Gender Relations survey, approximately 17.7 percent of female and 5.8 percent of male DOD employees indicated that they had experienced sexual harassment and/or gender discrimination by "someone at work" in the 12 months prior to completing the survey.**

**Q89. If confirmed, what actions would you take were you to receive or otherwise become aware of a complaint of sexual harassment or discrimination from an employee of the Office of the ASD(SOLIC)?**

If confirmed, and made aware of such a complaint, I would direct the case be handled promptly and properly, following the DoD guidelines and policies, and ensure the employee has access to all support resources. It is my number one priority to create a work place that is safe and equitable for all staff and free from hostile or abusive conduct by anyone.

**Congressional Oversight**

**In order to exercise its legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this Committee and other appropriate committees of Congress are able to receive testimony, briefings, reports, records (including documents and electronic communications) and other information from the Department.**

**Q90. 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.**

A: Yes

**Q91. 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.**

A: Yes

**Q92. 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.**

A: Yes

**Q93. 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.**

A: Yes

**Q94. 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.**

A: Yes

**Q95. 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.**

A: Yes

**Q96. 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.**

A: Yes