

Nominee for Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

Defense Reforms

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

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

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

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

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

Qualifications

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

For the last three years I have served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness. In this capacity, my primary responsibility is to ensure that our military is effectively manned, trained, and equipped to safely and effectively perform its assigned missions.

I've spent the last 20 years of my career specifically focused on understanding and managing military readiness. I've been part of the build-up of conflicts in two theaters, and the drawdowns of both. In addition, I gathered experience understanding some of the issues facing the Reserve Component. I spent several years after Hurricane Katrina supporting the Department of Homeland Security, the National Guard Bureau, and the National Guards of several states understanding and effectively articulating the nation's preparedness for responding to a homeland crisis.

I also understand, and have seen empirically that there is no greater readiness determinant than the quality of our force. Effectively recruiting and retaining a superior military and civilian workforce is our single most effective hedge against a host of negative factors. In

that sense, the opportunity to more directly influence the policies supporting these men and women will be a natural extension of my efforts to create a ready and resilient force.

I began my career in readiness as an analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses in 1994 and have also served previously as a readiness analyst in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. I am an economist both by training and practice and favor an analytic approach to most problems. This perspective serves me well in providing defensible and reproducible means for solving even the most complex problems. My work has directly influenced policy on a range of topics including spares and maintenance, aviation training, contingency sourcing, recruiting and retention, and response options for domestic emergencies.

I was born a military dependent and married a naval officer. In that sense I am familiar with the scope of issues facing military families, and am sensitive to the unique circumstances, challenges, and sacrifices made as part of the commitment to service to our Nation.

Major Challenges

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

The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness oversees one of the most complex and diverse portfolios in the Department. We are responsible for Service member support from recruiting, educating, health care, transitioning and retirement. During this Service lifecycle, we educate military children and care for families through child care, healthcare, on-base schools, commissaries, and morale, welfare and recreation services. Each of these areas will be affected by budget choices and will subsequently affect the lives of our Service members.

The Department is facing a host of challenges, but no matter is more urgent than resolving the critical issues of sexual assault, suicide prevention, and the treatment of the spectrum of mental/behavioral health disorders—especially those that are a product of the wars we’ve been in for the last thirteen years. These issues not only matter on moral and compassionate grounds, but they threaten our ability to generate resilient, cohesive, and predictably ready units.

The Department must also prepare for the likelihood of a more competitive labor market not just in highly technical fields like space and cyber, but also in high-demand fields like special operations, aviation, and the range of health services. In doing so, we must continue to evolve how we manage, compensate, and support our workforce so that we can attract, recruit, and retain an exceptionally qualified force.

The Department is also in the midst of a profound transition from the longest war in our Nation’s history. For the last decade, the vast majority of our force generation capabilities have been uniquely focused on meeting the intense demand for counterinsurgency and

irregular warfare missions, and for that mission, we have been exceptionally prepared. The cost of this sustainment, however, has been our ability to maintain the full-spectrum capabilities required for a high-end conflict. It will take considerable time and focused investment to regrow these capabilities. This is challenging under any circumstance, but it is especially difficult in a fiscally austere environment. The competition for resources should not degrade our ability to respond to conflicts that threaten the safety of our Nation and those who took an oath to defend it.

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

Acting Under Secretary Wright, Secretary Hagel, and Deputy Secretary Work have clearly said that addressing the challenges identified above are among their highest priorities. If confirmed, I will support those initiatives. For example, I look forward to supporting Secretary Hagel's and Acting Under Secretary Wright's proactive, individual-focused, and multi-disciplinary approach to supporting victims of sexual assault. I also strongly support the Department's plans to intensify efforts to prevent these crimes in the first place. Similarly, I would be proud to support ongoing efforts in the area of suicide prevention and providing help for those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Those efforts include getting in front of the problem by building resilience and coping skills that target risk factors; furthering our understanding through data and analysis, ensuring front line leaders create a climate that encourages members to seek help, and improving access to quality care.

If confirmed, I also look forward to the findings of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission and supporting a comprehensive approach to providing benefits and support to our Service members. A comprehensive approach would recognize the criticality of providing the training and equipment they need to come home as well as reflects the realities of a competitive and evolving labor market and the immense sacrifices already paid by those in our ranks. In the course of my current responsibilities, I am already deeply committed to evolving our military capabilities from the wars we've been in to a broader and less certain set of requirements that we will inevitably face—all without forgetting the hard fought lessons of our past. If confirmed, I look forward to expanding this work to include a deeper understanding of how to protect our most valuable asset: the quality of our workforce.

I understand the power of collaboration, both within and outside the building. I have a track record of transparent, inclusive, and cooperative approaches to resolving issues. I intend to continue this practice by working closely with the Congress, colleagues in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the Services, other governmental agencies, and advocacy groups.

Duties

Section 136a of Title 10, United States Code, provides that the Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness shall assist the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness in the performance of his or her duties.

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

If confirmed, I intend to carry out my responsibilities, functions, relationships, and authorities, in accordance with the law and consistent with DoD Directive 5124.08, "Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (PDUSD(P&R))." Under the direction of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness USD(P&R), I would support with all responsibilities in providing staff advice and assistance to the Secretary of Defense, including but not limited to Total Force management; National Guard and Reserve Component affairs; health affairs; readiness and training; military and civilian personnel requirements; language; dependents' education; equal opportunity; morale, welfare, and recreation; and quality-of-life matters.

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

The Secretary of Defense

If confirmed, I expect the Secretary of Defense to assign me my duties, through the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, functions, and responsibilities currently mandated by law and specified in the Department's directives for the position of Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

The Deputy Secretary of Defense

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

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs

If I am confirmed, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs ASD(HA) would be my principal advisor for all DoD health policies, programs, and force health protection activities.

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs

If I am confirmed, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs ASD(RA) would be my principal advisor for all Reserve component matters in the Department of Defense.

The Department of Defense General Counsel

If confirmed, I would anticipate regular communication, coordination of actions, and exchange of views with the General Counsel and the attorneys assigned to focus on personnel and readiness policy matters. I would expect to seek and

follow the advice of the General Counsel on legal, policy, and procedural matters pertaining to the policies promulgated from the USD(P&R).

The Department of Defense Inspector General

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

The Service Secretaries

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

The Chief of the National Guard Bureau

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

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

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

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

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

The Combatant Commanders

If confirmed, I would foster mutually respectful working relationships that translate into providing the Total Force capabilities and readiness needed to complete combat missions.

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

If confirmed, I would seek a close coordinating relationship and open channels of communication with the Joint Staff regarding personnel and readiness policy issues.

Systems and Support for Wounded Warriors

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

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

The Department has made progress by actively working with the Department of Veterans Affairs to establish joint policy guidance, processes, and metrics for coordination. However, there is still more work to do. And if confirmed, I will ensure we will continue to work toward a seamless transition from recovery to reintegration or transition for our wounded, ill or injured. Additionally, I will continue the Department's collaborative efforts with the VA on compensation and benefits, transition assistance and care coordination. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with Congress on this critical issue.

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

Our covenant with our wounded warriors and their families is perhaps one of the Department's greatest strengths, and one that we must continue to build upon. This commitment must guide our efforts to refine care and case management, including how to continue improving all aspects of the process online to reduce complexity and processing times.

What are the weaknesses that need to be corrected?

Going forward we'll need to figure out how to accommodate the unique needs of each Service and be able to scale our support based on the evolving needs of our Service members. As we reduce our combat operations, we must ensure that we do not lose the capabilities and capacity to provide that support.

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

Caring for and supporting Service members and their families will always be a top priority for the Department. If confirmed, I will work to execute this core mission of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, continually evaluating our programs and efforts, examining what resourcing and authorities are needed to further that goal. Linking efforts with community-based resources continues to be vital to ensure full re-integration into civilian life.

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

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

DoD continually evaluates IDES to identify and implement process improvements. DoD completed an initial congressional study on the feasibility of a Consolidated Disability Evaluation System in 2013. An additional key initiative underway is the development of a joint IT solution to provide new capabilities that will support end-to-end IDES case management – tracking, reporting, and electronic case file transfer. If confirmed, we will continue to work with VA to ensure system interface requirements are identified and planned for, from conception to deployment.

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

We will continue to work toward a more efficient IDES by engaging senior leadership within OSD and the Services, as well as capitalizing on information and recommendations presented to us by the Department of Defense Task Force on the Care, Management, and Transition of Recovering Wounded, Ill, and Injured Members of the Armed Forces, Government Accountability Office, and Military Department Inspector Generals. Most importantly, if confirmed, I will hear directly from the Service members themselves going through the IDES process. Where there are redundancies or gaps that need to be addressed by changing policy, we will do so. We will continue to collaborate with our VA partners to identify necessary changes and appropriately address them.

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

If confirmed, I will continue the partnership efforts embraced by Acting Secretary Wright and her VA counterpart. I will ensure the DoD continues to work closely with VA in supporting our men and women in uniform and their families, and our Veterans. I will

continue the DoD's engagement with VA to consider a complete range of issues as we seek process improvements and information exchanges, and use of key enablers to provide a seamless lifetime experience for our Service men and women, and our Veterans.

Voluntary Education Programs

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

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

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

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

Tuition Assistance is a very valuable tool in assisting Service members to earn civilian licenses and credentials prior to separation from military service. TA can be used to pay for academic coursework that supports earning a credential or licensure when part of an approved academic degree plan. Furthermore, earning a professional credential or license broadens Service members' occupational knowledge and furthers their contribution to the military "profession of arms." If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Military Departments to increase opportunities for Service members to use their tuition assistance.

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

I have no objection to the proposal to include Title 10 Tuition Assistance funds in the Federal portion of the 90/10 calculation. However, it would be appropriate that any statutory changes to the proposed 90/10 rule reside with the Department of Education.

Religious Guidelines

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

In my view, current DoD policies appropriately accommodate the free exercise of religion for all Service members. The Department respects and supports, by its policy, the rights of Service members to their own religious beliefs, including the right to hold no beliefs.

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

Existing DoD policies provide military chaplains with the guidance to allow prayer in accordance with the tenets of their faith, while respecting, in both formal and informal settings, the rights of others who may hold different or no religious beliefs. The Chaplaincies of the Military Departments train and equip chaplains with the knowledge and skills to fulfill this responsibility. Specifically, the Department protects, and supports by its policy, the rights of a chaplain to refuse, without any adverse action, any duty that is contrary to his or her conscience, moral principles or religious beliefs.

Section 533 of the FY13 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 112-239), as amended by section 532 of the FY14 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 113-66) protects rights of conscience of members of the armed forces and chaplains of such members, and prohibits, so far as possible, use of such beliefs as the basis of any adverse personnel action, discrimination, or denial of promotion, schooling, training, or assignment. Members of some religious denominations have sincerely held beliefs in opposition to same-sex marriage.

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

Yes, Service members are entitled to express their personal views in personal conversations. However, Service members speaking in their official capacities are expected not to use their positions as a forum to express their personal views, especially when dealing with subordinates.

Readiness Responsibilities

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

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

The sequester-imposed cuts in FY 2013, coupled with having to operate under a 6-month continuing resolution, contributed to degraded readiness and hindered our initial readiness recovery plans. In addition, sequestration impacted the DoD's ability to generate the ready forces necessary to meet the requirements of a rapidly evolving and complex security environment. Although we are meeting current operational requirements with well trained and equipped units, this is getting more difficult. The brunt of the sequester effects our ability to generate forces to meet contingency surge requirements. This is a serious concern. Some of these effects will take considerable time and resources to reverse. The Secretary has stated for the record that sequestration-level funding limits would yield a force that is too small and not ready enough to meet the nation's security objectives.

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

The investments made in our Armed Forces have helped maintain our military's standing as the most formidable force in the world. We remain able to meet the most critical ongoing operational and presence requirements that the Nation asks of us, however this is getting more difficult as we continue to feel the after-effects of sequester and more than a decade of war. What is at risk is our ability to generate the surge required for a high-end emergent crisis and this is a serious concern.

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

The defense strategy outlines three primary pillars – defend the homeland, build security globally, and project power and win decisively when called upon.

The most significant challenge is that current budget constraints and the after-effects of sequestration will inhibit the Services' efforts to regain full-spectrum readiness in order to successfully meet the tenets of the defense strategy.

The Services made deliberate plans to shift from counterinsurgency-focused operations to address more globalized, full spectrum warfighter requirements, but those plans will require time and consistent funding to materialize. A return to Budget Control Act levels of funding in FY 2016 and beyond will put readiness recovery at risk. Specifically, training opportunities and equipment condition are our primary concerns in preserving readiness across the force.

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

One of the responsibilities of the USD(P&R) is to oversee the total readiness of the force. There are many pipelines across the Department that come together to create readiness. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Logistics and Materiel Readiness oversees a critical portion of the readiness pipelines. Total force readiness depends on materiel readiness and logistics. We have a strong working relationship that I currently enjoy and will absolutely maintain. If confirmed, I will continue to build this relationship and thereby build a greater understanding of readiness across the Department.

What are the most critical objectives to improve readiness reporting and monitoring of the military forces, and if confirmed, how would you work with the Military Departments as well as other Office of the Secretary of Defense offices to achieve them?

Although monitoring the status of unit readiness and how that fits into overall joint readiness is important, the most critical element of readiness management is the ability to monitor the health of the pipelines that support it. Metrics in these areas provide a more complete picture of readiness as well as provide key indicators that are essential to forecasting readiness problems. In my current capacity, I have overseen dramatic improvements in the Department's ability to monitor readiness along these lines.

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

Do you believe the current system adequately sets and documents standards for military readiness and provides for timely, accurate readiness reporting to establish necessary confidence that our regular and reserve forces are not only "ready with what" but "ready for what"?

Yes. The Defense Readiness Reporting System directly addresses the "ready for what" question by focusing on mission capability as expressed by a units' mission essential task list. It assesses the readiness of all organizations throughout the Department to perform not only their high end combat mission but also their assigned missions such as counterinsurgency or disaster relief and humanitarian assistance.

What do you believe is the role of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness in advocating for Readiness resources during the DoD budget build process. Do you believe that the appropriate level of resources are being allocated to readiness accounts?

The USD (P&R), as the Department's lead readiness advocate, provides direct input to the budget build process each year. It is our responsibility to monitor the Services' ability to generate ready forces and the Combatant Commanders' ability to execute assigned priority plans and ongoing operations. In keeping with this responsibility, USD(P&R) must understand and clearly articulate the consequence of readiness degradations and

what is causing them. The USD(P&R) is also responsible for providing a complete range of mitigation options as part of the Department's formal program budget review process. This responsibility benefits from constant collaboration with the Joint Staff, the Services, as well as other offices within the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Thanks to Congressional action to raise the discretionary caps posed by the Budget Control Act of 2011, the 2013 Bipartisan Budget Agreement has afforded the Department the opportunity to restore healthy levels of readiness funding for FY2014 and FY2015. Overseas Contingency Operations funding in FY2014 also supported the Services' ability to begin addressing their most acute readiness deficiencies.

The FY2015 budget proposal reflects the Services' resolve to slow the readiness decline. Specifically, they shifted funding so that they could start climbing out of personnel, training, and maintenance backlogs. In doing this, the Services almost universally moved money out of procurement and facilities sustainment accounts. While this strategy is defensible in the near-term, this imbalance across resourcing areas is untenable in the long-term. Future budget uncertainty marked by the looming return of BCA-level funding is by far our greatest readiness concern.

If confirmed, I will continue to work tirelessly in promoting a responsible resource strategy that allows for viable and sustainable readiness across the Department.

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

The USD(P&R) monitors the readiness levels of units across the Services and articulates the capacity of the Services to provide forces. USD(P&R) collaborates with the Joint Staff to evaluate sourcing solutions, which include the Global Response Force (GRF), in order to balance risk to force generation with risk to mission requirements and presents mitigation options to the Secretary of Defense. Additionally, the USD(P&R), in its role as the DoD-wide sponsor for joint training and Combatant Command exercises and engagement, facilitates the exercise of the GRF across all echelons of the force.

Medical Marijuana

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

The Department supports only rigorously designed, scientifically sound, and lawful research efforts that adequately protect human subjects and align with programmatic requirements. A research proposal with the potential to help improve the lives of those affected by PTSD and meeting these requirements would be given consideration. We note with interest that the Public Health Service has recently approved such a study to

provide 50 veterans diagnosed with chronic, treatment-resistant PTSD with marijuana in various potencies. It is awaiting final approval from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. If confirmed, I will review the results of that study, if the study is approved.

Department of Defense Schools in the Continental United States

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

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

The Department understands the importance of education and the role it plays in the success, stability, readiness, and retention of Service members and their families. The Department is committed to quality educational opportunities for all military children, while balancing cost and exploring all options and alternatives.

In 2013, the Department initiated a study to consider the need for DoD to own and operate DoD Schools within the United States and to evaluate other options. The study findings will be provided to the Department in September 2014.

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

If confirmed, I will consider the study's findings in addition to direct feedback from the military community, and advocacy and professional groups, and force management projections in determining the best options for providing education support for military families. I will do this in consultation with the Military Departments and in collaboration with Congress.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Policy

The Fiscal Year 2013 Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military reflects that reports of sexual assault in the military increased by 50% from fiscal year 2012 to 5061 reports of sexual assault.

What is your assessment of this report?

We are encouraged that more men and women are coming forward to report a sexual assault, get care and support, and give us an opportunity to hold offenders appropriately accountable. That being said, we have much more to do to prevent this horrible crime. There is evidence supporting the hypothesis that this unprecedented increase is the result of increased confidence victims have in the system. I have not seen evidence that the recent spike in reporting is due to a concurrent increase in crime.

The survey being conducted by RAND this summer will give us an indication what kind of impact we're having on the prevalence of sexual assault.

What is your assessment of the Department of Defense sexual assault prevention and response program?

Senior leader focus has fundamentally improved the Department's approach in the past two years. The Services have implemented a number of programs designed to improve victim confidence, including reforms to the military justice system, the creation of dedicated legal support to victims, enhanced access to victim advocacy, and increased training and awareness for the entire force. While many of the recent changes have been response focused, the best thing we can do is to prevent the crime. To this end, last month Secretary Hagel directed the implementation of an updated Department-wide Sexual Assault Prevention Strategy that was developed in collaboration with civilian experts and is intensely focused on shaping the environment where Service members live and work.

Sexual assault is a complex problem, with no easy solutions. The Department continues to implement a multi-disciplinary approach, and, if confirmed, I will be committed to ensuring sustained progress, persistence, and innovation as we work to eliminate sexual assault from the military. We will continue to work closely with Congress to address this problem. The resulting reforms and policy changes are going to take time to implement and assess.

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

Giving victims reporting options is at the heart of the DoD SAPR Program. Restricted and unrestricted reporting was recommended to us in 2004 by a panel of experts, and we implemented these options in 2005. Since that time, a quarter of reports made to us each year are in the form of restricted reports. While the Department desires an environment where all victims feel free to make an unrestricted report, some victims will never be comfortable accessing care and support in that way. As a result, restricted reporting was enacted to provide victims a means to heal while respecting their privacy. Since 2005, more than 5,000 Service members have used the restricted reporting option, underscoring the need for the option as a way to provide critical medical care and support to victims.

Many civilian jurisdictions have adopted similar reporting options. Confidential reporting – or in our case restricted reporting – appears to be becoming standard practice in this country.

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

Commanders and leaders at all levels are key to our professional response to this crime. Victims must know that they will be respected and supported throughout the justice

process. We believe that some of the increase in reporting that occurred last year was because victims heard the messages of our leadership and believed that in coming forward they would be provided the full range of timely and responsive care, and treated with the sensitivity and privacy they deserve. The Department has taken a number of steps in order to educate frontline leaders about their responsibilities – not just to victims of sexual assault – but also in creating a command climate free of sexual assault.

What is your understanding of the adequacy of Department of Defense resources and programs to provide victims of sexual assault the medical, psychological, and legal help they need?

We have made a lot of progress in this area, but we are going to have to watch closely to make sure the changes we've made are working and that no gaps in support remain. Nevertheless, we can and should do more. We've benefited from a number of organizations looking at how we are providing victims with the many kinds of help they need – the GAO, the Defense Task Force on Sexual Assault in the Military, and soon, the Response Systems Panel. We have accepted almost every recommendation made to us – and instituted additional services and reforms as a result of our own evaluative work— learning from the perspectives of these groups is a very good thing.

Some of the specific reforms include offering special victims counsel to provide victims with legal representation, providing professionally certified responders, offering expedited transfers, ensuring that every case is treated as a medical emergency, updating our sexual assault examination protocols, combatting negative treatment and retaliation, and ensuring the availability of anonymous worldwide 24/7 crisis support through Safe Helpline. These are just a few of the services available to victims.

Victim support is critical part of healing the trauma caused by these incidents. It's also critical in increasing the odds that a victim will be willing and able to meet the very intense demands of the criminal justice system (military or civilian). Victims have to believe that we will support them, and then we have to deliver on that support. If confirmed, I look forward working on this issue. Specifically, working with the Congress and learning from the perspective of groups inside and outside of the Department.

What is your view of the steps the Department has taken to prevent additional sexual assaults both at home station and deployed locations?

My view is that the Department is taking a comprehensive, evidence-informed approach to preventing this crime. The Secretary of Defense, the Secretaries of the Military Departments, and the Joint Chiefs have all been working together on the 28 initiatives enacted over the past two years to improve our approach to sexual assault. We have also welcomed the assistance we've received from Congress and the 60+ provisions of law enacted that has fundamentally changed how the Department responds to sexual assault. Many of these provisions have focused on enhancing our care for victims and improving our ability to hold offenders appropriately accountable. However, experts tell us that improved response and deterrence are just part of a much larger approach that must

include dedicated work of prevention. In order to solve a complex problem like sexual assault in an institution as large and spread out as the U.S. Armed Forces, we need a comprehensive approach – one that leverages every amount of influence, planning, and persistence the Department can muster. Consequently, the Department tasked itself with updating its Sexual Assault Prevention Strategy – a Department wide roadmap that reflects a wide range of integrated policies and programs to influence behavior, shape the environment, and reduce the crime of sexual assault.

In developing this updated strategy, the Department has been working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Justice, state sexual assault coalitions, civilian colleges and universities, and other researchers to identify and incorporate the best practices in sexual assault prevention. The updated sexual assault prevention strategy is designed to take action at every level of military society to advance a comprehensive prevention approach. Our military leaders are at the core of this approach and must work every day to create a healthy command climate in their units; ensure deterrence and accountability for misconduct consistent with military values; provide training and empowerment for all personnel to intervene in incidents they believe to be at risk for sexual harassment and assault; and mentor their personnel using leadership and role-modeling as a way to develop healthy work and personal relationship skills.

In sum, prevention is a comprehensive, sustained focus on creating an environment that actively deters and interferes with a perpetrator's attempts to commit a crime. We are committed to producing such an environment in the Department.

What is your view of the adequacy of the training and resources the military departments have in place to investigate and prosecute allegations of sexual assault?

Last year, each Service established a Special Victims Capability to improve the investigation and prosecution of allegations of sexual assault, child abuse, and serious domestic violence, and to provide specialized support for victims of such offenses. The capability consists of investigators, prosecutors, paralegals, victim/witness program professionals who are selected, trained, and certified to respond to sexual assault. Through these capabilities, the Services are training and equipping professionals to improve and enhance victim care, victim support, and prosecution support, and provide a more comprehensive, integrated, and standardized response to allegations of these crimes.

Over the last year, we also dedicated additional resources to continue specialized training on trauma-impacted memory and interviewing techniques to ensure military criminal investigators are using research-proven best practices when questioning victims. Also, as of 1 January 2014, each Service now offers victims of sexual assault a dedicated attorney to provide representation and consultation throughout the military justice process. There are currently 185 trained attorneys in place to support victims of each military Service, ensuring victims know their rights and understand the justice system.

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

As we have seen in other recent military culture changes, establishing appropriate culture starts at the top with commanders and leaders, leading by example and enforcing standards of conduct. Central to our approach is requiring leaders at all levels to foster a command climate where sexist behaviors, sexual harassment, and sexual assault are not condoned or ignored; where dignity and respect are core values we live by and define how we treat one another; where victims' reports are treated with the utmost seriousness, their privacy is protected, and they are treated with sensitivity; where bystanders are motivated to intervene to prevent unsafe behaviors; and where offenders know they will be held appropriately accountable by a strong and effective system of justice.

Secretary Hagel has recently directed important new initiatives to make the command structure more accountable. These reforms include fielding methods to better assess command climate, mandatory forwarding of command climate surveys to the next level in the chain of command, and elevating status reports of sexual assault allegations to the first general/flag officer in the chain to ensure appropriate response to every case (victim care, investigative actions, unit climate, and actions taken).

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

We talk about sending our Service members into "harm's way" a lot and the need for Service members to follow the orders of their commanders. The crux of this concept rests on the principle that every person in a unit has to believe in an instinctive and immediate sense that when a commander tells them to do something, a) that the order is lawful, ethical, moral and exactly the right thing to do for the successful accomplishment of that mission, and b) the commander places the welfare of every person in the command before his/her own. A commander who would interfere with the successful investigation or disposition of a crime based on his or her own welfare is simply intolerable. Similarly, a commander who allows the routine harassment, ridicule, or discrimination of Service members trusted in his/her care is equally unfit and must be fired from that position.

Based on this logic, absolving a commander of the responsibility of doing the right thing is a big thought. It would suggest a lack of confidence in command. My fear is that it will inject doubt where we need that instinctive and immediate faith. I strongly prefer that the disposition authority remain in the command structure. That said, I also strongly support requiring senior level review of decisions not to proceed with prosecution of sexual assault cases. I expect a series of NDAA changes over the last few years to help the Department better address allegations of sexual assault and help ensure appropriate accountability

If confirmed, I am committed to increasing victim confidence and ensuring that dignity and respect are guaranteed attributes of every organization in this Department. More

specifically, I'd look forward to supporting Secretary Hagel's efforts on prevention, including those involving gauging and improving command climate.

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

If confirmed, I will support the Department's efforts to prevent the occurrence of sexual assault. But, when crimes do occur, we must have comprehensive, effective, accessible, and responsive investigative and victim assistance services available.

I will work to ensure that our program continues to educate all Service members, frontline commanders and leaders and hold them accountable in establishing a climate of dignity and respect. I will also support our DoD Sexual Assault Prevention Strategic Plan and the 28 Secretary of Defense directives to address this crime. The Department must sustain our current level of attention, focus, and emphasis throughout the entire organization.

We recognize how difficult this problem is to solve and that it will take a multi-disciplinary approach. There have been a lot of beneficial changes to law, policy, and processes over the last few years. We should continue to collect and monitor command climate, prevalence, and case data to ensure that the changes we've made are working as intended and to look for areas we've missed. I also support staying tuned to the research literature and victims' groups for exactly the same reason.

Service Academies

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

Sexual assault has no place at the Military Service Academies. To advance a cadet and midshipman culture that embraces dignity and respect, Secretary Hagel directed each Academy to implement sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention and response strategic plans that are aligned with the strategic plans of their respective Service. These strategic plans ensure a coordinated effort of instilling our future leaders with the ability to take action when faced with situations at risk for sexual assault, sexual harassment, and inappropriate behavior of any kind. If confirmed, I will review and assess these efforts, as well as ensure that each Academy provides appropriate support for victims of this crime.

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

In the past few years, the Academies' leadership has emphasized the need for greater respect for the rights of others to their own religious beliefs, including the right to hold no beliefs.

In January, Secretary Hagel directed a number of initiatives to enhance the Academies' climates of dignity and respect. If confirmed, I will remain committed to ensuring that the Department trains its future leaders to establish and be committed to fostering a climate where sexual assault, sexual harassment, and inappropriate behavior and attitudes are not tolerated.

Assignment Policies for Women in the Military

As you know, the Department in January, 2013, rescinded the policy restricting the assignment of women to certain units which have the primary mission of engaging in direct ground combat operations, and gave the military services until January 1, 2016, to open all positions currently closed to women, or to request an exception to policy to keep a position closed beyond that date, an exception that must be approved by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense. The services are working now to develop gender-free physical and mental standards for all military occupations, presumably with the goal of allowing individuals, regardless of gender, to serve in those positions if they can meet those standards.

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

If confirmed, I will monitor the progress the Services are making toward integration of females into previously closed occupations and positions, and will work with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Service Chiefs as this effort progresses. The Department will continue to notify Congress before opening additional positions.

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

Absolutely. Public Law 103-160, Section 543, prohibits the Department of Defense from changing an occupational performance standard for the purpose of increasing or decreasing the number of women in that occupational career field. The Department is aware of, and complying with, this law. We are committed to opening positions and occupations when and how it makes sense, while preserving unit readiness, cohesion, and the quality of the All-Volunteer Force.

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

Absolutely, they should be based on a scientific determination of the requirements to perform each occupational specialty. If confirmed, I will fulfill the responsibilities of my office by reviewing each request to open positions and evaluate such requests for

compliance with statutory requirements and impact on the readiness of the All-Volunteer Force.

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

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

I expect our commanders to select the best qualified personnel for assignment regardless of gender, and to create a command climate that focuses on mission accomplishment while treating each person under their command with dignity and respect. Since mid-2012, we have successfully integrated women into formerly male-only units. We are incorporating this experience as we progress.

Mental Health Care

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

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

I am deeply committed to countering the stigma associated with getting help for mental and behavioral health concerns. The thought of our Service members or their dependents creating or suffering from a barrier in receiving care is heartbreaking. Simply put, getting quality care works; these conditions can be treated. I look forward to the time where Americans approach mental health with the same comfort level that they approach physical health.

The Department provides a number of self-help initiatives and other resources to meet the needs of Service members and their families for mental health care and is working to address the barriers (real or perceived) that may prevent them from seeking help. If confirmed, I will continue to support the Department's efforts designed to reduce the stigma associated with seeking mental health care, encourage help-seeking behavior and increase the use of available resources among Service members and their families. I am also prepared to work across the Services to ensure an integrated approach with necessary resources for ongoing mental health research, prevention, and evidence-based treatment efforts that will continue to allow the Department to provide high-quality, timely mental healthcare services.

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

Absolutely. Since 9/11, with the support of Congress, the DoD has increased the outlays for mental health care by a 12 percent compounded annual rate, roughly quadrupling care rendered between the beginning of FY 2002 to the beginning of FY 2014. On average, each member of the Active Duty force is seen by a mental health professional one and a half times per year. Care is embedded into primary care clinics and fighting units. Mental health providers in Military Health System (MHS) Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) have been increased by 50 percent, to nearly 10,000. Further, TRICARE network assets have been bolstered to better serve reservists, dependents, and retirees. A total of 65,000 mental health providers are available in the purchased care network. DoD provides state of the art substance abuse care, including medical therapies for addiction and confidential alcohol abuse treatment, and one of the finest benefits for autism spectrum disorders in the nation, including care to provide early intervention.

Suicide Prevention

The number of suicides in each of the services continues to be of great concern to the Committee.

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

Suicide among our men and women in uniform is one of the greatest concerns of our entire leadership across DoD, and one I share closely. In the last few years, and under my early direction, the department has taken several steps to address suicide. It has issued new policies, identified key roles and responsibilities for prevention and resilience, addressed rate calculations, established new partnerships with other Federal agencies, particularly with the Department of Veterans Affairs, and collaborations with community organizations, and has led the Nation in suicide prevention research.

If confirmed, I intend to improve data collection that can better inform risk and protective factors within our force and their families and ensure that programs are evaluated, aligned to a strategy, and show effectiveness. Continued outreach, peer support, and resilience skills training are efforts that I will ensure reach all of our active and reserve components and that their families understand what resources are available to them as well. The resilience of the force must be equal to the readiness of the force and the same successful approaches I have had with ensuring readiness, I will apply to resilience.

End Strength Reductions

In this year's budget request and Future Years Defense Program, the Department proposes making additional cuts to the Army's active and reserve component end strengths, as well as the Marine Corps' active-duty end strength. The Department proposes reducing the Army active component to 450,000 by 2019, and further to 420,000 if sequestration continues in FY16 and beyond, and the Marine Corps to 182,000, or 175,000 if sequester continues.

In your view, can the Army and the Marine Corps meet national defense objectives at the strength levels proposed without sequestration? What about at the strength levels proposed with sequestration?

Yes, the Army and Marine Corps can meet national defense objectives at the force levels associated with the Department's proposed FY 2015 budget submission. The 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review articulates the Department's commitment to transitioning to a smaller but capable and ready force over the next five years. Towards that end, end strength proposed in the President's Budget for FY 2015, specifically a 440-450K Active Duty Army and 182K Active Duty Marine Corps, allows the Army and Marine Corps to maintain a balanced ready and modern force.

A return to sequestration would force the Army and Marine Corps to further reduce their end-strength numbers to 420K and 175K, respectively. This would undoubtedly jeopardize the Army and Marine Corps' ability to fully implement the defense strategy.

If the Army and Marine Corps must reduce their active component end strengths to 420,000 and 175,000, respectively, where does the Department take risk with respect to the national defense strategy?

If the Army and Marine Corps were compelled to further reduce their end strength beyond their existing drawdown plans, there would be additional risk in conducting a broad range of military operations worldwide. Specifically, their decreased ability to respond to a major contingency operation could result in extended timelines and increased casualties.

Furthermore, the Army and Marine Corps would be hard-pressed to maintain acceptable deployment-to-dwell rates to meet unrelenting global operational demands. This would place added stress on a smaller force and jeopardize our continued pledge to take care of our men and women in uniform.

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

Congress has supported the Department with the force shaping tools necessary to meet the drawdown under its current plan. However, as we have progressed through the drawdown, we learned where and how minor changes to the existing authorities could make our force shaping both more effective and more efficient. If confirmed, I will continue to work with Congress to effect these minor changes to legislation to meet reduced end strengths.

The Department remains concerned that continued budget reductions may make it necessary to revisit the size of all components of the Total Force—Active Duty military, Reserve Component military, DoD civilians and contractors. Consequently, future

assessment may require us to request additional Congressional authorization for force shaping tools.

Military Quality of Life

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

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

Our most valuable resource is our people. If I am confirmed, the programs that support our Service members and their families will remain one of my top priorities. We must care for our people, particularly as our ability to recruit and retain the very best Service members becomes more challenging.

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

Military quality of life programs comprise a vast range of services that support Service members and their families in many different ways. Programs such as Morale, Welfare and Recreation fitness opportunities and Child and Youth Programs, for example, help minimize stress on the force. These programs should promote a work-life balance and address the unique challenges associated with military service, such as deployments, frequent relocations and financial readiness. The Department is working with a host of interagency and non-governmental collaborators, as well as Congress, to efficiently close gaps and reduce overlaps in programs. We also have made a deliberate effort to communicate effectively to ensure that families know how to access available support when they need it.

If confirmed, I will continue to work to promote interagency collaboration and Service coordination and advance these objectives.

Family Readiness and Support

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

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

We must recognize that every family has unique needs, requiring a flexible and responsive network of services to deliver support at the right time, using the most effective methods. Following more than a decade of war and the ongoing draw down, we must be ready to continue supporting families. In particular, it is important to assist the surge of Active Component Service members and families transitioning from military to civilian life; and for our Reserve Component Service members and families, the focus must remain on reintegration. It is critical that Service members, their families, and their survivors receive information about available support services and resources through communication vehicles they prefer and trust. The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program will continue to provide support for the Reserve Component Service members in remote locations. We must continue outreach, education, awareness, and engagement strategies to promote Service member and family readiness programs.

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

We must be capable of enabling services, staff, and resources to be surged or evolved, as needed, to respond swiftly and effectively to the changing needs of Service members and their families during peacetime, war, periods of force structure change, relocation of military units, base realignment and closure, crisis, natural disaster, and other emergency situations. Close collaboration with and between the Services, as well as interagency and non-governmental resources providing family support needs, will ensure that we continue to provide timely support while finding the most effective and efficient ways of doing so.

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

I consider the needs of geographically dispersed military families, including those who serve in the Reserve Component, of equal importance to the needs of all other military families. Implementation of quality assurance measures for Reserve Component family readiness programs that meets national accreditation standards supports the overall mission of military family readiness. This approach requires constant coordination with the Services and each of the Reserve Components to ensure that we are responsive and inclusive. Since 2008, the Yellow Ribbon Integration Program has led our support efforts with this population, providing access to deployment cycle information, resources, programs, services, and referrals to more than 1.3 million Service members and their families. The Yellow Ribbon Integration Program eases transitions for Service members and families as they move between their military and civilian roles. Our geographically diverse populations are also supported by the Joint Family Support Assistance Program which works to build capacity to identify and meet evolving needs at the local community level where these families live, work, and attend school. To augment and enable that local support, Military OneSource provides support to military families, military leadership, and military and civilian service providers through delivery of information, referrals, and non-medical counseling.

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

Family support programs that are flexible, responsive, and communicate and coordinate with interagency and non-governmental family services are critical to meet the enduring needs of our Service members and their families, whether they live on, near, or far from military installations. If confirmed, I will continue to work to ensure that resources are used efficiently and effectively to support our families. Our collaboration with others who share our interest in the support of military families is key. Working together with the Services, we can find efficiencies and enhance the accessibility of support when and where it is needed and at the right level.

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

I believe USSOCOM families do have unique support requirements. The deployment rates are among the highest in the Department. Even when they are home, they have arduous training requirements. Deployment locations tend to be extremely austere and they are far less likely to be able to maintain reliable contact with families. We know that suicide rates, divorce rates, and incidents of risky behavior have remained high over the last few years. Aside from being ethical and compassionate concerns, these are also increasingly impacting unit readiness.

P&R components continue to work closely with USSOCOM to identify family support requirements that are unique to this community, analyze current support provided by the Services, and identify and address gaps in family support provided to the SOF community. If confirmed, I look forward to expanding my support for this issue.

Office of Community Support for Military Families with Special Needs

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

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

The Office of Community Support for Military Families with Special Needs endeavors to strengthen personnel readiness for military families with special needs through the development of comprehensive and uniform policies, oversight of programs,

identification of gaps in services, and facilitation of access to resources that support military families with special needs. The Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) currently supports military families with special health and/or educational needs in three component areas: identification/enrollment, assignment coordination to determine the availability of services at a projected location, and family support to help families identify and access programs and services.

If confirmed, I look forward to reaching the Departments goal of enabling military families with special needs to have the same level of access to EFMP support, regardless of Service affiliation or location, with a particular emphasis on military families stationed at joint or sister Service installations.

Morale, Welfare, and Recreation

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

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

Our ability to deliver Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) programs to our military families is impacted by changes in our basing, deployment patterns and force structure. With more than 75 percent of military families now living off installation, there is an increasing need for partnerships and support from local governments, school systems and businesses to ensure we continue to provide comprehensive, accessible, and affordable recreation programs. To explore improvements further, we are conducting a major assessment of MWR programs to ensure they are being operated in as efficient and cost-effective manner as possible. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that we continue to provide these important services to our Service members and their families.

Commissary and Military Exchange Systems

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

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

Commissary and exchange programs and policies must continue to evolve to meet the needs and expectations of our changing force and marketplace. Efforts should be aimed at reducing overhead and pursuing new avenues to reach our military families who do not live on military installations. The military resale community must continue to work,

individually and collaboratively, to adapt marketing and selling practices, invest in technologies, and improve merchandise availability to be responsive to the evolving needs of their military customers. They should continue to deliver customer savings, strive to achieve high customer satisfaction ratings, and deliver exchange dividends in support of our MWR programs.

The Department takes great care to weigh the potential effects of any proposed changes on our Service members and their families as we consider efficiencies that may impact the commissary and exchange benefits.

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

If confirmed, I would review any proposals aimed at reducing overhead, which may include closing underutilized locations or eliminating duplicative services.

I recognize that commissary and exchange programs are important elements of the Service members' compensation package and contribute to the quality of life of military personnel and their families. The fiscal realities facing the Department of Defense today and in the foreseeable future require that we evaluate all options that will maximize the effectiveness of our compensation benefits while reducing costs. If confirmed, I will proactively engage with the Committee if we believe a change in statute is needed to operate our military resale system more efficiently and effectively.

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

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

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

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

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

If confirmed, I would ensure the Board continues to meet regularly to review operational areas of interest across the military resale system and continues to promote significant efficiencies through cooperative efforts. The Board is crucial to balancing competing needs and providing consistent and coordinated input to inform any decisions to be made regarding these important benefits.

Civilian Personnel Systems

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

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

I understand the Department's plans for the performance management system, workforce incentives, and hiring flexibilities were informed by recommendations developed by DoD employees, supervisors, and managers representing labor and management from across the Department. Our plans were submitted to the Armed Services Committees at the end of March 2013. The collaborative labor-management pre-decisional recommendations for the personnel authorities were widely adopted by the Department.

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

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

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

Section 1112 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 directs the Department to develop a Defense Civilian Leadership Program (DCLP) to recruit, train, and advance a new generation of civilian leaders for the Department. Section 1112 provides the Department with the full range of authorities available for demonstration

programs under section 4703 of title 5, U.S. Code, including the authority to compensate participants on the basis of qualifications, performance, and market conditions. These flexibilities are not otherwise available to the Department of Defense.

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

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

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

While I believe the Department currently has a highly talented workforce, I also wholeheartedly support initiatives to further streamline the civilian hiring process. The Department embraces a simplified, transparent hiring system that meets the needs of stakeholders, attracts quality candidates, and reduces the time to fill a vacancy. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department continues to actively engage in pursuing continued improvements in the civilian hiring process.

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

If confirmed, I will make it a priority to continue implementing the authority provided by section 1112. The Department recognizes the need for a sound leader-development model to attract, retain, and develop civilian leaders to support readiness, enhance bench strength, and promote the quality of the Department's civilian workforce. I will continue implementing the authority provided to ensure a successful framework for developing the next generation of innovative leaders to meet the Department's future needs.

Human Capital Planning

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

Would you agree that a strategic human capital plan that identifies gaps in the workforce and strategies for addressing those gaps is a key step toward ensuring

that the Department has the skills and capabilities needed to meet future challenges?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yes. The planning process should be updated to be more aligned and integrated with the Department's programing and budget process, and meet the requirements for a total force mix and competencies assessments. In preparing for FY 2013 through 2018, we conducted a pilot study that examined the total force mix based on the workforce requirements and relationships in high risk mission critical occupations. We have launched a tool to collect competency gap information for all mission critical occupations

to analyze gaps that will lead to strategies for mitigation. These processes will take several planning cycles, and functional communities are preparing for further assessment and implementation.

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

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

DOD Civilian Personnel Workforce

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

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

I absolutely agree that civilians are vital to the Department. They help provide the critical equipment maintenance, base support, logistics and engineering expertise, family programs, and medical care that ensure our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines are ready to deploy, world-wide, and answer the call of our Commanders in executing the national defense posture. Additionally, we have dedicated civilians serving as critical enablers in essential functions such as acquisition, contract management, quality control, auditing, engineering and design, and financial management. Moreover, civilians are a key element of our national security strategy, serving as operators in areas such as intelligence, cybersecurity, security assistance, and stability operations.

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

I believe that if we are faced with further budgetary reductions as a result of sequestration, we will see significant adverse and untenable impacts on all areas and programs of the Department, including the civilian workforce. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that any reductions to the civilian workforce are balanced and executed in the context of the Department's Total Force management principles, ensuring the appropriate and most cost effective alignment of work.

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

Yes, planned and prioritized reductions to the civilian workforce aligned to mission divestiture and a decrease in workload are preferable. Reductions based on hiring freezes and workforce attrition may result in unintended consequences such as loss of required skills and competencies, unnecessary gaps in mission execution, and inappropriate realignment of workload to other elements of the Department's Total Force.

Balance Between Civilian Employees and Contractor Employees

The Department of Defense employs many contractors whom now play an integral role in the performance of functions that were once performed exclusively by government employees, including the management and oversight of weapons programs, the development of policies, the development of public relations strategies, and even the collection and analysis of intelligence. In many cases, contractor employees work in the same offices, serve on the same projects and task forces, and perform many of the same functions as federal employees. Contractors continued to be hired as many civilian positions remained on a hiring freeze over the past few years.

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

The Department uses a Total Force approach to manage its workload. Contractors are an important element of the Total Force and provide flexibility and technical competence. However, we must be careful to ensure work is appropriately assigned to military personnel (Active/Reserve), civilian employees, or contract support.

If confirmed, I will work to ensure the Department continues its efforts to implement a Total Force strategy that aligns functions and work to military, civilian, and contract support in a cost effective and balanced manner, consistent with workload requirements, funding availability, laws, and regulations.

In your view, has the Department become too reliant on contractors to perform its basic functions?

We must be constantly vigilant in assessing the extent of our reliance on contractors and ensuring that we do not have an erosion of critical skills and competencies, particularly in our scientific, technology, and engineering communities all of which are critical to maintain operational readiness and superiority.

If confirmed, I will work to ensure the Department continues to implement robust workforce review processes that are geared to ensuring the Department is not overly reliant on contracted services and is making the most economical workforce alignment decisions.

Do you believe that the Department should undertake a comprehensive reappraisal of “inherently governmental functions” and other critical government functions, and how they are performed?

No, I do not believe a comprehensive reappraisal is necessary. The Department’s policies are aligned to recent federal government-wide policy, which was published in 2011 in response to Congressional direction. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department meets its statutory obligations to review annually the alignment of workload to ensure that inherently governmental functions are properly aligned to the government workforce. Further, I will endeavor to ensure that critical functions of the Department are being performed by the appropriate workforce, with sufficient oversight and management, and in a manner that meets operational needs, while mitigating risk and reducing unnecessary cost.

If confirmed, will you work with other appropriate officials in the Department to review the contractor and civilian force mix?

Yes, if confirmed, I will work with my colleagues across the Department to ensure reviews of workforce mix are conducted, as required by statute and the Department’s policies.

Would you agree that the balance between civilian employees and contractor employees in performing departmental functions should be determined by the best interests of the Department and not by artificial constraints on the number of civilian employees?

Yes, I agree.

If confirmed, will you work to remove any artificial constraints placed on the size of the Department’s civilian workforce, so that the Department can hire the number of employees most appropriate to accomplish its mission?

Yes, if confirmed, I will work to ensure policies and procedures for workforce shaping are consistent with statutory requirements and that the workforce is managed to available budget and workload.

Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl

Following the recent repatriation of Sergeant Bergdahl after five years of captivity with foreign fighters there have been questions about the circumstances under which he became separated from his unit in Afghanistan in 2009.

If confirmed, what is your understanding of your role as Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, concerning review of the facts and circumstances of Sergeant Bergdahl’s capture and his status as a member of the United States Army?

If confirmed, my role would be to provide the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Army with appropriate recommendations regarding DoD statutes, regulations, and policies.

Congressional Oversight

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

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

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

Yes.