

Senate Armed Services Committee
Advance Policy Questions for Mr. Ely Ratner
Nominee to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs

Duties, Qualifications, Challenges, Priorities

1. What is your understanding of the duties and functions of the ASD(IPSA)?

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs (ASD(IPSA)) serves as the principal advisor to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)) and the Secretary of Defense on international security strategy and policy on issues of DoD interest that relate to the nations and international organizations of the Indo-Pacific region, their governments and defense establishments, and for oversight of security cooperation programs, including Foreign Military Sales. As provided by DoD Directive 5111.17, the ASD(IPSA) is responsible for conducting and managing day-to-day defense relations with foreign governments; developing, coordinating, and overseeing the implementation of regional security and defense strategy and policy; representing the USD(P) and Secretary of Defense in interagency policy discussions; participating in planning, budgeting, and execution activities; and other duties USD(P) or the Secretary of Defense may prescribe.

2. What background, experience, and expertise do you possess that qualify you to serve as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs (ASD(IPSA))?

I was trained as an international security specialist, with a PhD from the University of California, Berkeley, during which time I also had the opportunity to live and study in the People's Republic of China. Since graduate school, I have traveled extensively throughout the region and worked on Indo-Pacific security issues at leading think tanks, including as an associate Political Scientist at the RAND Corporation, as a senior fellow for China studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, and as a senior fellow and executive at the Center for a New American Security. In this latter role, I led the major study on U.S. strategy in the Indo-Pacific region required by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019, entitled "Rising to the China Challenge: Renewing American Competitiveness in the Indo-Pacific." I have also had the honor of serving in government, including in the U.S. Senate in the office of then-Senator Joe Biden and as a Professional Staff Member on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, at the State Department in the Office of Chinese and Mongolian Affairs in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and in the Office of the then-Vice President, where I served as the Deputy National Security Advisor to Vice President Biden and regularly participated in National Security Council Deputies Committee meetings on the full range of Indo-Pacific issues. Currently, I am serving as a Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense and the Director of the DoD China Task Force.

3. Specifically what leadership and management experience do you possess that you would apply to your service as ASD(IPSA), if confirmed?

I have held leadership and management positions inside and outside of government. As the Executive Vice President and Director of Studies at the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), I was the second-ranking member of a three-person executive team guiding the Center's strategic direction, managing staff and personnel issues, and overseeing financing and budgets. There I was directly responsible for managing the Center's research agenda, publications, and research staff, as well as the CNAS communications team. As then-Vice President Biden's Deputy National Security Advisor, I helped to manage the Vice President's national security staff and day-to-day operations, while regularly representing the Office of the Vice President in Deputies Committee meetings and staffing the Vice President for foreign leader meetings and calls, interagency meetings, foreign travel, and speeches. I am currently serving as Director of the DoD China Task Force, reporting directly to the Secretary and leading a team from across the Department in a four-month sprint to assess China-related activities at DoD and provide the Secretary with recommendations for top priorities going forward.

4. If confirmed, what additional duties and responsibilities would you recommend the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)) to prescribe for you, particularly in light of the pending modification of the National Defense Strategy and global force posture?

If confirmed, I would expect to serve as the principal advisor to the USD(P) and the Secretary of Defense on international security strategy and policy on issues of DoD interest that relate to the Indo-Pacific region. In addition, I would consult with the USD(P) to determine in what ways I could best support the development and implementation of Department reviews, including the Global Posture Review and the National Defense Strategy. I would also consult with the USD(P) on how I could best support the implementation of China Task Force recommendations as directed by the Secretary of Defense.

5. In your view, what are the major challenges that will confront the next ASD(IPSA) and, if confirmed, what plans do you have for addressing these challenges?

The major challenges that will confront the next ASD(IPSA) include: completing a safe and orderly retrograde and supporting long-term stability and counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan; advancing the U.S. Government's vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific region; accelerating efforts at DoD for competition with China, including the implementation of the China Task Force recommendations; strengthening capabilities to deter, defend against, and respond to North Korean threats; and building a strong, effective policy team in the office of the ASD(IPSA). If confirmed, in each instance, I would prioritize these challenges and assess current policies and approaches, engage in relevant DoD and interagency policy reviews, strengthen ties with allies and partners, work closely with Congress and counterparts in other departments, and support government-wide approaches to these challenges.

Civilian Control of the Military

- 6. In its 2018 report, *Providing for the Common Defense*, the National Defense Strategy Commission observed, “there is an imbalance in civil-military relations on critical issues . . . Civilian voices appear relatively muted on issues at the center of U.S. defense and national security policy.” Do you agree with this assessment?**

It is essential to reestablish proper civil-military balance at the Department of Defense. I am aware of serious concerns regarding instances of imbalance in civil-military relations on critical issues at DoD. If confirmed, I will make it a priority to ensure we are correcting any imbalances in civil-military relations.

- 7. If confirmed, what concrete steps would you take to correct this imbalance in civil-military relations?**

Correcting imbalances in civil-military relations will require leadership, a healthy workforce, and strong initiative in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. If confirmed, I will fully carry out the responsibilities of the ASD(IPSA), including conducting and managing day-to-day defense relations with foreign governments; developing, coordinating, and overseeing the implementation of regional security and defense strategy and policy; representing the USD(P) and Secretary of Defense in interagency policy discussions; and participating in planning, budgeting, and execution activities. I will also work hard to build strong collaborative relationships with my military counterparts, and advocate for the appropriate staffing levels for the office of the ASD(IPSA) to perform the required civilian oversight of the military.

- 8. If confirmed, how would you use your position to contribute to the discussion, debate, and resolution of core U.S. defense and national security issues?**

If confirmed, I will fully carry out the responsibilities of the ASD(IPSA), including conducting and managing day-to-day defense relations with foreign governments; developing, coordinating, and overseeing the implementation of regional security and defense strategy and policy; representing the USD(P) and Secretary of Defense in interagency policy discussions; and participating in planning, budgeting, and execution activities. I will also play an active role in major Department of Defense reviews and in the interagency process.

- 9. The National Defense Strategy Commission report notes, “allocating priority—and allocating forces—across theaters of warfare is not solely a military matter. It is an inherently political-military task, decision authority for which is the proper competency and responsibility of America’s civilian leaders.” What is your view of the role of DOD civilian leadership, as compared to the role of the military, in the formulation of strategy and contingency planning in the Indo-Pacific area of responsibility?**

For the Indo-Pacific area of responsibility, the ASD(IPSA) is charged with developing,

coordinating, and overseeing the implementation of regional security and defense strategy and policy in the region. This includes providing policy guidance, objectives, and end-states for strategy and contingency plans. The Department's military leadership also plays a critical role in strategy development and contingency planning, providing operational expertise and military advice. Together, a balanced civil-military relationship is essential to leveraging both sets of capabilities.

10. In your view, how important is it to have robust civilian oversight of the development and implementation of defense strategy as well as reviewing campaign and contingency plans? Please explain your answer.

Civilian control of the military is an essential feature of our democracy, and it is vital to have robust civilian oversight of the development and implementation of defense strategy, as well as reviewing campaign and contingency plans. I am encouraged that President Biden and Secretary Austin share that view. For the Indo-Pacific area of responsibility, the ASD(IPSA) is charged with developing, coordinating, and overseeing the implementation of regional security and defense strategy and policy in the region. This includes providing policy guidance, objectives, and end-states for campaign and contingency plans. If confirmed, I would remain committed to fulfilling these critical civilian policymaking responsibilities.

11. In your view, would an increase in the number of personnel assigned to the Office of the ASD(IPSA) enhance civilian control of the military? Please explain your answer.

I understand that OSD Policy's civilian workforce has shrunk as a result of mandatory headquarters cuts over the past decade, although I have not had the opportunity to assess the personnel requirements in the Office of the ASD(IPSA). If confirmed, I will make it a priority to review current staffing levels and, if necessary, seek additional personnel to ensure the Office of the ASD(IPSA) can effectively perform its civilian policymaking and oversight responsibilities.

Relations with Congress

12. What are your views on the state of the relationship between the Office of the ASD(IPSA) and the Senate Armed Services Committee in particular, and with Congress in general?

I have not had the opportunity to assess the state of the relationship between the Office of the ASD(IPSA) and the Senate Armed Services Committee in particular, and with Congress in general. If confirmed, I will make it a priority to engage regularly in furthering these critical relationships.

13. If confirmed, what actions would you take to sustain a productive and mutually beneficial relationship between Congress and your office?

The Senate Armed Services Committee and the Congress provide important oversight for U.S. policies, programs, and activities in the Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, I will work with the ASD for

Legislative Affairs to engage the Committee and Congress regularly to ensure a transparent and effective relationship on all issues within the purview of the ASD(IPSA), in addition to providing testimony, briefings, reports, and other information to help the Committee fulfill its oversight and legislative responsibilities.

National Defense Strategy

14. The 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) outlines that the United States faces a rising China, an aggressive Russia, and the continued threat from rogue regimes and global terrorism. Do you believe that the 2018 NDS accurately assesses the current strategic environment, including the most critical and enduring threats to the national security of the United States and its allies generally, and more specifically in the Indo-Pacific region?

I believe that the 2018 NDS accurately characterizes the strategic environment faced by the United States and its allies, and highlights concerning developments in the Indo-Pacific region. I agree with the Secretary of Defense that China represents the top pacing challenge for the Department, particularly given its accelerating military modernization and aggressive activities. Further, our national security interests in the region remain challenged by North Korea's destabilizing activities. More broadly, Russia and Iran continue to constitute enduring and advanced national security challenges. Given these threats, the Department must work to check the continued erosion of U.S. military advantages in relation to its primary strategic competitors.

15. In your opinion, what developments since 2018 need to be addressed as part of a new NDS?

In its development of a new NDS, the Department will need to consider a number of emerging threats and geopolitical challenges, namely our expanding strategic competition with China, a rapidly evolving technological landscape, and critical transnational threats, including COVID-19 and climate change. In the Indo-Pacific region, the new NDS must consider the decisions and trade-offs faced by the Department as it addresses escalating Chinese aggression and extensive military modernization.

16. If confirmed, what changes or adjustments would you recommend for the Department of Defense's (DOD) implementation of the NDS?

If confirmed, I would recommend that strategy implementation, oversight, and accountability be included as a critical component of the NDS. Further, I believe that NDS implementation should consider how Departmental efforts can be synchronized with those of other departments and agencies and our allies and partners, so that we can more effectively leverage all elements of U.S. national power for strategic competition.

17. What is your understanding of the Department of Defense's processes for strategic assessment, analysis, decision making, and reporting for the development and implementation of the NDS?

I understand the Secretary of Defense and the Deputy Secretary have put in place robust assessment and analytical processes to support the development and implementation of the NDS.

18. If confirmed, what recommendations would you make, if any, to improve the Department's processes for strategic assessment, analysis, policy formulation, and decision making?

If confirmed, I would strongly advocate and support efforts in the Department to rebuild and strengthen the Department's core analytic capabilities and capacities that support strategic assessments, policy formulation, analysis, concept development, and capability investments; and critically, I would work to ensure linkages to the policy-making process. The challenges that DoD faces—particularly related to pacing with China—must be informed by rigorous analytic work, especially at the joint and Department-wide level. The Department needs to strengthen its quantitative analysis capabilities with modeling and simulation, experimentation, and exercises—informed by enterprise-wide improvements in data collection and knowledge management. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues across the Department to advocate to strengthen DoD's core analytic capabilities.

19. In your opinion, should the NDS be budget-driven or budget-informed and what do you see as the key differences in those two approaches?

The NDS should be budget-informed rather than budget-driven. A budget-driven strategy puts spending priorities ahead of strategic interests and national security imperatives, whereas a budget-informed strategy takes spending constraints into account while focusing on securing our strategic interests and national security needs. Reconciling our national military priorities with the expected level of DoD resourcing is critical, but we must begin with and retain a clear-eyed focus on the capability investments, internal reforms, and strategy necessary to deter our strategic competitors.

20. In your view, how does the Joint Warfighting Concept currently under development relate to the NDS?

In its formulation of the next NDS, the Department should carefully consider the trends of future warfare as described in the Joint Warfighting Concept. The Joint Warfighting Concept is critical for understanding how the future force may be employed during a conflict and for informing joint warfighting development priorities, such as command and control, fires, logistics, and information advantage. In doing so, the Department can more effectively outline the strategic and political objectives that we expect the Joint Force to achieve in the NDS.

21. In your opinion, should there be what are the differences in the Joint Operational Concept as it addresses the threat from Russia and the Joint Operational Concept as it addresses the threat from China?

I believe that it is important that the Joint Warfighting Concept and its supporting concepts recognize and address the differentiated threats from Russia and China, and align with a theory of victory for achieving our strategic and political objectives for potential conflicts in each theater. A Joint Warfighting Concept describes how our future force may be employed during a conflict and informs force development priorities, and should be grounded in analysis of the specific operational challenges unique to each adversary and theater. That said, there is

substantial common ground in our approach to each threat, and I understand that resilience in our basic systems provides warfighting options across all domains and against all opponents.

22. Do you believe it is also important for the Department to develop a Joint Concept for Competition? If so, why, and what kind of role would you envision for the U.S. armed forces in that concept?

I believe the Joint Force would benefit from a Concept for Competition that provides a framework for military activities throughout the competitive space, sets priorities, and delineates roles and responsibilities for the Department. Our adversaries have studied our military strengths and way of war and seek to challenge us outside the traditional scope of our Joint Force. We must acknowledge that preparing and posturing for armed conflict, alone, are insufficient to meet the Department's comprehensive national security responsibilities. A Joint Concept for Competition could seek to establish a common understanding and lexicon across the Department for strategic competition to further align the effort. It would also offer the Joint Force a framework for aligning its competitive strategies in synchronization with and in support of those of interagency and international partners.

Force Posture

In February, President Biden tasked Secretary Austin to conduct a Global Force Posture review of the Department's military footprint, resources, strategy, and missions.

23. If confirmed, what would be your role in the Global Force Posture Review?

I understand that the ASD(IPSA) has been closely involved in providing regional, allied, and partner perspectives in the Global Posture Review. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing and deepening that close collaboration.

24. In your view, is the current U.S. force posture in the Indo-Pacific region sufficient to support our security strategy in the region?

A more resilient and distributed force posture in the Indo-Pacific region is essential to maintaining the U.S. military's ability to deter and, if necessary, deny adversary aggression against the United States, U.S. forces, allies, and partners. If confirmed, I will work with civilian leadership, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, the Military Departments and Services, and other U.S. departments and agencies to ensure that our Indo-Pacific region posture is optimized to deter aggression, reassure allies and partners, and prevail in conflict.

25. How would you restructure U.S. security posture in the Indo-Pacific best to compete with China, reassure allies and partners, and deter Chinese aggression? Please explain your answer.

China's military modernization poses significant challenges to our traditional posture and operations. If confirmed, I will work with U.S. stakeholders and with partners and allies as we seek to optimize toward a more resilient and distributed posture in the region. The ongoing

Global Posture Review will provide critical insights for how best to posture our forces in support of our strategic objectives.

26. What is your understanding and assessment of the relative cost and benefits of the permanent versus rotational forces forward stationed in the Indo-Pacific?

The proper balance between permanently stationed and rotational forces varies from region to region and Service to Service depending on a number of factors, including relationships with the host nation, access to advanced training, and host nation cost-sharing. If confirmed, I will review force stationing decisions based on the specifics of each case and the dynamic security environment. I am committed to ensuring a more resilient and distributed posture in the Indo-Pacific region.

27. In your opinion, what should be the highest priority military capabilities and capacities in the Indo-Pacific that would most directly contribute to deterrence of aggressive behavior that could lead to miscalculation and potential conflict?

Investments in specific military capabilities and capacities for the Indo-Pacific region that directly contribute to deterrence should be intelligence-informed, linked to joint operational concepts, and supported by analysis of the range of operational problems presented by the adversary across the spectrum of conflict. In my opinion, the mix of relevant capabilities and capacities would include, but not be limited to, long-range strike, multi-domain intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), undersea warfare, autonomous systems, resilient communications, and a more distributed and resilient forward force posture.

28. What do you view as the gaps between these highest priority capabilities and capacities and what exists today?

In my view, the high priority capabilities, such as long-range strike, multi-domain ISR, undersea warfare, autonomous systems, resilient communications, and a more distributed and resilient forward force posture, are reflected in the President's recent budget submission, which is the Administration's first step toward resourcing these gaps. Further development of the Joint Warfighting Concept and associated experimentation should yield additional insights into high priority capabilities and potential gaps.

29. If confirmed, what steps would you take to bridge these gaps?

If confirmed, I will be a strong advocate within DoD for investments in military capabilities and capacities that are directly relevant to deterring aggression in the Indo-Pacific region. I would also advocate for accelerated development of new operational concepts tied to mission-level experimentation.

30. In your assessment, does DOD need to invest in a wider range of primary bases as well as alternate operating locations throughout the Indo-Pacific?

I believe that a combat-credible forward posture is necessary to the U.S. military's ability to

deter, and, if necessary, deny a fait accompli scenario. I believe DoD must take a comprehensive approach to addressing this challenge, including forward-basing and forward-postured U.S. forces, as well as new operational concepts, modernized and high-end ready forces, and capable allies and partners proficient in their warfighting roles in such scenarios.

31. Do you support the Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI), including the realignment of some U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam and the build-up of facilities at other locations, such as Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan?

I support the continued implementation of the realignment plan known as the Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI), as it is the bilaterally determined way forward. The realignment of Marine Corps forces on Okinawa and the main islands of Japan, including the establishment of a strong presence on the U.S. territory of Guam, is fundamental to the Department's effort to achieve an improved Indo-Pacific defense posture. If confirmed, I will remain regularly engaged with OSD leadership, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, the Military Departments and Services, the Department of State, and our Allies as we proactively adapt and adjust U.S. access and joint presence to the realities of great power competition. I will ensure our partners and allies understand and are assured by any necessary adjustments.

32. In your opinion, why is force structure and force posture west of the International Date Line important to the deterrence of China, especially in a scenario involving conflict in the first or second island chains?

A combat-credible forward posture is essential to the U.S. military's ability to deter and, if necessary, deny adversary aggression in a timely manner. It is a tangible expression of our commitment, willingness, and ability to defend our interests. Moreover, a distributed and resilient forward posture must be combined with new warfighting concepts; modernized, highly capable, and ready forces; and capable allied and partner forces to deter any adversary miscalculation, or to respond if necessary.

33. What is your assessment of the adequacy of U.S. integrated air and missile defense capabilities and capacities currently deployed and stationed in the Indo-Pacific?

The quantity and sophistication of adversary air and missile threats in the Indo-Pacific region continues to grow, posing a substantial challenge to U.S. Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) capabilities throughout the region. Given the importance of IAMD for ensuring that the United States can continue to project joint military forces in the Indo-Pacific region, if confirmed I fully intend to support Departmental efforts to ensure that our approach to IAMD is well integrated and addresses both current and future operational needs.

34. Contested logistics is an emerging area of focus and potential significant limitation to the ability of the United States military to project power into the Indo-Pacific. Several studies over the past few years have resulted in more than 50 recommendations for improvement—recommendations that GAO recently noted have not been implemented. What areas regarding contested logistics do you feel need the most attention and would have the greatest impact on deterring China?

I agree that contested logistics represents a critical challenge for the Department in the Indo-Pacific region. If confirmed, I intend to work closely with colleagues in OSD, the Joint Staff and the Military Services to support the development of the Joint Warfighting Concept, which I understand includes the development of supporting concepts to ensure effective and resilient key joint warfighting functions such as logistics. More robust, resilient, and distributed logistics would contribute to deterrence in the region.

35. What is your assessment of U.S. force posture in Guam?

Under current realignment plans, the Department of Defense is consolidating Guam's position as a joint strategic hub for our forces operating in the Western Pacific. If confirmed, I will ensure that we consider what further capabilities may be appropriate for our forces in Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

36. In your opinion, what are the benefits of participation of European partners in military operations and exercises in the Indo-Pacific region, especially in the maritime domain?

European participation in Indo-Pacific exercises and operations demonstrates and strengthens interoperability with U.S. forces, as well as interoperability with the forces of our Indo-Pacific allies and partners. It also reassures our Indo-Pacific allies and partners by signaling Europe's willingness and ability to deploy globally to defend the rules-based international order and ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific. This is particularly important as the People's Republic of China's (PRC) increasingly assertive and coercive behavior in the South China Sea and elsewhere threatens to undermine the rules-based international order.

37. What, if any, areas of cooperation between the U.S. military and regional partners and allies would you recommend be enhanced?

I am encouraged that our key regional allies (Japan, Republic of Korea, and Australia) are placing increasing emphasis on new domains such as cyber, space, and electromagnetic operations, as well as continuing to be strong partners in a broad range of areas including missile defense support to U.S. force posture. With a number of other allies and partners throughout the region, we should continue working together to support shared goals related to maritime security, counterterrorism, and non-proliferation. If confirmed, I would assess and support the continuation of these efforts.

Pacific Deterrence Initiative

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 20 authorized \$2.2 billion for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI), to support the stability and security of the region and deter Chinese aggression. The current Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) has indicated that China is the “pacing threat” in the Indo-Pacific and that “the [PDI] is the foundational approach to advancing capabilities and capacity in lethality, force design and posture, logistics, exercises, and experimentation, while strengthening our allies and partnerships for an integrated joint force west of the International Date Line.”

38. Do you agree that PDI is a useful tool to improve U.S. posture in the Indo-Pacific?

The PDI is an important tool to highlight the substantial investments that DoD is making to maintain a credible conventional deterrent in the Indo-Pacific region, including through improvements to U.S. force posture.

39. In your view, what strategic objectives, lines of effort, and specific areas of investment should be prioritized for funding under the PDI?

The elements of the PDI laid out in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 serve as important priorities: modernization of U.S. presence, including advanced capabilities; improved logistics and maintenance; exercises and experimentation; infrastructure resiliency; and building allied and partner capabilities.

40. Do you believe that continued, dedicated funding for PDI is required to support implementation of the NDS in the Indo-Pacific? Please explain your answer.

Robust funding for DoD priorities in the Indo-Pacific region is an essential element of maintaining a strong deterrent. My understanding is that the President’s Budget request for Fiscal Year 2022 incorporates funding for specific programs that DoD has prioritized as important to developing the robust capability required to maintain regional deterrence.

41. The European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) has significantly improved U.S. force posture and capabilities in the European theater. What do you see as the biggest challenges to implementing PDI in the Indo-Pacific theater to achieve similar improvements?

The scale and scope of China’s military modernization challenge longstanding DoD assumptions and operating concepts. The United States will need to modernize our capabilities and posture, as well as our operational concepts, planning, and integration with allies and partners to enhance deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Congress to advance these goals, including as part of PDI.

42. If confirmed, what steps would you take to overcome these challenges?

If confirmed, I am committed to supporting the Secretary's efforts to prioritize DoD activities and investments in the Indo-Pacific, including by working closely with Congress on PDI to ensure the United States maintains a robust deterrent posture in the region.

Strategic Competition

The NDS references “expanding the competitive space.” In recent years, China has successfully demonstrated the ability to compete with the United States below the threshold of armed conflict through a variety of military and non-military approaches.

43. What is your interpretation of the meaning of “expanding the competitive space” and how does it impact U.S. competition with China?

My understanding is that “expanding the competitive space” means leveraging all elements of its U.S. power, including economic, diplomatic, intelligence, cultural, and military tools, in a whole-of-government effort to address the multi-domain challenges posed by China. China's strategy for competition with the United States entails efforts to increase its “comprehensive” national power and international influence at the United States' expense. While the Department of Defense plays a critical role in addressing this challenge, it should not do so alone. I agree with the NDS that “effectively expanding the competitive space requires combined actions with the U.S. interagency to employ all dimensions of national power.” Accordingly, I believe that competition with China will also require substantial non-military leadership and interagency coordination to advance our interests in the Indo-Pacific region.

44. What are the most critical capabilities the Joint Force needs to compete effectively below the threshold of armed conflict?

Although the Department largely supports U.S. interagency partners in addressing challenges that fall below the threshold of armed conflict, the Joint Force offers a number of critical capabilities that enhance our ability to compete in this space. First, the Joint Force offers an unparalleled conventional military capability that deters adversary aggression toward U.S. security partners. Second, it can demonstrate the strength of our commitments and develop invaluable military-to-military relationships through continued engagement with allies and partners. Third, the Joint Force can provide critical information and intelligence to expose malign activities. Finally, Joint Force operations, particularly freedom of navigation operations and joint activities with security partners, offer opportunities for shaping the information environment, enhancing our regional influence and legitimacy, and bolstering partner resilience to adversary destabilization and coercion.

The NDS also states that “effectively expanding the competitive space requires combined actions with the U.S. interagency to employ all dimensions of national power. We will assist the efforts of the Departments of State, Treasury, Justice, Energy, Homeland Security, Commerce, USAID, as well as the Intelligence Community, law enforcement, and others to identify and build partnerships to address areas of economic, technological, and informational vulnerabilities.”

45. In your view, has the interagency been effective in a whole-of-government effort to expand the competitive space, particularly with respect to China? Please explain your answer.

Given that China and other actors are increasingly synchronizing their military and non-military efforts to achieve strategic objectives, I believe that it is essential that non-DoD departments and agencies are sufficiently resourced and aligned to address these challenges. If confirmed, I will continually advocate for and advance deeper coordination with other departments and agencies as we pursue a whole-of-government effort to compete with China.

46. If confirmed, what recommendations, if any, would you have to better employ all dimensions of national power to “expand the competitive space” as regards China?

If confirmed, I would recommend that our whole-of-government efforts prioritize cooperation with and support to our Indo-Pacific region allies and partners, including expanded bilateral and multilateral diplomatic engagement, increased economic and technological partnerships, and joint military exercises and operations. I believe that improving partner resilience to Chinese military and economic coercion is essential for deterring Chinese aggression throughout the Indo-Pacific region, and that enhanced coordination on military and non-military efforts will serve as a force multiplier for strategic competition with China.

Information Operations

During the COVID-19 pandemic, China has embarked on a misinformation campaign to sow confusion over the origins of the virus and malign the response of the United States and other nations. This appears to have been done not only to shield China from blame for the initial outbreak, but also to undermine democratic nations and institutions.

47. What is your assessment of the ability of DOD to conduct effective military operations in the information environment to defend U.S. interests against malign influence activities carried out by state and non-state actors?

The Department has an important role to play in the information environment—in support of and in coordination with a whole-of-government approach—to defend U.S. interests against malign influence activities. If confirmed, I would work with the interagency and my counterparts throughout the Department to improve the speed, agility, efficiency, and effectiveness, of DoD information operations. I would also support the USD(P) in tasks required in Section 1631 of the

National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 concerning the USD(P)'s role as the Secretary's Principal Information Operations Advisor.

48. Are DOD efforts in this regard appropriately integrated with other U.S. Government organizations and activities?

DoD is one part of a whole-of-government approach to the challenge of misinformation and foreign malign influence activities, and other civilian departments and agencies have critical roles and responsibilities, which demand close interagency coordination. Our respective efforts can complement each other to defend the United States against foreign malign influence. If confirmed, I would ensure that DoD efforts are appropriately integrated with other U.S. Government organizations and activities, including elevating the role of diplomacy, as described in the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance.

Many of the geographic combatant commanders, including the Commander, INDOPACOM, have expressed a need for improved support by the intelligence community in exposing malign influence and coercion activities by our adversaries, including China.

49. Do you believe this is a valid requirement and, if so, how do you believe the intelligence community can better support the requirements of the Commander, INDOPACOM?

Strong support by the intelligence community in exposing malign influence and coercion activities by our adversaries, including China, is vital. The intelligence community plays an essential role in collection and analysis on malign behavior, as well as providing information in a timely manner and at the appropriate levels of classification. If confirmed, I would support these efforts.

Strengthening Alliances and Attracting New Partners

50. In your view, how can DOD more effectively cultivate multilateral cooperation in the Indo-Pacific?

Networking security and promoting linkages between like-minded partners across the region are critical to building a more resilient Indo-Pacific security architecture. As DoD modernizes U.S. alliances and partnerships in the region, it should also strengthen avenues of cooperation between existing multilateral groupings – such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Quadrilateral Dialogue – that are central to sustaining a rules-based regional order. If confirmed, I will work to ensure DoD leverages the full breadth of its security networks to enhance the complexity of multilateral training and exercises; foster interoperability; and build resilience and rules of the road in new domains, such as space, cyber, and artificial intelligence.

51. What is your assessment of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue between the United States, Japan, Australia, and India?

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is emerging as one of the most consequential

multilateral groupings in the Indo-Pacific region. The increased pace and scope of Quad consultations, including the historic Head of State Summit in March, reflect strategic convergence between Australia, India, Japan, and the United States. This partnership is an increasingly important element of the U.S. regional security network, which also includes bilateral alliances and strong support for ASEAN's centrality in the region.

52. What military lines of effort can be strengthened through the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue to benefit deterrence in the Indo-Pacom region and what do you view as the challenges to doing so?

The Quad partnership emerged in the immediate aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami to address recovery efforts and chart a new way forward for regional democracies. Similarly, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are opportunities for the Quad countries to deepen cooperation in areas of mutual interest, including maritime security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, counter terrorism, and emerging technology.

53. In your view, what are our strategic objectives in building the capacities of partner nations in the Indo-Pacific?

DoD continues to support capacity-building to build a network of capable, interoperable allies and partners committed to upholding a rules-based international order. Partner capacity-building efforts are critical to ensuring that Indo-Pacific partners are able to protect their own sovereignty and territorial integrity; work collectively to address transnational threats such as violent extremism, illegal fishing, and humanitarian disasters; and support key international principles, such as freedom of navigation and overflight.

54. How would you prioritize the types of programs or activities that should receive support under these security assistance authorities?

If confirmed, I would review our current focus areas to ensure they are aligned with our strategic priorities. I would also ensure that DoD continues to work closely with the Department of State such that our programs are complementary in building needed capabilities for U.S. partners.

55. What is your assessment of the Maritime Security Initiative (MSI)?

MSI is an important program that strengthens maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region through a focus on enhanced information-sharing, interoperability, and multinational maritime cooperation. If confirmed, I will fully support the Department's commitment to strengthening this critical program, which supports the execution of our National Defense Strategy objectives in the Indo-Pacific region.

56. How can MSI be leveraged to build shared maritime domain awareness capabilities and build multilateral cooperation amongst participating nations?

My understanding is that DoD is currently prioritizing needed training, equipment, supplies, and small-scale construction to enable regional partners to establish a common maritime operating

picture. If confirmed, I will work to advance this critical program.

Over the last several years, China has exerted its influence with our partner nations throughout the Indo-Pacific. Challenged by competition over economic resources, fishing areas, access to water, concerns over rising sea levels, and more, some of our partner nations have voluntarily or involuntarily turned to China for support—in many cases because U.S. engagement has been absent or inadequate.

57. In your view, how should DOD seek to engage with partner nations to better support their ability to protect their sovereignty and natural resources?

DoD should provide sustained support to our partners through robust capacity-building programs, training and exercises, and an enhanced focus on defense professionalization and military education. Freedom of Navigation Operations and other U.S. presence operations are also critical components of ensuring DoD is poised to support a rules-based order.

58. Respect for human rights has long been a core principle of United States foreign and security policy. In your view, what role does U.S. military engagement, including efforts to help professionalize foreign partner militaries, play in encouraging respect for human rights?

Through DoD's interaction and engagement with partner militaries, the United States can consistently message that respect for human rights and the rule of law are critical to the continued support and advancement of initiatives within our defense relationships. Working to professionalize foreign partner militaries – including through military training and education – serves as an opportunity for DoD to reinforce our commitment to democratic principles and to encourage partners to act in accordance with universal values and human rights.

China

59. How would you characterize the current U.S. relationship with China?

I agree with the assessment in President Biden's Interim National Security Strategic Guidance that China is "the only competitor capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system." If confirmed, I would be honored to support Secretary Austin and Deputy Secretary Hicks in their mission to prioritize China as the Department's number one pacing challenge.

60. What is your assessment of the current state of U.S.-China military-to-military relations?

Department of Defense engagement with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) supports overall U.S. policy and strategy toward the PRC. DoD engagements with the PLA continue to be limited, and focused on mitigating risk and preventing miscalculation. Engagements are conducted in accordance with the statutory limitations of the National Defense Authorization Act

for Fiscal Year 2000.

61. What do you believe should be the objectives of U.S.-China military-to-military dialogue?

The Department of Defense should seek to maintain a constructive, stable, and results-oriented defense relationship with the People's Liberation Army to advance the objectives of crisis management, risk mitigation, and cooperation where interests align.

62. What are the limitations on this kind of dialogue?

The limitations on this kind of dialogue are primarily due to the vast differences in values and interests between the United States and the PRC. Divergent perspectives on a range of issues, including the purpose and utility of crisis management mechanisms, further limit this kind of dialogue. If confirmed, I will work to find ways to advance U.S. goals and priorities accounting for these differences and limitations.

63. What do you believe are the objectives of China's steady increase in defense spending and its overall military modernization program?

I believe that China's ambitious military modernization program and increased defense spending are aimed at safeguarding what it considers its sovereignty, security, and development interests, which includes building toward an illiberal China-led order in the Indo-Pacific and beyond that reduces the influence of the United States and accommodates Beijing's authoritarian political imperatives. To achieve these aims, China's leaders have stated in numerous forums that they want to modernize the People's Liberation Army into a "world-class" military by the end of 2049, which many have interpreted to mean that they want a military that is equal or superior to that of the United States.

64. In what technology areas are you most concerned about the erosion of U.S. advantages?

Technology is at the center of U.S.-China competition. PRC leaders are focused on seizing the advantage in critical and emerging technologies with military application, including artificial intelligence (AI), advanced robotics, quantum technologies, biotechnology, hypersonics, directed energy, and advanced computing. The PRC's overseas investments, ability to use economic ties to exert political influence, pursuit of expertise from advanced foreign militaries, and promotion of national champions in strategic sectors, such as 5G, pose strategic risks for the United States and ally/partner interoperability, data security, information sharing, military mobility, and military readiness.

65. What is your assessment of China's increasing military presence overseas, including installations like its bases in Djibouti and across Africa, as well as other infrastructure projects across the Indian Ocean?

China's overseas infrastructure projects are a mechanism for increased influence overseas and a

potential inroad for establishing overseas logistics and basing infrastructure. The PLA's growing access to foreign ports and airfields allows the preposition of logistic support necessary to sustain military operations abroad. This includes naval deployments in the Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Atlantic Ocean. A global network of PLA logistical support facilities and installations could enable China to project and sustain military power at greater distances, reinforce its overseas interests, interfere with U.S. military operations, and potentially support offensive operations against the United States and U.S. interests.

66. What is your assessment of the strategic and military implications for the United States of China's Belt and Road Initiative?

The PRC regards the One Belt, One Road initiative as a means to expand its global influence and footprint by developing and maintaining access to foreign markets, resources, and critical infrastructure including ports and airfields that could host PLA assets. The expansion of China's overseas military and logistical support could manifest in a loss of access and influence for the United States while increasing coercive PRC pressure on host nations.

67. What are the strategic and military implications for other countries in the Indo-Pacific?

Our allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region can expect increasing pressure from China to deny the United States military operational and logistical support, transit and basing. The loss of this access would present additional challenges for U.S. efforts to support a free and open Indo-Pacific region. The degradation of U.S. access in the region could also increase the vulnerability of Indo-Pacific nations to PRC coercion and malign activities, further endangering their sovereignty and independence.

The smaller number of nuclear weapons possessed by China relative to the United States and Russia is often cited as an impediment to nuclear arms control talks with China.

68. What do you think could motivate China to participate in nuclear arms control negotiations in a genuine and meaningful way?

At present, the PRC does not appear to view participating in nuclear arms control negotiations as in its interest. There are indications that the PRC will remain disinclined to engage meaningfully until its nuclear arsenal is on relative par with the United States. If confirmed, I will work with interagency partners to address the PRC's resistance to participating in meaningful negotiations on nuclear weapons and risk reduction.

69. What are the strategic implications of the rapid modernization of Chinese nuclear weapons that are set to at least double by 2030, and what approach should the United States take to address those implications, in your view?

It is my understanding that China's nuclear weapons modernization is driven by its evolving view of the security landscape, concerns over the survivability of its nuclear forces, and perspective on what it means to be a great power. The modernization, diversification, and

increase in the number of land, sea, and air-based nuclear delivery platforms presents a security challenge for the United States, particularly given some ambiguity over the conditions under which China would leverage its nuclear capability. As a result, I believe it is essential that the United States continue its efforts to understand China's evolving capabilities, as well as press for transparency and dialogue regarding China's strategic intent and capabilities.

Taiwan

70. How do you assess the current cross-strait relationship between China and Taiwan, and how can the U.S. help prevent miscalculation on either side?

The PRC is increasing its aggressive and destabilizing activities toward Taiwan. If confirmed, I would continue to monitor this situation closely, especially given the more recent increase in PLA military activity in the vicinity of Taiwan and increased risk of miscalculation. I would also ensure the United States is fulfilling its commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act.

71. How do you assess the current military balance across the Taiwan Strait?

The PLA today is mission-focused, well-resourced, and rapidly developing both in terms of direct military pressure on Taiwan and through other PLA capabilities aimed at deterring, delaying, or denying third-party intervention in a crisis. If confirmed, I will carefully review the current military balance across the Taiwan Strait to ensure that our defense cooperation with Taiwan is commensurate with the threat posed by the PRC.

72. What do you believe should be the objectives and priorities for U.S. military assistance to Taiwan?

If confirmed, I will ensure that we are focused on providing Taiwan with the necessary defense articles, as well as the training and expertise to ensure its Armed Forces support a combat-credible deterrent. I will continue to advance our defense cooperation with Taiwan, encouraging Taiwan to focus on mobile, cost-effective, and resilient capabilities that aid Taiwan's already substantial geographic and societal advantages.

73. Do you think Taiwan is making appropriate investments in its defensive capabilities and if not, what changes would you recommend?

I believe that Taiwan can demonstrate through sound investments that it remains committed to its own defense. Taiwan has sought to allocate its defense budget to investments in capabilities that confer an advantage against the PRC, and if confirmed, I will ensure the Department continues to support progress on this front.

74. What is your view of the United States' responsibilities under the Taiwan Relations Act?

Our actions to fulfill our responsibilities enumerated in the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) have remained strong, principled, and bipartisan for over forty years. If confirmed, I will continue to

uphold our one China policy, as described in the TRA, the Three U.S.-PRC Joint Communiqués, and the Six Assurances, and will continue to prioritize the Department’s effective provision of defensive arms and services to Taiwan and support the Secretary’s ability to maintain a credible deterrent to the use of force or other forms of coercion against Taiwan.

75. Some have argued that the time has come to explicitly state that the United States would respond militarily to any Chinese use of force against Taiwan as a means to deter such actions. Do you support such a policy change? Why or why not?

The President has said clearly many times that U.S. support for Taiwan is rock solid, which reflects more than 40 years of a consistent, principled, and bipartisan one-China policy based on the Taiwan Relations Act, the Three U.S.-PRC Joint Communiqués, and the Six Assurances. If confirmed, I will continue to support these commitments commensurate with the threat the PRC poses to Taiwan.

76. In March 2021, the former commander of INDOPACOM, Admiral Davidson, testified “Taiwan is clearly one of [China’s] ambitions . . . and I think the threat is manifest during this decade, in fact, in the next six years.” How concerned are you about potential conflict in the Taiwan Strait as a result of ambition or miscalculation, and what do you assess is the likelihood of a conflict during this decade?

The PRC has yet to renounce the use of force against Taiwan. What we’ve seen instead over the last few years is the PLA’s rapid modernization alongside PRC efforts to coerce and degrade Taiwan’s security through diplomatic, informational, military and socioeconomic tools. These activities are destabilizing, and indicative that the PRC may no longer be willing to resolve differences with Taiwan in a peaceful manner. As a result, we must remain vigilant in providing combat-credible deterrence in the region. If confirmed, I will continue to monitor the evolving security situation in the Taiwan Strait.

Republic of Korea

77. What is your assessment of the U.S.-South Korea security relationship?

The U.S.-Republic of Korea (ROK) Alliance, built on the foundation of shared values, trust, and cooperation, is the linchpin of peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region. Our steadfast Alliance of over 70 years is among the most combined, interoperable, capable, and dynamic bilateral alliances in the world. It remains critical to maintaining peace on the Korean peninsula and addressing the threats posed by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). Moreover, the importance of the alliance stretches beyond the peninsula. It is key to promoting U.S. interests in the region and around the globe, with the ROK having deployed with U.S. forces as part of nearly every war that we have fought since 1950. If confirmed, I will work with our ROK allies to ensure we continue to bolster our combined force.

78. What measures, if any, would you take to improve this security relationship?

The U.S.–ROK Alliance is among the most dynamic bilateral Alliances in the world. The foundation of a shared worldview, mutual trust, and multi-faceted cooperation guarantees our alliance remains strong. The alliance is critical to countering North Korea’s malign behavior. Our combined force posture has been critical to deterring North Korean aggression for more than 70 years, and these forces have been postured to respond should deterrence fail. If confirmed, I will work with our ROK allies to prioritize the capabilities necessary for our common defense in addressing our collective threats on the Korean Peninsula and beyond. I will also make sure there is mutual understanding regarding necessary requirements to improve our robust combined defense posture in the face of challenges posed in the Indo-Pacific region.

79. In your view, is South Korea carrying an appropriate share of the burden of the cost of the U.S. presence in South Korea?

The U.S.- Republic of Korea (ROK) Alliance is the linchpin of peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region and the ROK is among our strongest allies. The ROK is currently spending more on defense as a percentage of its gross domestic product than nearly any other treaty ally. The Department of Defense works constantly with the ROK to maintain and develop this dynamic bilateral Alliance, which is one of the most combined, interoperable, and capable in the world. If confirmed, I will continue to work with our ROK allies to ensure that we strengthen the relationship and also invest in the right combination of defense capabilities to provide for our common defense. The new U.S.-ROK Special Measures Agreement that was concluded recently demonstrates the ROK commitment to burden-sharing and the stable stationing of U.S. Forces on the Korean Peninsula.

80. Do you believe South Korea is investing appropriately in its defensive capabilities? If not, what changes would you recommend?

The ROK, strengthening its status as a global economic leader and Alliance partner, has demonstrated a firm commitment to significant investment in its defensive capabilities, with a defense budget of approximately 2.8 percent of its GDP and rising. Although this is promising, there is still more work to be done. If confirmed, I will work closely with the ROK to ensure that our alliance maximizes our capabilities investments to optimize the effectiveness of our combined force and sustain “Fight Tonight” readiness.

81. Do you believe the transfer of wartime operational control from the U.S. to the Republic of Korea should be conditions-based? Please explain your answer.

I do believe the transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON) from the United States to the ROK should be conditions-based, as bilaterally established within the Conditions-Based OPCON Transition Plan (COTP). The COTP was the result of a clear-eyed assessment by the United States and the ROK on what is needed protect our respective peoples from the DPRK threat. A carefully planned and executed transition is necessary for our sustained security and the fulfillment of our alliance commitments. If confirmed, I will work with our ROK partners to preserve our shared commitment to a Conditions-Based approach to OPCON transfer, and I will encourage ROK partners to make every effort to meet the established conditions.

North Korea

82. In your view, what should be the overall U.S. overall strategy to mitigate the threat posed by North Korea to our allies in the region and to the United States?

If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the military and political requirements for dealing with the threat from North Korea. Primary roles of the Department include maintaining the readiness of our U.S.-ROK combined forces and supporting the enforcement of United Nations Security Council Resolutions pertaining to North Korea. Having a strong and credible deterrent force is essential for any potential path that we pursue to mitigate the North Korean threat, including through diplomatic engagement. If confirmed, I will ensure that we work with interagency partners, as well as regional partners and allies, to forge a comprehensive approach to North Korean threats, including those emanating from weapons of mass destruction, missile, and cyber programs.

83. How important are cooperation and collaboration with South Korea and Japan in addressing the threat from North Korea?

Close cooperation and collaboration with the Republic of Korea and Japan are an essential part of addressing the threat from North Korea. If confirmed, I will work to ensure the Department has effective, affordable, and tailored solutions to deter and respond to North Korean nuclear and ballistic missile provocations, and to maintain our robust deterrent and readiness posture in Northeast Asia in close collaboration with our regional allies, including through trilateral training events and exercises.

84. In your view, what is the role of China in addressing the security threat posed by North Korea?

China has an obligation under international law and multiple United Nations Security Council Resolutions to help address the North Korea nuclear, weapons of mass destruction, and ballistic missile threat. If confirmed, I will review the current and proposed U.S. strategies to engage the PRC on the North Korean problem set and will work with our allies and partners to develop appropriate policy approaches in this area. I will also prioritize holding China accountable for international commitments it made as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

85. What recommendations would you have concerning the U.S. approach to North Korean nuclear and ballistic missile provocations?

If confirmed, I would work to ensure the Department has effective, affordable, and tailored solutions to deter and respond to North Korean nuclear and ballistic missile provocations. These provocations threaten the United States and our allies and partners and I would endeavor to ensure that U.S. forces have what they need to maintain our robust deterrent and readiness posture in Northeast Asia in close collaboration with our regional allies and partners. In addition, trilateral cooperation and information sharing among the United States, ROK, and Japan are a

critical component of our ability to defeat North Korean ballistic missiles. If confirmed, I will continue to reinforce trilateral cooperation as a center piece of our strategy vis-à-vis the DPRK.

86. What are the core elements of a strategy to contain or deter the North Korean threat?

If confirmed, I will review the full range of current and proposed strategies to deal with the North Korean threat. This includes reviewing efforts on sanctions enforcement, bi- and trilateral cooperation between the United States, the ROK, and Japan, and the current status of our bilateral and multilateral exercises to maintain the readiness of forces in and around the Korean Peninsula.

87. What policy recommendations would you make to ensure U.S. and allied forces have the capability to address the challenge posed by the significant number of sites in North Korea containing weapons of mass destruction?

If confirmed, I will review the entire range of current and proposed activities to enhance U.S. and allied capabilities to deal with North Korea's development of weapons of mass destruction, including their chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons programs, and means of delivery. I will also work with our allies and partners to prioritize missile defense, readiness, interoperability, and development of capabilities related to intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.

88. What is your assessment of the threat that North Korea poses as a possible source of proliferation of missile, nuclear, or other military technology?

North Korea has a history of proliferation activities. If confirmed, I will prioritize addressing the proliferation threat posed by North Korea and will work to advance or develop effective DoD solutions and responses as part of a whole-of-government approach.

Japan

89. How would you characterize the current U.S.-Japan security relationship?

As Secretary Austin stated during his visit to Tokyo in March, the United States–Japan security Alliance is strong, resolute, and resilient. In addition to maintaining our readiness today, we should continue placing emphasis on adapting to future challenges, broadening the scope of the alliance, and increasing Japan's role in securing a free and open Indo-Pacific region, through bilateral and multilateral efforts.

90. How does Japan's relationship with its regional neighbors—including China, North Korea, South Korea, and Taiwan—influence the U.S.-Japan relationship?

Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) are two of our most important allies in the Indo-Pacific

region. In the face of shared challenges posed by North Korea and China, it is critical that we build strong relationships between and among our three countries. If confirmed, I will work to expand trilateral and bilateral defense cooperation, including through increased information-sharing and joint military exercises and training. Japan and the United States also share a common view of the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

91. What steps, if any, do you believe Japan should take to improve its capability and capacity to deter and, if necessary, respond to North Korean aggression?

Japan is a premier partner in missile defense cooperation, and the North Korean missile capability is a primary area of concern for Japan. Under the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty, if confirmed, I would look forward to consulting with Japan on the requirements for and scope of any response to North Korean provocations or aggression.

92. What about Chinese aggression?

If confirmed, I will ensure we continue efforts to work with Japan to address challenges from China in the East and South China Seas. We should remain engaged in continuous discussion with our Japanese allies on ways in which they can increase their support for regional and global security efforts. I am encouraged that the Japan Self Defense Forces are a capable and well-equipped component of Japan's steadily growing international presence.

93. Given the buildup of Chinese ballistic and advanced cruise missiles, how important is it for Japan to be able to defend itself against such missiles?

The quantity and sophistication of regional missile threats posed by adversaries in the Indo-Pacific, including China and North Korea, continue to grow. Although missile defense is only one component of a broader U.S. posture needed to stand up to these regional threats, it remains an important tool to shape an adversary's risk-benefit decision calculus to deter, and if necessary, defend against conventional regional aggression. If confirmed, I will ensure that we continue to work closely with Japan to bolster its existing missile defense capabilities and to seek out new areas of potential cooperation. The United States should not face these threats alone; we need strong allies like Japan to increase regional missile defense capacity while investing in the right technologies in order to ensure our future ability to deter aggression and maintain stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

94. What do you perceive to be the potential for reinvigorating U.S.-Japan cooperative missile defense efforts? Please explain your answer.

Japan remains one of our most robust BMD cooperation partners. I understand that we continue to consult closely with Japan following its mid-2020 decision to suspend land-based Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) sites in favor of sea-based alternatives. In addition, I also understand that we regularly discuss missile defense policy issues with Japan through a variety of bilateral and trilateral forums. As the Department conducts a new Missile Defense Review, if confirmed, I will conduct regular consultations with our closest allies and partners, including Japan.

Australia

95. What is your assessment of the current state of the U.S.-Australia alliance and what specific priorities would you establish for this relationship?

Our time-tested Alliance with Australia is strong. It provides operational reliability, political viability, and mutual confidence, facilitating a combined alliance approach to the current and future global operational environment. Our shared commitment to freedom, democracy, and the rules-based international order remains resolute. Australia is a critical partner, facilitating our shared operational freedom of maneuver in the Indo-Pacific region. If confirmed, I will work to strengthen the alliance's defense cooperation and force posture efforts to ensure operational success, deter PRC aggression, and preserve the security and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific. I am also committed to supporting the continued enhancement of defense acquisition and development efforts to advance alliance interoperability.

96. What is your assessment of Australia's relations with China?

Australia is taking a clear-eyed approach to its relations with China. Recent Australian legislation to counter foreign influence was a direct response to PRC interference in Australia's domestic political environment. Australia has also banned Huawei and ZTE, called an investigation into the origins of the COVID-19 virus, and criticized Beijing over harsh reactions to political dissent in Hong Kong. These well-considered measures have led to aggressive retributive actions by the PRC. I would expect Australia to continue protecting and promoting its own values and sovereignty, while working toward a productive relationship with the PRC.

97. What impact does that relationship have on the U.S.-Australia alliance?

Every nation sets its own priorities and protect its own interests. Australia's strategic reassessment of its defense strategy and approach to the region, articulated in its *Defence Strategic Update 2020*, represents a clear-eyed view of the strategic environment that closely aligns with U.S. perspectives. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that our alliance remains strong and is prepared to address the challenges posed by the strategic environment based on our shared values and objectives.

India

98. What is your view of the current state of U.S.-India security relations and what specific priorities would you establish for this relationship?

The U.S.-India security relationship is built on both shared values and interests. If confirmed, I would continue to strengthen the U.S.-India Major Defense Partnership and enhance the ability of the U.S. and Indian militaries to advance shared interests across the Indo-Pacific region.

99. What is your assessment of the relationship between India and China and how does that relationship impact the security and stability of the region?

The India-China relationship has seen an increase in tensions driven by China's growing

aggressiveness and assertiveness in the region, especially along the Line of Actual Control – India and China’s disputed border – and increasingly in the Indian Ocean. As two of the largest territorial powers in Asia, a secure and stable relationship between India and China contributes to regional stability. A stable relationship, however, should not come at the expense of India’s interests. India, like the United States, seeks to ensure regional stability against China’s territorial revisionism, while also seeking areas of potential cooperation. If confirmed, I will continue to monitor this situation closely.

Philippines

100. What is your current assessment of the U.S.-Philippines alliance and the state of our defense cooperation?

The Philippines is a treaty ally, and we have a long history of mutual defense cooperation dating back to World War II. The Mutual Defense Treaty and other bilateral defense agreements continue to provide the foundation for the defense relationship and enable critical U.S. military support, presence, and interoperability. This Alliance has made key contributions to regional security, including combatting the growth of terrorism in the southern Philippines and in Southeast Asia.

101. What areas, if any, do you perceive as having the potential to increase defense cooperation between U.S. and the Philippines armed forces?

Continued defense cooperation with the Philippines is critical to our shared goals of advancing a free and open Indo-Pacific region. If confirmed, I would continue to enhance cooperation on common interests such as maritime security, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance, and defense institution-building.

102. What do you believe the U.S. goals should be in the Philippines and how best can we achieve those goals?

The United States and the Philippines share the goal of upholding a free and open Indo-Pacific region that supports peace, stability, economic opportunity, and the rule of law. If confirmed, I would work closely with our Philippine allies to strengthen cooperation in the critical areas of maritime security, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance, and defense institution-building.

103. What is your assessment of the relationship between the Philippines and China?

Due to geographic proximity and economic ties, the Philippines has a strong interest in maintaining a relationship with China, but they also have points of disagreement, particularly in the South China Sea. U.S.-Philippines defense cooperation remains strong and U.S. advocacy for a free and open Indo-Pacific reinforces Philippines efforts to protect its own sovereignty and national interests.

104. What impact does that relationship have on the U.S.-Philippines alliance?

The U.S.-Philippines Alliance stands on its own. It benefits both of our nations and contributes to peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region.

Thailand

105. What is your assessment of U.S.-Thailand relations and what specific priorities would you establish for this relationship?

DoD is committed to our decades-long Alliance with Thailand, which benefits both of our nations and supports peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region. I understand we conduct a significant number of military-to-military engagements and exercises with Thailand each year, including COBRA GOLD, the Indo-Pacific region's largest multilateral exercise. If confirmed, I will work to strengthen our Alliance with Thailand through promoting interoperability, military professionalism and modernization, and reciprocal access and posture initiatives.

106. What is your assessment of the relationship between Thailand and China?

Due to geographic proximity and economic ties, Thailand has a strong interest in maintaining a relationship with China, but they also have points of disagreement. The U.S.-Thai Alliance helps contribute to Thailand's ability to support a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

107. What impact does that relationship have on the U.S.-Thailand relationship?

The U.S.-Thailand Alliance stands on its own. It benefits both of our nations and supports peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region.

Vietnam

108. What is your current assessment of the U.S.-Vietnam security relationship and what specific priorities would you establish for this relationship?

The U.S.-Vietnam defense relationship is strong and growing, built upon the shared goal of preserving a free and open order in the Indo-Pacific region. If confirmed, I will work to expand bilateral cooperation on shared interests such as maritime security, cybersecurity, and support for Vietnam's own war remains recovery efforts.

109. What is your assessment of the relationship between Vietnam and China?

Due to geographic proximity and economic ties, Vietnam has a strong interest in maintaining a relationship with China, but they also have points of disagreement, particularly in the South China Sea. U.S.-Vietnam defense cooperation remains strong. U.S. advocacy for a free and open Indo-Pacific region reinforces Vietnam's efforts to protect its own sovereignty and national interests.

110. What impact does that relationship have on the U.S.-Vietnam relationship?

The U.S.-Vietnam partnership stands on its own. It benefits both of our nations and supports peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region.

Indonesia

111. What is your view of the current state of military-to-military relations with Indonesia and what specific priorities would you establish for this relationship?

Defense relations between the United States and Indonesia are strong. I understand the Department of Defense is focused on enhancing the bilateral U.S.-Indonesia partnership through training, exercises, and support for Indonesia's professional military education. If confirmed, my priorities will include supporting Indonesia to enhance defense professionalism and training, and to improve its maritime capabilities.

112. What is your assessment of the relationship between Indonesia and China?

Due to geographic proximity and economic ties, Indonesia has a strong interest in maintaining a relationship with China, but they also have points of disagreement, particularly in the South China Sea. U.S.-Indonesia defense cooperation remains strong. U.S. advocacy for a free and open Indo-Pacific reinforces Indonesia's efforts to protect its own sovereignty and national interests.

113. What impact does that relationship have on the U.S.-Indonesia relationship?

The U.S.-Indonesia partnership stands on its own. It benefits both of our nations and supports peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region.

Afghanistan

President Biden announced the transition of all U.S. forces from Afghanistan by September 11, 2021.

114. Do you agree that despite the transition of forces from the country, it should remain the policy of the United States to ensure Afghanistan will not be a source of planning, plotting, or projection of terrorist attacks around the globe, including against the U.S. homeland?

Yes, I agree with the President that we should not take our eye off any potential terrorist threat emanating from Afghanistan. If confirmed, I will work closely with U.S. Central Command and other Components and agencies to ensure this mission is addressed appropriately.

115. If you agree, how would you advise that we best adapt our counterterrorism posture in the region to account for the transition of forces from Afghanistan?

Secretary Austin and other DoD senior leaders have explained in recent testimony that the Department will maintain substantial capabilities in the region and will continue to work closely with regional partners. If confirmed, a top priority of mine will be aligning United States regional policy with our enduring counter-terrorism objectives.

116. If you do not agree, what do you assess to be our national security interests in Afghanistan and how would you advise that the U.S. advance those interests once our forces are transitioned out of the country?

N/A

117. What specific challenges do you foresee in conducting counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan from “over the horizon”?

General McKenzie has stated that “over the horizon” counterterrorism operations will be difficult, but not impossible. Issues associated with time, distance, and intelligence are among the primary challenges. One under-reported advantage, as I understand it, is that even with all of its challenges, the Afghan security forces do conduct counter-terrorism operations and they bring meaningful capacity to that fight.

118. What do you recommend doing to address these challenges?

If confirmed, I would support efforts to develop an effective “over-the-horizon” capability while ensuring that our support to the Afghan security forces continues. The latter will reinforce counter-terrorism efforts in Afghanistan, as well as help to maintain security and stability in the country.

119. If confirmed, would you advocate for continuing support to the Afghan Security forces in light of the transition of U.S. and NATO forces from the country? Please explain your answer.

Yes. Supporting the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) is essential to the viability of the Government of Afghanistan and its capability to combat terrorist organizations within Afghanistan. If confirmed, I will work within the Department and with Congress to ensure the Afghan forces are sufficiently funded and resourced.

120. What can be done to ensure proper oversight of U.S. support to the Afghan security forces after U.S. troops leave Afghanistan?

I understand that the President has directed that DoD continue to support the ANDSF through the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF) appropriation. Proper oversight and accountability of the ASFF will be as crucial from an over-the-horizon posture as it has been in the past. If confirmed, my commitment in this regard is twofold: first, understanding and validating accountability mechanisms will be part of every discussion about ASFF in my office; and second, I commit to transparency with Congress.

121. Do you agree that an effective Afghan air force is essential to countering terrorists in Afghanistan?

Yes. Afghan air power provides the Afghan ground forces with a powerful tactical advantage over terrorist threats in Afghanistan. If confirmed, I will prioritize a continued focus on

sustaining the Afghan air force.

122. What approach would you recommend to ensure that the U.S. can effectively equip and support the Afghan air force, while maintaining appropriate oversight, from “over the horizon”?

My understanding is that DoD is already shifting to an over-the-horizon approach to sustainment of the Afghan aircraft fleet. This involves virtual or tele-maintenance support, transporting aircraft to third country locations to perform complex maintenance tasks, and continued training of pilots and maintainers in third countries.

123. What is your assessment of the roles Pakistan, Russia and Iran are playing in Afghanistan, including with regard to support for the Taliban and other militant groups?

If confirmed, I will have access to greater information that can help inform a more complete view of the regional players’ roles in Afghanistan. I agree with Secretary Austin that the United States should work with Pakistan to defeat al-Qa’ida and ISIS-K, and to advance a negotiated peace settlement in Afghanistan. I understand that Russia and Iran favor the U.S. withdrawal from the region, but are also concerned about a destabilized Afghanistan.

124. What is your assessment of the role China is playing in Afghanistan?

China has engaged both the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban in pursuit of regional stability. According to DoD’s December 2020 Section 1225 Report to Congress, Afghanistan has not been a major economic partner for China to date.

Pakistan

125. What is your view of the current state of the U.S.-Pakistan security relationship?

Pakistan is an important, yet challenging, partner. If confirmed, I would seek to work with Pakistan on defeating al-Qaida (AQ) and the Islamic State – Khorasan (ISIS-K), pursuing a durable peace in Afghanistan, and enhancing regional stability, among other things. I would also assess the use of the International Military Education and Training program (IMET), along with other opportunities, to develop and deepen our relationships with Pakistan’s future military leaders.

126. Do you believe U.S. security assistance to Pakistan is effective and supports U.S. national security objectives?

I understand that U.S. security assistance to Pakistan remains suspended, with limited exceptions for programs that advance U.S. national security interests. If confirmed, I would assess whether any changes to security assistance may be useful to advance U.S. interests in the region.

127. What steps would you recommend the United States take to convince or compel Pakistan to do more to cut off support and sanctuary for militant and terrorist groups?

If confirmed, I will work with Pakistan's military leaders to collaborate on mutual priorities. I will continue to press Pakistan to take action against militants and violent extremist organizations operating in its territory.

128. Are there additional conditions on security assistance to Pakistan that you believe should be considered if Pakistan declines to cut off support and sanctuary for militant and terrorist groups? If so, what are the additional conditions on assistance that you would recommend?

I understand that U.S. security assistance to Pakistan remains suspended, with limited exceptions for programs that advance U.S. national security interests. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that any U.S. security assistance is shaped to advance U.S. interests.

Terrorism

129. What is your assessment of the threat to U.S. interests posed by al-Qaeda, ISIS, and affiliated terrorist organizations operating in the Indo-Pacific region?

Following the withdrawal of combat forces from Afghanistan, the potential for the reemergence of al-Qaida in Afghanistan is a risk that must be addressed. The President has committed to ensuring that even after a U.S. withdrawal, the U.S. Government will have capabilities that remain available to help manage the risk that al-Qa'ida or ISIS attempts to rebuild. If confirmed, I will work with Secretary Austin to ensure we have the capability to address any terrorist threat that would emanate from the Indo-Pacific Region.

130. What is your understanding of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy in the region and, what changes, if any, would you recommend to that strategy, particularly given the impending departure of U.S. forces from Afghanistan?

It is my understanding that even after a U.S. withdrawal, the U.S. Government will have capabilities within the region that will help us to manage the risk of al-Qa'ida or ISIS attempting to rebuild. If confirmed, I will ensure our regional strategy accounts for our counterterrorism objectives and accounts for the threat landscape we face today.

Sexual Harassment

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

131. What is your assessment of the current climate regarding sexual harassment, gender discrimination, and other harassment in the Office of the USD(P)?

I have not had the opportunity to assess the current climate regarding sexual harassment, gender discrimination, or other harassment in the office of the USD(P). However, if confirmed, ensuring a safe and equitable work place for all employees will be a top priority. It is my expectation that each member of Policy has a safe, healthy, and respectable place to work.

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

If confirmed, and made aware of such a complaint, I would first ensure the complainant was in a safe place and had access to support resources. I would direct the case be handled promptly and properly, following the DoD guidelines and policies, and swiftly work to resolve the complaint appropriately. It would be a top priority to create a safe workplace for all staff and free from hostile or abusive conduct by anyone.

Congressional Oversight

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

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

Yes.

134. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to provide this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs such witnesses and briefers, briefings, reports, records (including documents and electronic communications), and other information as may be requested of you, and to do so in a timely manner? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes.

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

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

Yes.