

Senate Armed Services Committee
Advance Policy Questions for Mr. Erik Raven
Nominee to be Under Secretary of the Navy

Duties and Responsibilities

1. What is your understanding of the current duties and functions of the Under Secretary of the Navy?

The U.S. Code states that the Under Secretary shall perform such duties and exercise such powers as the Secretary of the Navy may prescribe. By regulation, the Under Secretary is the deputy and principal assistant to the Secretary in managing the Department of the Navy. The Under Secretary also serves as the Chief Operating Officer of the Department. In accordance with section 904(b) of the FY 2008 NDAA, the Under Secretary serves as the Department's Chief Management Officer. As the Chief Management Officer, the Under Secretary is required to perform the duties set forth in 10 U.S. Code § 2222, including establishing and implementing measures to control and reduce costs; issuing guidance related to the planning, programming, and control of investments in covered defense business systems; and serving as the appropriate official for defense business systems unless otherwise directed. Additionally, the Under Secretary oversees intelligence activities, intelligence policy, intelligence related activities, special access programs, Department of the Navy critical infrastructure, and sensitive activities within the Department of the Navy.

2. What background and experience do you possess that render you highly qualified to perform these duties and responsibilities?

Since 2007, my primary duty as clerk on the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee has been to review nearly all annual spending requested for the Department of Defense and intelligence community. These reviews culminated in my making recommendations to Subcommittee Chairmen and Vice Chairmen on how to better allocate funds to programs that address top national security needs, and how to reform programs that are under-performing, in a defense budget of more than \$740 billion of annual spending. This work also allowed me to work closely with many leaders and organizations throughout the Department of the Navy, the Department of Defense, and others.

If confirmed, I intend to use the knowledge I have gained on the programs and processes in the Department of the Navy to capitalize on the strengths of the Navy and Marine Corps, and to accelerate reforms where needed.

3. Do you believe there are any steps you need to take to enhance your ability to perform the duties and responsibilities of the Under Secretary of the Navy?

If confirmed, I will work diligently to further my understanding of the Department of the Navy through close collaboration and consultation with military and civilian leaders of the Department. I will work with the Secretary of the Navy to ensure I am fully aligned with his

priorities and vision for the Department of the Navy.

- 4. What recommendations, if any, do you have for changes in the duties and functions of the Under Secretary of the Navy, as set forth in section 8015 of title 10, United States Code, or in Department of Defense regulations pertaining to functions of the Under Secretary of the Navy?**

After review of the statutes and regulations, I do not currently recommend any changes. If confirmed, I will review these statutes and regulations within the context of the current challenges of the Department of the Navy and propose any changes that I may identify as meriting attention through the appropriate channels.

- 5. If confirmed to be the Under Secretary of the Navy, what role do you envision for yourself with respect to the Assistant Secretaries of the Navy and the Navy General Counsel?**

If confirmed, I will develop a close and collaborative relationship with the Assistant Secretaries and the Department of the Navy General Counsel. I will ensure there is a synergy of efforts in support of the missions and priorities established by the Secretary of the Navy.

- 6. If confirmed, what duties and responsibilities would be appropriate for the Secretary of the Navy to assign to you?**

If confirmed, I expect the Secretary of the Navy to assign me duties that I can execute by leveraging my strengths and experiences that will assist him with advancing his priorities and vision for the Department of the Navy.

Major Challenges and Priorities

- 7. In your view, what are the major challenges that will confront the next Under Secretary of the Navy?**

The President's Interim National Security Strategic Guidance describes our key national security challenge as the changing distribution of power across the globe, which impacts our ability to influence global events and outcomes. This creates two military challenges – 1) developing and fielding capabilities that can influence, disrupt, and deter our adversaries and 2) strengthening existing and building new alliances and partnerships to form a united front against those who threaten our fundamental interests or seek to disrupt the rules-based international order. The major challenge for the Under Secretary of the Navy is to advance the Secretary's Title 10 authorities to man, train, and equip a force to deter and defeat any adversary while taking care of our Sailors, Marines, and Civilians, within the existing budget.

- 8. If confirmed, what plans do you have for addressing these challenges?**

The Department of the Navy must address a more assertive China and an aggressive Russia by accelerating prototyping, experimentation, and acquisition and mastering the data and technology space. Naval Forces must develop capabilities that limit our adversary's ability to maneuver in the battle or competition space, and these capabilities need to be shared, networked, and strengthened through our allies and partners. Our relationships with China and Russia will remain enduring challenges. If confirmed, I will support the Secretary and work with our Navy and Marine Corps leaders to address specific challenges in the near, mid, and long term horizons.

Civilian Control of the Military

9. If confirmed, specifically what would you do to ensure that your tenure as Under Secretary of the Navy epitomizes the fundamental requirement for civilian control of the Armed Forces embedded in the U.S. Constitution and U.S. law?

Our founding fathers ensured that civilian control of the military was permanently embedded in the Constitution. I believe Department of the Navy personnel respect this foundational constitutional principle. If confirmed, I will work with Navy and Marine Corps leaders to ensure the responsibilities and authority of senior civilian leadership continue to be emphasized, clearly articulated, and understood.

10. If confirmed, how would you ensure your inclusion in the discussion, debate, and resolution of U.S. defense and national security issues?

I believe the Deputy Secretary of Defense's governance structure for executive decision processes, such as the Deputy's Management Action Group and Deputy's Workforce Council, provide for discussion and resolution of many U.S. defense and national security issues at the level of the Under Secretary of the Navy. Well-established relationships, coordination, and vetting processes between the Services, Department of Navy, and Office of the Secretary of Defense provide for timely incorporation and resolution of naval perspectives in the development of strategic guidance.

Duties and Responsibilities as Chief Management Officer (CMO)

11. What is your understanding of the duties and responsibilities of the Under Secretary in the capacity as CMO of the Department of the Navy?

My understanding is the duties and responsibilities of the Under Secretary as the CMO of the Department of the Navy are those authorized by Congress and prescribed by the Secretary of the Navy. The Under Secretary is responsible to the Secretary of the Navy for the functioning and efficiency of the Department. Section 904(b) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008, Public Law 110-181, directs that the Under Secretary be designated as having primary management responsibility for business operations of the Department of the Navy, as well as effective and efficient organizations of those business operations. In the performance of such duties, the Under Secretary of the Navy is known as the "Chief Management Officer." Therefore, I understand that, if confirmed, my duties shall be to manage the business operations of the Department of the Navy effectively and efficiently.

12. Please provide an example of a situation in which you took action to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the business operations of a large organization and describe the outcomes of your actions.

During my tenure as professional staff member and clerk of the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, I have worked to ensure the effectiveness of taxpayer funds provided to the Department of Defense and intelligence community, and to maximize efficiencies and value. Since 2007, I have recommended or implemented proposals to eliminate several hundred billion dollars of unneeded spending or underperforming programs, and to redirect those funds to higher priority programs. This work has resulted in an approximately 20 percent increase in the number of battle force ships provided by Congress from fiscal years 2015 to 2021, as compared to the number of ships requested in the President's budget.

In addition, in 2019, I proposed the creation of a pilot program for improving the maintenance of Navy ships in the Pacific at private shipyards. This pilot program seeks to increase the transparency and flexibility of ship depot maintenance efforts. The pilot program was enacted in the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2020, and has been embraced by Navy leadership, as shown by the Navy's formal request to continue the program in the President's budget for fiscal year 2021, and to expand the program to the Atlantic fleet in the President's budget for fiscal year 2022.

13. Do you believe that the CMO has the resources and authority needed to carry out the business transformation of the Department of the Navy?

It is my understanding the CMO has the necessary authorities and the resources to carry out the business transformation of the Department of the Navy. In my opinion, transformation begins with identifying current performance and then driving reform and improvement. If confirmed, you have my commitment to fully assess the business transformation activities within the Department and notify Congress of any additional authorities or resources that may be required to make the Department's business practices more efficient and effective.

14. If confirmed, on which specific business operations would you focus your improvement efforts and why?

If confirmed, I will actively support the Secretary of the Navy's Strategic Guidance to modernize business systems to enhance performance and affordability. This includes action to enforce business systems modernization on an accelerated and integrated path that is sufficiently resourced and supported. I am committed to data-driven decision-making to achieve savings while consistently working to become more effective and more efficient as a core element of the Department of the Navy's operations. I will also foster a culture that encourages innovation, solves problems, and achieves results to get the most out of every dollar and I will use my position to hold senior leaders accountable for performance improvement.

15. What performance goals and measures would you establish for evaluating increases in the overall efficiency and effectiveness of each business operation you cite?

Inefficiencies and poor effectiveness in the execution of the Department of the Navy's business operations risks the misallocation of critical resources and may delay necessary logistics and maintenance support to operational forces. I would look at business operations across the Department to ensure the Department effectively and efficiently utilizes modernized business process and systems. Areas such as supply chain visibility and forecasting, contract execution, and information security are areas where business reform can improve effectiveness and reduce the amount of time needed to repair ships and aircraft, while ensuring costs are reasonable and appropriate. If confirmed, I look forward to understanding the full scope of the Department's business operations to develop realistic and stretch performance goals and measures.

16. How will you work to improve the quality and quantity of Navy management personnel and expertise?

If confirmed, I will collaborate with Department of the Navy leaders to ensure there are processes and procedures in place to recruit, train, and retain world-class management personnel at all levels of the military and civilian workforce. I will evaluate training and development programs and ensure the Department provides the funding and support required to build a diverse cadre of managers who are prepared to execute the Department's missions.

17. How will you make use of advanced business practices and technologies, and leverage the capabilities of Navy laboratories and research universities and business and public administration schools to improve Navy management capabilities?

One of the ways I will make use of advanced business practices and technologies is by reinforcing to all senior leaders within the Department of the Navy that every acquisition, every contracting action, and every hiring action has a business practice behind it. The business of the Department is to man, train, organize, and equip Navy and Marine Corps forces for global operations. In order to achieve this, the Department must fully leverage business best practices, Navy laboratories, and universities to help senior leaders make evidence-informed decisions. I believe the Department must embrace a culture of continuous learning and improvement. If confirmed, I am committed to implementing best practices to ensure the Department is implementing sound business practices and is effectively utilizing applied research to improve the management of the Navy, while directly supporting our warfighters.

Defense Capabilities

18. In your view, are the Navy and Marine Corps current end strengths sufficient to meet current national security objectives and execute the associated operational plans?

I am aware that the Navy and Marine Corps are continuing to transform their forces, but I lack sufficient information on current operational plans and Navy and Marine Corps requirements to make a fully informed assessment. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of the Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps to ensure the resources the Department of the Navy requests in the annual budget process are optimized to maximize current and future warfighting readiness across the entire naval force structure to meet our national defense objectives.

19. If not, what end strengths do you believe are necessary? Please explain your answer.

Without knowledge of current operational plans, I do not possess adequate information to provide a recommendation on necessary end strengths at this time. I do know Navy and Marine Corps have recently changed strategies for managing end strength. The Navy has transitioned from a growth strategy to a sustainment strategy. The Marine Corps is continuing efforts to re-design the force and optimize end strength reductions to fund equipment and capability modernization, with focus on alignment as a maritime force. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the Secretary of the Navy and the leadership of the Navy and Marine Corps to achieve the right end strength for peak warfighting readiness.

20. If confirmed, how would you propose achieving those levels with a focus on continuing to recruit and retain high quality candidates?

As Secretary Del Toro states in his strategic guidance, the Department of the Navy's people provide the foundational strength that give the Navy and Marine Corps a competitive warfighting advantage. We know that, in addition to compensation, job satisfaction, and quality of life matter for recruiting and retention. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of the Navy and Department of the Navy leaders to further innovate both monetary and non-monetary incentives to meet recruiting and retention goals, while balancing current and future fiscal constraints.

21. What is your opinion on the necessity to modernize Navy and Marine Corps weapons systems in light of current and emerging threats?

I agree with the Secretary of the Navy's Strategic Guidance that innovation and modernization is an enduring priority for the Navy and Marine Corps in order to maintain maritime dominance in defense of our nation. From artificial intelligence and cyber weapons, to unmanned platforms, to directed energy and hypersonic weapons, we are on the cusp of technological breakthroughs that will define future conflict. We must prioritize capabilities that create advantage relative to the pacing threats. If confirmed, I look forward to assisting the Secretary in the execution of his Strategic Guidance.

22. What do you believe are the most critical capabilities the Department of the Navy needs to prioritize over the next 10 years?

I believe the Department of the Navy must expand capabilities for distributed operations and modernize the expeditionary posture to sustain dominance at sea. My key priorities include the modernization of the Sea Based Strategic Deterrent; developing resilient and persistent command, control, communications, computers, cyber, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems; increasing the capabilities and capacity of logistics forces; improving combat capabilities such as long-range fires; and the development of unmanned technologies. Critical to all these priorities is the need to rapidly develop and field technologies by streamlining the acquisition process, while at the same time making sure taxpayer dollars are used effectively.

23. If confirmed, how will you contribute to keeping Navy and Marine Corps acquisition costs under control and ensuring the Department successfully fields the capabilities for which the U.S. taxpayers are paying?

In my view, acquisition costs must be estimated and managed with the same discipline as traditional requirements. Properly defining operational and technical requirements, performing to stable acquisition and budget plans, leveraging investments, and procuring at efficient rates can all lower cost and schedule risk. If confirmed, I will review acquisition policies and practices to identify opportunities for improvement and will work to strengthen the culture of cost consciousness in the Department.

Emerging anti-access and area denial capabilities of certain countries and the prospect that these capabilities may limit the U.S. Navy's freedom of movement and action in certain regions are growing concerns.

24. To what extent are anti-access and area denial capabilities a concern?

Anti-access and area denial (A2AD) capabilities are a significant concern as they force a different approach to conducting naval operations. The Navy and Marine Corps will need to deliver precision fires and ISR capabilities that are resistant to A2AD technologies from inside and outside the A2AD zone. Both services must be able to penetrate, sustain, and create desired effects within an A2AD area.

If confirmed, I will support innovative Navy and Marine Corps concepts and capabilities that will enhance the ability of our Naval force to maintain access and maneuver through the global commons, project power, and defeat an adversary trying to deny us freedom of action.

25. What do you believe the Navy and Marine Corps need to be doing now and in the next few years to ensure continued access to all strategically important segments of the maritime domain?

First, we need robust security partnerships and collaboration with our partners and allies to maintain access across the maritime domain. I believe we are stronger as a team, and fostering

this collaboration is an essential component of providing shared security. In addition, the Department of the Navy must continue to modernize and adapt to a changing security environment. Finally, our warfighting concepts must continue to evolve. I support the Commandant's vision and his efforts to adapt to future operating environments, replace legacy platforms with new capabilities better suited to future challenges, and ensure we retain the ability to outmaneuver our adversaries. The Navy's fleet needs to have the proper mix of both manned and unmanned platforms to provide greater geographical distribution with increased integration. If confirmed, I will work with the Services and with Congress to ensure the Department of the Navy continues to shape, modernize, and prepare our Naval forces to meet global challenges.

In his *Force Design 2030*, the Commandant of the Marine Corps stated unequivocally, "I assess that the current force is unsuited to future requirements in size, capacity, and specific capability."

26. Do you agree with the Commandant's assessment and his plans for reshaping the Marine Corps? Why or why not?

I support the Commandant's vision and his efforts to transform the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps' transformational Force Design 2030 is a signature effort to adapt to future operating environments, and ensure we retain the ability to outmaneuver our adversaries. Force Design 2030 aligns with Secretary Austin's objectives for the Department, as well as to the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Marine Corps and Congress to advance this effort.

27. What reform and modernization efforts do you consider most critical in support of the future Marine Corps?

I believe that the most critical reform and modernization effort for the future Marine Corps is to increase warfighting capability through long-range fires, coupled with the necessary command and control, air and maritime lift, and logistics support to enhance the Marine Corps' capabilities for multi-domain and distributed operations. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary, Commandant, and Chief of Naval Operations to support these modernization programs.

Indo-Pacific Region

28. In your view, what are the key areas in which the Navy and Marine Corps must improve to provide the necessary capabilities and capacity to the Joint Force to deter Chinese aggression and, if necessary, prevail in a potential conflict with China?

An increasingly assertive China continues to develop sophisticated military capabilities to include surface, air, and undersea platforms, while demonstrating aggressive behavior that flouts the rules-based order and threatens regional stability and security. The Department of the Navy must invest in modernization of systems and deployment of capabilities focused on the needs of the Indo-Pacific region, while building cooperative alliances and partnerships to leverage

capabilities and influence. The Department of the Navy must be funded to provide a balance of capacity and capability to confront near term as well as mid-to-long term threats.

If confirmed, I will fully support the efforts of Secretaries Austin and Del Toro to modernize Naval Capabilities and work with our allies and partners to meet the challenges posed by China with a combat-credible Navy and Marine Corps team.

29. How would you assess the threat to Navy and Marine Corps forces and facilities from Chinese missile, naval, and air forces?

China has steadily developed complex military capabilities, including the world's largest missile force. In my previous capacity on the Senate Appropriations Committee, I have seen positive steps taken by the maritime services to address the growing threat in the Pacific through increased investments and posture adjustments. If confirmed, I will leverage my experience to ensure the Department of the Navy supports implementation of the 2022 Missile Defense Review and other strategic guidance for the protection of critical assets in the Indo-Pacific region and security of the American people.

30. In your assessment, have Navy and Marine Corps investments, posture shifts and/or new operational concepts sufficiently addressed this threat?

I am not able to assess of the totality of Service investments, posture shifts, and/or new operational concepts against the threat. In my current position, I have reviewed and support the guidance that Secretaries Austin and Del Toro are providing on the China threat. If confirmed, I will work with Secretary Del Toro, the Services, and Congress to further advance efforts to address the threat posed by China.

31. In your assessment, what are the priority investments the Navy and Marine Corps could make that would help implement the NDS and improve the military balance in the Indo-Pacific?

Cooperation with regional allies and partners, while conducting routine and robust forward operations in the Indo-Pacific sends a powerful message to our adversaries. Investments in warfighting capabilities, along with the supporting infrastructure to sustain training and forward operations, in the Indo-Pacific, are key drivers for implementation of the defense strategy in the Indo-Pacific.

My experience on the Appropriations Committee has made it clear that increased investment in critical capabilities requires a deliberate approach to developing the capability and capacity necessary to meet the threat across all domains and time horizons. If confirmed, I will work with the Services and Congress to ensure investments optimize implementation of the 2022 NDS priorities in the Indo-Pacific.

32. What is your current assessment of the risk of operational failure in a conflict with China as a result of a critical logistics failure?

I believe combat-credible forces, forward-deployed with allies and partners, and sustained for enduring operations are critical to any successful campaign against China – whether to deter, or if necessary, defeat. If I am confirmed, I will want to ensure the nation has a Naval logistics force capable of enabling and supporting joint operations across the Indo-Pacific.

Europe

33. What do you believe are the key areas in which the Navy and Marine Corps must improve to provide the necessary capabilities and capacity to the Joint Force to deter Russian aggression and, if necessary, prevail in a potential conflict with Russia?

Russia's unprovoked assault on Ukraine illustrates its complete disregard for international rules of order. The Department of Navy must be an active contributor to integrated deterrence within DoD, the U.S. Government, and with our allies and partners. I support investments in advanced capabilities, a focus on development and readiness of combat credible forces, and deepening the already strong relationships with our European allies and partners.

If confirmed, I will work with Secretaries Austin and Del Toro to ensure the Department of the Navy has appropriate forces and infrastructure along with required advanced capabilities. Advanced capabilities fielded alongside the contributions of our allies and partners provide an operational depth that multiplies our ability to deter and influence.

34. The U.S. European Command Commander and various other DOD officials have consistently called for two additional destroyers to be forward-stationed at Rota, Spain. Do you agree with them?

Strengthening our combat deterrence against Russia and enabling NATO forces to operate more effectively are two of the Global Posture Review outcomes. I believe the addition of two additional forward-stationed destroyers in Rota is consistent with these outcomes; however, the basing decision is under Secretary Austin's authority and requires the endorsement of our NATO ally, the Government of Spain.

35. In your view, are there investments the Navy and Marine Corps should prioritize for the competition with Russia below the level of direct military conflict in order to counter Russian malign influence and hybrid warfare operations?

I am very aware of the efforts our competitors are making to leverage space and cyber to gain advantages at a level below the threshold of war. As we have seen in the assault on Ukraine, Russia has also attempted to capitalize on social media and disinformation. Many of these

“gray-zone” tactics will require a whole-of-government approaches to counter both state sponsored and non-state sponsored actors. In order to compete in this new era of hybrid warfare, I believe the Department must invest in robust cyber resiliency programs, the cyber workforce, and the general education of the Department’s entire workforce. If confirmed, I look forward to better understanding areas the Department must improve to meet current and future threats.

The Marine Corps is transforming into a more littoral centric force, shedding heavier formations and focusing on INDOPACOM.

36. What role do you see for the Marine Corps in the Indo-Pacific and European theaters?

The inherent strengths of Force Design 2030 with its purpose to deploy Marines at the time and place of our choosing with expanded long-range fires, lighter and more mobile infantry, unmanned systems, maritime mobility and resilience, and mobile air defense and counter-precision guided missile systems, are a key Joint Force enabler applicable to both the Indo-Pacific and European theaters. If confirmed, I will support the necessary investments and force structure modifications in order to move at speed to create the naval expeditionary force of the future.

Training/Readiness

37. How would you assess the current readiness of the Navy and Marine Corps—across the domains of materiel and equipment, personnel, and training—to execute the 2018 NDS and Combatant Commanders’ operational plans?

I believe the Navy and Marine Corps team is ready to execute its missions, deter conflict, and if necessary, fight and win against any challenger regardless of domain. Readiness is challenged by yearly continuing resolutions that create shortfalls in Operations and Maintenance and Military Personnel funding, and create inefficiencies in acquisition accounts. With congressional support, I believe that the Navy and Marine Corps can continue to make steady progress in further improving readiness, while modernizing and transforming the force to execute the defense strategy.

38. In your view, what are the priority missions for which current and future Navy and Marine Corps forces should be trained and ready in the context of day-to-day activities, as well as for contingencies?

The Navy and Marine Corps play an active role within the Joint Force in responding to a wide range of rapidly changing threats to global security. The priority warfighting mission remains maintaining the nation’s advantage at sea, which requires generating integrated all-domain naval power, strengthening alliances and partnerships, controlling the seas to deny the objectives of our adversaries, and modernizing the future force. In addition, the Navy and Marine Corps need to be trained and ready to support global crisis response missions, to include humanitarian and pandemic response, enhancing leadership and diversity within our force, and protecting economic trade across free and open seas.

39. What is your assessment of the risk the Navy and Marine Corps have accepted regarding their readiness to execute operational plans in furtherance of the 2018 NDS?

I am not yet able to assess of the level of risk the Navy and Marine Corps have accepted regarding their readiness to execute operational plans in furtherance of the 2018 NDS. If confirmed, I will work to reduce the level of risk through effective investment prioritization and seek congressional support for the procurement and fielding of modern capabilities that will contribute effectively to operational plan execution and the implementation of carefully crafted plans to retire older, less effective platforms that heavily consume readiness investments.

40. If confirmed, how would you oversee compliance by the Navy and Marine Corps with readiness goals and timelines?

I support the use of data analytics to improve performance, costs, and accountability and implement an outcome-driven culture. Compliance with readiness goals and timelines will require data-driven decision-making processes and systems. If confirmed, I will support Secretary Del Toro's commitment to get the most out of every dollar to include reducing maintenance costs and improving on-time maintenance completion.

41. If confirmed, how would you prioritize maintaining readiness in the near term, with modernizing the Navy and Marine Corps to ensure future readiness?

I believe investments need to be balanced across both near-term and future force requirements. We must keep pace with our adversaries and invest in key capabilities for the future, while maintaining a force that can respond to current threats. If confirmed, I will seek risk analysis and assessments to make strategy-driven, data-informed decisions on where risk can be managed and accepted and where we need to invest in cutting-edge technologies.

Mandatory Vaccination for COVID-19

42. What is your view of the Secretary of Defense's requirement that all service members be vaccinated for COVID-19 unless they meet established exemption criteria?

I fully support the Secretary of Defense's policy requiring all Service members to be fully vaccinated unless they meet established exemption criteria. If confirmed, I will work with Navy and Marine Corps leadership to ensure all non-exempt Sailors and Marines are vaccinated to protect the Force against COVID-19.

43. In your view, should sailors and marines who decline to be vaccinated be separated, even if they have skills and experience that the Navy and Marine Corps need?

I fully support the Secretary of Defense's policy requiring all Service members to be fully vaccinated unless they meet established exemption criteria. If confirmed, I will work with Department of the Navy leadership to understand if Navy and Marine Corps separation policies have affected manning in critical skills while continuing work to achieve a fully vaccinated force.

44. To date, there have been no religious exemptions approved for sailors and only six such exemptions approved for marines. In your view, why have so few religious accommodation requests been granted?

It is my understanding that the Religious Freedom Restoration Act requires all requests for exemption to be reviewed on an individual basis. Information concerning how requests for accommodation are processed or individually determined has not been shared with me. Given the expeditionary mission of the Services and the fact that Sailors and Marines must serve in confined areas (e.g., ships and submarines) for extended periods of time, I understand why the Services would be concerned about Sailors and Marines serving in close quarters with unvaccinated teammates. If confirmed, I'll work to ensure that current law and policy within this area are consistently applied to all requests by Sailors and Marines.

45. As of March 2022, the Navy estimates that approximately 4,500 active component and 3,200 Ready Reserve service members remain unvaccinated. What impact would the discharge of sailors and marines who remain unvaccinated have on Navy and Marine Corps readiness?

I do not have enough information to assess the impact discharge of unvaccinated sailors and Marines has on readiness. If confirmed, I will consult with Department leadership to understand what impact the discharge of Sailors and Marines who remain unvaccinated may have on readiness.

Operational Energy

46. If confirmed, how would you lead the Navy and Marine Corps in harnessing innovations in operational energy and linking them with emerging joint operational concepts in order to reduce contested logistics vulnerabilities for warfighters?

As I understand it, the Navy and Marine Corps operational energy investments are focused on increasing lethality, range, and persistence of naval platforms by advancing energy solutions to enable distributed maritime operations. These solutions include technologies to increase weapons capabilities, methods to reduce logistics demand of our forward deployed naval forces, and platforms that distribute energy to the warfighter.

47. In what specific areas, if any, do you believe the Navy and Marine Corps need to improve the incorporation of energy considerations and alternative energy resources into the strategic planning processes?

I believe the Navy and Marine Corps need to fully integrate energy planning and energy risk assessments associated with their Title 10 wargames. They must also ensure their components and warfighting commands fully define the energy requirements to the extent needed to integrate explicit energy and logistics risk assessments into their planning. Such assessments are critical to understanding their ability to succeed at their missions.

48. How can Department of the Navy acquisition systems better address requirements related to the use of energy in military platforms to decrease risks to warfighters?

It is my understanding the Navy and Marine Corps are currently working to improve energy performance, storage, distribution, and controls to both reduce costs and better support fielding and sustainment of advanced weapon systems and sensors. If confirmed, I will prioritize a continued focus on hybridizing platforms and energy management in Department of the Navy acquisition programs.

49. In your view, should energy supportability that reduces contested logistics vulnerabilities be a key performance parameter in the requirements process?

I believe the energy key performance parameter (eKPP) already requires an operational energy supportability analysis. If confirmed, I will support the use of eKPP and ensure Navy and Marine Corps leadership conduct supportability analyses that incorporate contested logistics scenarios.

50. If confirmed, to what extent would you prioritize energy resilience, including acquiring and deploying sustainable and renewable energy assets, to support mission critical functions, and address known vulnerabilities?

Energy resilience and mission assurance are two sides of the same coin. The Department cannot achieve one without the other. From what I understand, the Navy and Marine Corps select the appropriate energy source to meet the needs of the mission. In many cases, that includes renewable energy sources. The Department's Installation Energy Plans (IEPs) inform the governance process for mitigating the installations' most critical energy security vulnerabilities. If confirmed, I will focus on addressing the most critical energy security gaps laid out in the IEPs through efforts that enhance the Department's sustainability and deploy renewable energy solutions that work towards accomplishing the President's goals.

Environment

51. If confirmed, how would you ensure that the Department of the Navy complies with environmental protection laws, regulations, and guidance from the Environmental Protection Agency?

If confirmed, I will verify that Department of the Navy environmental policy is aligned with current environmental protection laws, regulations, and guidance from the Environmental Protection Agency. I will ensure the Department's environmental practitioners and military personnel have the necessary resources and training to ensure compliance with the latest standards.

52. What are your ideas, if any, for improving collaboration with the Department of Interior and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to find cooperative ways to ensure military readiness while protecting the environment on and around Department of the Navy installations?

I am aware the Department of the Navy works closely with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to identify collaboration opportunities in support of both agencies' missions. I believe both agencies work to preserve undeveloped lands adjacent to military installations and ranges and have a long history of partnering to conserve and protect military readiness and important environmental resources. If confirmed, I will ensure we continue to push innovative solutions such as initiatives under the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) and Recovery and Sustainment Partnership Initiative (RASP) and Sentinel Landscapes program, and to seek new authorities, where appropriate, to help streamline collaboration opportunities.

53. If confirmed, how would you further efforts to address PFAS contamination at Department of the Navy installations?

If confirmed, I would meet with the Department of the Navy's environmental program leadership to assess strategies, successes, and challenges to date and take action to remove barriers to support investigation and remediation efforts across the portfolio.

54. If confirmed, what would be your approach to addressing the health concerns of service members and their families regarding alleged exposures to potentially harmful contaminants on U.S. military installations and in the context of performing military duties?

The health, safety, and well-being of our Sailors, Marines, and their families are our most important mission. If confirmed, I will make sure that any identified health concerns are acted upon and mitigated with a sense of urgency.

Readiness and Resource Impacts from Extreme Weather

55. How would you assess the readiness and resource impacts on the Department of the Navy from recent extreme weather events?

Many Department of the Navy facilities lie in flood or hurricane prone areas. Others are subject to drought or extreme heat. All indications are that these conditions will persist. I am aware that more recently constructed facilities perform better under extreme weather and environmental conditions than those that were built many years ago. If confirmed, I will work with the Department's senior leaders to ensure mission assurance programs identify and address risks to Department of the Navy installations from extreme weather, storm surge, and sea-level rise.

56. Based on these readiness and resource impacts, do you believe it necessary to use more resilient designs in Department of the Navy infrastructure?

As I understand it, the Department of the Navy does incorporate resilience in its planning, design and construction in its master planning process, and annual assessments. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the Department of the Navy continues to include resilience in the planning process, and in all infrastructure decisions.

57. How can the Department of the Navy better use existing authorities on extreme weather mitigation granted by Congress in the last few National Defense Authorization Acts?

It is my understanding that the Department of the Navy has been working with Congress to leverage Title 10 authorities to increase installation energy security and energy-efficient operations. The President has deemed that climate change is a national security matter, and I agree. If confirmed, I will continue to foster the collaborative effort between the Department of the Navy and Congress to achieve this Administration's goals for both energy and climate change.

Audit

58. In your view, what is the benefit to Department of the Navy missions in achieving a clean audit opinion?

While there are a multitude of benefits to the Department of the Navy in achieving a clean audit opinion – accountability, transparency, stronger controls, process efficiencies, and quality of financial information, to name a few -- the true benefit of audit is ingraining audit rigor into the Department's business DNA, understanding and improving Navy and Marine Corps business processes, and implementing internal controls to safeguard resources and increase transparency of how resources are used across the enterprise. I believe audit supports financial excellence, which maximizes spending power and contributes to the lethality and readiness of the Navy and Marine Corps and, strengthens Congressional and public confidence in Department of the Navy resource requests.

59. If confirmed, what specific actions will you take or direct to help the Department of the Navy achieve a clean audit opinion in the most efficient manner?

If confirmed, I want to understand the critical path to a clean audit opinion that supports operational mission requirements. I would also direct audit remediation to focus on large dollar value, mission critical assets, and an ability to track and validate the resources provided to the Department. In addition, I would examine how sustainable and affordable change supports the mission and helps the Department leverage every dollar toward the readiness of our Sailors and Marines. I understand the Marine Corps is making a push for an audit opinion in two years, and if confirmed, I will ensure the Marine Corps will have every resource available to achieve its goal, applying the lessons learned to the Navy.

60. Do you support the Department of the Navy investing significant resources including personnel, investments in IT modernization, and funding for audit activities and audit remediation activities in order to support the Department of the Navy achieving a clean audit opinion in a timely fashion?

Yes, I strongly support investing significant resources into audit remediation where it makes sense and is needed to achieve and sustain a clean audit opinion. As I understand it, there are long-standing personnel, system, control, process, and policy issues that hinder a clean audit, but they are all problems that stand on their own. It makes sense to galvanize these issues under the overarching goals of audit as a management tool. If confirmed, I would ensure audit remediation investments make sense, add value, and help sustain a clean audit opinion.

61. If confirmed, how will you hold Department of the Navy leaders accountable and responsible to prioritize, support, and manage Department of the Navy audit activities?

If confirmed, I would hold leaders accountable and responsible for audit activities by ensuring every senior civilian and military leader is evaluated against clear audit objectives. I would assess progress throughout the year through various audit governance forums. I would measure progress against the audit roadmap and scorecard metrics, of which I understand the Department of the Navy has a robust inventory. Additionally, setting a strong tone-at-the-top at the beginning of my tenure is critical to driving accountability and challenging senior leaders to continue prioritizing audit and to tackle audit remediation head on.

Navy and Marine Corps-Related Defense Industrial Base

62. How would you describe the state of the industrial base that supports Navy and Marine Corps programs?

Health and competition in the shipbuilding industrial base and supply chain is a critical national security requirement and vital to meeting our National Defense Strategy. While today's domestic shipbuilding supply chains are highly capable, global competitive pressure continues to erode many of the industries the Navy relies on, and results in fragile market spaces and an increased number of single and sole source suppliers. I am aware that throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Navy has diligently worked with industry to balance worker safety, economic

wellness, and National Defense imperatives to ensure the industrial base is sustained and able to emerge stronger.

63. If confirmed, what actions would you take related to the industrial base?

If confirmed, I will promote best practices from industry and government in our acquisition processes, work with the Secretary of the Navy to protect our intellectual property and data, and maximize the use of the American workforce to build and sustain our forces in support of President Biden's Executive Order on Ensuring the Future is Made in All of America by All of America's Workers, and the Build Back Better initiatives.

64. In your view, how should Navy and Marine Corps acquisition leaders consider impacts on the industrial base when addressing requirements for recapitalization or modernization of major defense weapons systems and munitions?

A healthy and productive industrial base is a key national strategic asset for the Department of the Navy and is critical to building strength and capacity. The Department must manage the risk associated with maintaining a healthy industrial base while expanding industrial partnerships and providing predictable workload to suppliers.

65. If confirmed, how should the Navy and Marine Corps use procurement investments to support the maintenance and growth of the domestic industrial base in sectors critical for Department of the Navy readiness and modernization plans?

It is my understanding that Congress has provided additional funding to support the domestic industrial base targeted to the surface combatant supplier base and the submarine industrial base. This funding has enabled the Department to integrate efforts across the industrial base and make targeted investments to increase efficiency, capability, and capacity. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of the Navy and Congress to maximize the use of existing authorities and to identify additional opportunities to support our industrial base partners.

66. In your opinion, how should the Department of the Navy use its research and manufacturing investment activities to support the maintenance and growth of the domestic industrial base in sectors critical for Department of the Navy readiness and modernization activities?

Research and development of new materials, manufacturing processes, and capabilities is an important component of supporting the domestic industrial base. If confirmed, I intend to review the Department of the Navy's investments in these areas, and evaluate the impact of other investments, such as from the Defense Production Act Title III program, for strengthening the industrial base in sectors which are key to Navy and Marine Corps programs.

Navy Shipbuilding

The most recent pronouncement on the Navy force structure goals for the Navy fleet was announced by former Secretary Esper in December 2020. His vision was to have 382 to 446 battle force ships, augmented by 119 to 242 unmanned vessels (surface and undersea vessels). The previous Force Structure Assessment had set a goal of having 355 battle force ships, but made no estimate about requirements for unmanned vessels. The Navy's current battle force contains roughly 300 ships, and would not have achieved a force level goal of 355 ships until 2031 at the earliest, even under the shipbuilding projections of the previous administration.

The current administration has not specified a force goal for the Navy, although we expect the Chief of Naval Operations to set a new goal in June 2022 pursuant to section 1017 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022.

67. If confirmed, will you support the Chief of Naval Operations in meeting the June 2022 statutory requirement for providing Congress with an updated battle force ship assessment and requirement?

It is my understanding that the Navy is currently conducting a force structure assessment based on the new National Defense Strategy. If confirmed, I will support the Chief of Naval Operations' (CNO) efforts to complete an updated Naval Force Structure Assessment as expeditiously as possible.

68. If confirmed, what shipbuilding options or alternatives would you recommend evaluating to meet the Chief of Naval Operations and Commandant of the Marine Corps' requirements as soon as practicable?

I assure you of my commitment to building a modernized naval force with sufficient size and capability to campaign effectively, deter aggression, and, if required, win decisively in combat. At the same time, I believe that we should build only those ships that we can afford to sustain in the future in terms of manning, training, operations, and future modernization. If confirmed, I will consult with the Secretary of the Navy, the CNO, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps to find the right balance of investments in readiness, capability, and capacity.

Section 1025 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018 established "the policy of the United States to have available, as soon as practicable, not fewer than 355 battle force ships, comprised of the optimal mix of platforms, with funding subject to the availability of appropriations or other funds."

69. Do you support this policy?

I am committed to building a modernized naval force with sufficient size and capability to campaign effectively, deter aggression, and, if required, win decisively in combat. The 355-ship goal was based on the Navy's 2016 Force Structure Assessment. The Navy continuously

reviews the numbers of ships—and the capabilities they require—to meet the evolving demands of the National Defense Strategy. If confirmed, I look forward to seeing the results of the ongoing force structure assessment to meet the demands of the 2022 National Defense Strategy.

The Navy has begun acquiring replacements for *Ohio*-class ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs). The new *Columbia*-class boats are projected to have an acquisition cost of \$10 billion per ship. The Navy has stated publicly that it could not afford to buy both the new SSBNs and maintain other required procurements under expected Defense Department budget top lines.

70. In your view, what steps will be necessary to enable the Navy to modernize and expand the rest of the fleet, while also procuring the *Columbia*-class SSBNs?

I support the *Columbia*-class SSBN as the Navy's number one acquisition priority and most survivable leg of the nuclear triad. Continuing to fully fund the program will be essential to ensure on time delivery, so that the nation's sea based strategic deterrent requirements continue to be met as the *Ohio*-class is retired. To minimize the impact to the rest of the fleet, I believe in continuing to prioritize efforts to reduce cost and schedule risk, increase the capacity of the submarine industrial base, and improve affordability.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the United States procured the current *Ohio*-class SSBN submarines within the Navy's shipbuilding (SCN) account. In 2015, Congress created a special fund, the National Sea-Based Deterrence Fund (NSBDF), for procurement of *Columbia*-class SSBNs.

71. What is your view on how the program costs of the *Columbia*-class SSBNs should be funded – solely from Navy resources, from a combination of Navy and other-than-Navy (e.g., OMB and other Defense) sources, or with a different approach? Please explain.

I understand that the Navy has budgeted for the *Columbia*-class program in the Shipbuilding and Conversion account, and executed funds from the National Sea-Based Deterrence Fund. I support this approach to funding and execution of this important program, as it maximizes transparency and provides valuable authorities to control costs. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of the Navy and Congress to determine the best approach for funding the *Columbia*-class program and ensure the proper acquisition authorities are used to make this critical program more affordable.

Aircraft Carriers

When the construction contract was signed in 2008, the planned delivery date of the USS *Gerald R. Ford* (CVN-78) was September 2015 at a cost of \$10.5 billion. Delivery of the ship was accepted by the Navy, despite major construction work still on-going, in May 2017 at a cost of \$12.9 billion. The ship finished major construction in December 2021 with

the completion of the final advanced weapons elevator at an overall cost of \$13.3 billion.

72. What is your understanding of the reasons behind the CVN-78 delivery delay and cost overrun?

CVN-78 (FORD) incorporated many advances in technology such as a new reactor plant, propulsion system, electric plant, Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System, Advanced Arresting Gear, new elevators, machinery control, and integrated warfare systems. It is my understanding that these advances will provide unparalleled lethality to the Fleet and support significant life cycle cost reductions. The incorporation of these advanced technologies on one ship has created challenges, which resulted in the concurrent development of some of these technologies during ship construction.

73. What lessons should the Navy learn from the CVN-78 experience?

If confirmed, I will evaluate acquisition programs to ensure steps are being taken to strike the right balance between introducing new technology and leveraging proven capabilities. Using a system engineering approach and harnessing prototypes at land-based sites where it makes sense are approaches to reducing the risk of introducing new technologies.

Frigates

74. What is your understanding of the frigate (FFG-62) program and how it will differ from Littoral Combat Ship (LCS)?

The FFG 62 program is the evolution of Small Surface Combatants with increased lethality, survivability, and improved capability to support the National Defense Strategy across the full range of military operations. Unlike the Littoral Combat Ship's modular capabilities, that was designed to operate primarily in the littoral regions of the world, it is my understanding that FFG 62 is designed for operation in littoral and blue water environments and is planned to operate independently or integrated with a Task Force to conduct offensive and defensive surface, anti-submarine, and air warfare.

75. What is your understanding of the current FFG-62 acquisition strategy?

I understand that the FFG 62 program is based on a parent design to include U.S. sourced components, and that the Navy has undertaken a number of risk reduction efforts to increase the confidence that all ships in the class will achieve the required capability upon delivery, on budget, and on schedule.

76. In your view, what steps should the Navy be taking in the FFG-62 program to avoid the problems that have been and are being experienced in the LCS program?

I understand Navy is reducing risk in the FFG 62 program by using a proven hull form, utilizing program of record systems, and engineering plant land-based testing. If confirmed, I will review

these risk reduction efforts to ensure the FFG 62 avoids issues experienced in the LCS program and delivers on time and on budget.

Navy Aviation

77. What is your assessment of the most important challenges facing Navy aviation?

Naval Aviation faces challenges similar to those confronting the Department as a whole —how to balance readiness while modernizing an aging fleet and evolving the Air Wing of the Future in order to meet next-generation security challenges.

78. If confirmed, what steps would you take to meet those challenges?

If confirmed, I will work with the Naval Aviation Enterprise (NAE) to continue readiness improvement efforts to meet aircraft mission capable targets and expand the use of industry best practices. I will also work with the NAE to modernize the fleet using the right balance of service life modifications, capability upgrades, and new procurement.

79. Does the Navy have a sufficient number of strike-fighter aircraft?

My understanding is that the FY 2022 President's Budget included sufficient resources and levers to drive execution-year strike fighter shortfall to zero for all deploying squadrons. To maintain a sufficient amount of strike-fighter aircraft, this requires ongoing F-35C production and F/A-18E/Fs service life extensions, capability improvements, and readiness enhancements.

80. If not, if confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure they do?

As stated above, reaching the sufficient number of strike fighter aircraft requires stable resourcing and the use of multiple levers to ensure targets continue to be met.

81. What is your understanding of the physiological episodes that the naval aviation community has been confronting and the plans to address such episodes?

It is my understanding that the Department has undertaken a comprehensive effort to evaluate the causes of and mitigate the occurrences of Physiological Episodes (PEs). While these efforts have reduced the incidence of PEs by more than 80 percent since the peak in 2017, these efforts must remain Naval Aviation's number one safety priority. Ongoing modifications to the aircraft, improved maintenance practices, and improved aircrew interface will enhance aircraft performance and continue to reduce the rate of PEs.

Marine Corps Aviation

82. What is your assessment of the most important challenges facing Marine Corps aviation?

The most important challenges facing Marine Corps aviation are the same as those facing Naval Aviation, as well as those facing the entire Department. First and foremost, the Department must continue to modernize our aircraft and systems while adapting aviation employment to ensure that we maintain our competitive edge against all adversaries. Second, the Department must maintain the steadily growing readiness rates achieved to this point across our current fleet.

83. If confirmed, what steps would you take to meet those challenges?

I will work diligently to protect our research and development funding as well as our readiness account funding, while collaborating with the Navy/Marine Corps team to ensure our force employment is sustainable and effective.

84. Is Marine Corps aviation readiness at an acceptable level?

It is my understanding that forward-deployed forces are frequently deploying with the highest readiness rates across the fleet. This is indicative of readiness actions that are being taken by the Department, as well as the resources provided by Congress. However, I also understand that there are areas that need to be improved when it comes to units at home in a training environment. The ongoing work that the Department of the Navy has undertaken has achieved significant results, but much must still be done. If confirmed, I am committed to working with the Commandant of the Marine Corps and the Chief of Naval Operations to further enhance aviation readiness to ensure the pilots and aircrews have enough ready aircraft for operational and training employment.

85. If not, if confirmed, what steps would you take to improve aviation readiness?

If confirmed, I will support the Secretary and work with Congress to protect readiness accounts and to support investments in assets and personnel that will restore readiness of the current fleet and the future readiness of aircraft to be purchased through the Marine Corps' aviation modernization programs.

F-35 Joint Strike Fighter

86. What is your assessment of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program?

The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter is a dominant, multirole, fifth-generation aircraft capable of projecting U.S. power and deterring potential adversaries. I am also aware that the F-35 is costly and presents unique challenges in areas such as development, testing, fielding, and sustainment. It is my understanding that the program continues to mature, and that the Department of Defense is reviewing the management structure for F-35 sustainment and acquisition functions.

87. If confirmed, what changes would you seek to implement in the program?

If confirmed, I will support the Secretary of the Navy's review of the F-35 program and efforts to deliver this transformational capability to front-line forces as soon as possible.

Carrier Air Wing

88. Do you believe the Navy's carrier air wing is designed to provide the capability we expect it to provide in order to contribute to the carrier strike group?

It is my understanding that the Navy maximizes carrier air wing lethality through a mix of 4th and 5th generation fighters. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the aviation enterprise to usher in the Air Wing of the Future with the Next Generation Air Dominance Family of Systems, including the use of breakthrough technologies such as manned-unmanned teaming, machine learning, and AI-enabled autonomy.

89. Specifically, will the projected air wing have sufficient available strike range, available payload, electronic warfare capability, and command and control capability? Why or why not?

My understanding is that the Next Generation Air Dominance Family of Systems is being specifically designed to meet the challenges of increasing adversary capabilities. If confirmed, I intend to further examine the capabilities of current and next-generation platforms to better assess how the Air Wing of the Future will meet these warfighting requirements.

90. If not, if confirmed, what steps would you take to address any gaps?

If confirmed, I will ensure the naval aviation enterprise is focused on the optimization of legacy platforms and tactics to allow investment in the capabilities required for the Air Wing of the Future to deliver game-changing lethality and survivability.

Uncrewed Systems

91. What is your assessment of the appropriate role uncrewed systems should play in Naval and Marine Corps operations?

I am committed to fully assessing the potential for uncrewed systems for the Navy and Marine Corps. I believe that distributed maritime operations and expeditionary advance base operations concepts could greatly benefit from manned/uncrewed teaming.

92. If confirmed, what steps would you take to achieve that vision?

Lessons learned from past uncrewed programs demonstrate the importance of collaboration between all stakeholders to ensure warfighting requirements, technical requirements, industry, and acquisition processes are aligned appropriately. If confirmed, I will support an enterprise approach that focuses on resolving technical, testing, and integration issues while prioritizing reliability and maintainability in earlier program stages.

93. What is your assessment of the Navy and Marine Corps manned/unmanned teaming with respect to aviation?

While I do not have specific details regarding the Navy's plans for manned/unmanned aviation team, I believe these capabilities have significant potential. In the area of strike-fighter aviation, I believe unmanned assets will act as a force multiplier by increasing range, weapons capabilities, ISR enhancements, and distribution of the strike force in contested environments. If confirmed, I will work to grow such capabilities to address warfighting threats.

94. If confirmed, what changes would you make to the programs to ensure affordability en masse?

The Department of the Navy's 2021 Unmanned Campaign Framework identified opportunities to improve development and affordability of Navy and Marine Corps unmanned programs. Moving to a capability-centered approach and implementing concepts such as "Test, Prove, and Scale" will reduce risk and identify performance requirements by standardizing autonomy, command and control, payload interfaces, and networks. If confirmed, I will continue to evaluate such constructs drive additional affordability for unmanned programs.

95. What is your assessment of the Navy's plans to team manned and unmanned vessels that could result in operating significant numbers of unmanned vessels in future naval operations?

I believe manned and unmanned vessels will act as a force multiplier in contested environments. If confirmed, I will work to continue to assess and grow such capabilities to address warfighting threats. The Navy and Marine Corps must continue to advance unmanned systems to ensure the naval forces have the necessary capabilities to keep pace with the future threats. It is my understanding that the Department is taking deliberate steps to develop and mature key unmanned systems and enabling technologies. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring that the Department carefully assesses, develops, fields, and sustains the required unmanned capabilities to ensure success in any future conflict.

Munitions

Munitions inventories, particularly those of precision guided munitions, have declined significantly due to high operational usage, insufficient procurement, and a requirements system that does not adequately account for the ongoing need to transfer munitions to our allies and operations short of major combat, such as in recent operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria.

96. If confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure that the Department of the Navy has sufficient inventories of munitions to meet our combatant commanders' needs?

If confirmed, I will engage with the necessary stakeholders, including the Secretary of Defense's staff, the Chief of Naval Operations, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and Combatant Commanders to ensure all warfighting requirements and capability gaps regarding weapons and munitions are understood and properly resourced.

97. What changes in budgeting and acquisition processes would you recommend to facilitate faster Navy and Marine Corps munitions replenishment rates?

I do not have enough information to make recommendations at this time. If confirmed, I will review the budgeting and acquisition processes to ensure Navy munitions replenishment rates are sufficient to meet the needs of the warfighter.

Cruise, Ballistic and Hypersonic Missiles

98. In your view, how serious is the cruise, ballistic and hypersonic missile threat to the Navy and Marine Corps?

As our adversaries accelerate their military modernization programs and develop advanced capabilities, the cruise, ballistic, and hypersonic missile threat to the Navy and Marine Corps becomes ever more serious, putting our naval forces at risk at ranges that could limit our maritime operations in defense of our national interests.

99. What is your understanding of the Navy and Marine Corps' cruise, ballistic and hypersonic missile defense strategy?

While I have not been briefed on the results, it is my understanding the Navy has conducted detailed analyses to develop a missile defense strategy, and is investing in near, mid, and long term capabilities to counter the emerging threat.

100. If confirmed, what actions would you take to ensure that the Navy and Marine Corps are adequately addressing this threat?

If confirmed, I will support the Secretary of the Navy in a thorough review of the current strategy and investments to ensure the Navy and Marine Corps is adequately addressing the threat.

Science, Technology and Innovation

101. What is your understanding and assessment of the role that science and technology programs have played and will play in developing capabilities for current and future Navy and Marine Corps systems?

Science and technology (S&T) is a critical building block for warfighting capabilities. As we face rapid change in the global security environment, Navy and Marine Corps S&T programs play a vital role in developing capabilities to maintain and expand our technological advantage.

102. If confirmed, how will you ensure that successful Navy and Marine Corps science and technology programs will transition to operational warfighting capabilities?

If confirmed, I will work to strengthen collaboration between the science and technology community and the program managers who transition the technologies to operational warfighting

capabilities. In addition, I will work with leaders in the Department to foster partnerships between government, academia, and industry to increase the speed of technology transition to the Fleet.

103. How would you improve efforts the Navy and Marine Corps are making to identify new technologies developed commercially by the private sector and apply them to military and national security purposes?

It is my understanding the Department is building networks of innovation organizations, consisting of private industry, academia, small business, and other government entities, to increase collaboration and innovation, and accelerate solutions to the warfighter. I believe initiatives and networks such as these are critical in identifying new technologies to the warfighter. If confirmed, I look forward to examining these efforts to identify additional opportunities for collaboration.

104. How will you work to increase investments in research infrastructure through Department of the Navy MILCON investments to match growing investments in China in research infrastructure in areas such as quantum science, hypersonics, and advanced materials?

If confirmed, I will examine the MILCON investments needed to improve research infrastructure at our Naval Labs and Warfare and Systems Center. Additionally, I will work with stakeholders across the Department to develop a plan to ensure our research infrastructure supports accelerated development of cutting-edge technology in support of our warfighters.

Test and Evaluation (T&E) Efforts

105. What is your assessment of the Department of the Navy's test and evaluation capabilities, including the test and evaluation workforce and infrastructure?

The Department's test and evaluation capabilities are critical in delivering new technologies that have been proven ready for Fleet deployment. If confirmed, I will assess these capabilities, including the test and evaluation workforce and infrastructure, to ensure we are adequately resourced and fully capable of supporting the development and test and evaluation of new technologies.

106. In which areas, if any, do you feel the Department of the Navy should be developing new test and evaluation capabilities?

If confirmed, I will support continued investments in the modernization of legacy test capabilities to ensure they are ready and adequate to support customer requirements. The Navy must continue to make investments in areas such as modeling and simulation, engineering, and test capabilities. Collecting performance data earlier in the acquisition process can produce a more efficient and effective approach to test and evaluation. In my view, I expect cybersecurity, directed energy, and autonomy will drive future Navy test capability investments.

107. If confirmed, to what extent would you seek to accelerate the development of these new capabilities?

If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary to support continued investments in the modernization of legacy test capabilities to ensure they are ready and adequate to support evolving requirements.

108. What are your views on the appropriate roles of OSD developmental and operational testing organizations with respect to the testing of Navy and Marine Corps systems?

From my experience, test and evaluation (T&E) plays a critical role in delivering proven technologies ready for Fleet deployment. While Service-led developmental and operational testing performs much of this work, oversight from the Office of the Secretary of Defense test organizations helps ensure warfighter needs are assessed properly and programs are held accountable. This is more important than ever to support the rapid acquisition and fielding of new technologies and systems for our warfighters, and to integrate operational realism into developmental testing phases.

Information Technology Programs

109. What major improvements would you like to see made in the Navy and Marine Corps' development and deployment of major information technology (IT) systems?

It is my understanding that the Department of the Navy has implemented a road map in its Information Superiority Vision and is already taking steps to modify acquisition practices to fully leverage leading edge technologies. If confirmed, I intend to review ongoing efforts to consolidate cloud brokers, develop acquisition teams, and leverage agile development methodologies and partners. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the Department's Chief Information Officer to assess and implement the Department's Information Superiority Vision.

110. If confirmed, how will you encourage process and cultural change in organizations so that they maximize the benefits that new enterprise IT systems can offer in terms of cost savings and efficiency?

Culture change begins with leadership. As Secretary Del Toro highlighted in his Strategic Guidance, leaders in every functional unit and discipline must take action to enforce business systems modernization on an accelerated and integrated path that is sufficiently resourced and supported. If confirmed, I will do my part to ensure leaders are held accountable for contributing to a culture that breaks down barriers and aggressively pursues the best IT systems for our Sailors, Marines, and civilian workforce.

111. What is the appropriate relationship between the Department of the Navy's efforts to implement enterprise IT programs and supporting computing services

and infrastructure to support Department of the Navy missions and efforts being undertaken by the Defense Information Systems Agency?

It is my understanding that the Department of the Navy and Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA) have a very close working relationship today, and if confirmed I will seek to maintain and strengthen that relationship tomorrow. I believe that the Department must adopt and share best practices across the entire information enterprise. There should not be any pride of authorship on enterprise services that satisfy common needs, but neither should the drive for enterprise services limit or compromise mission execution.

112. How will you ensure that appropriate business process reengineering is undertaken and accomplished before initiating new business systems and IT program development and deployment?

I intend to work to improve the effectiveness of our business process reengineering efforts. The Department of the Navy must coordinate organizational change management efforts, policy updates, and reviews of lessons learned. It also must become an integral part of the continuous engineering and update of business capabilities and systems, not a one-time or one-off activity. If confirmed, I would support ongoing efforts.

113. What role will the Department of the Navy's research and testing enterprise play in the development and deployment of Navy and Marine Corps business IT systems?

The Department of the Navy's research enterprise already conducts cutting edge research that benefits Navy and Marine Corps IT business systems. It is my understanding that the Office of Naval Research has sponsored research that reduces the complexity and increases the security of commercial software underpinning new business systems. If confirmed, I will continue to leverage the Navy's R&D community by sharing requirements, evaluating their solutions, piloting capabilities, providing feedback, and transitioning the best solutions to operations.

Investment in Infrastructure

Witnesses appearing before this Committee in the past have testified that the military services under-invest in both the maintenance and recapitalization of facilities and infrastructure compared to private industry standards. Decades of under-investment in Defense Department installations have led to substantial backlogs of facility maintenance activities, created substandard living and working conditions, and made it harder to take advantage of new technologies that could increase productivity. These challenges have been exacerbated by current budget pressures.

114. What is your view of Navy and Marine Corps infrastructure investment?

I understand that the Department of Navy has routinely funded facilities sustainment below the Department of Defense's model. If confirmed, I look to better understand the challenges that the Navy and Marine Corps have balancing investments for current and future infrastructure to meet

the department's urgent readiness needs, future force requirements, and business reforms.

115. If confirmed, what actions, if any, would you propose to increase resources to reduce the backlog and improve Navy and Marine Corps facilities?

If confirmed, I would assess the Department's aging infrastructure and where it makes sense, look for opportunities to consolidate and reduce our footprint. The last two years of pandemic-driven remote work has provided an opportunity to reimagine infrastructure requirements and potentially reduce off-installation leasing requirements. I believe that a fresh examination of the Department's infrastructure needs could potentially reduce total ownership costs. If confirmed, I would work closely with the Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the Marine Corps to develop and fund modern, resilient, and sustainable facilities that meet our warfighter needs.

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

Officials of the Department of Defense, including previous Secretaries of the Navy, have advocated for accession to the Law of the Sea Convention.

116. Do you support U.S. accession to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea?

It is my understanding that the United States Navy could benefit from accession to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea should the Administration and Senate decide to ratify the treaty, since it enshrines freedoms of navigation and overflight that are vital to our national security interests. If confirmed, I will strive to protect these vital national security interests.

117. How would you respond to critics of the Convention who assert that accession is not in the national security interests of the United States?

As the Convention's navigation and overflight provisions are already reflective of customary international law, it is my understanding that acceding to the Convention would serve to strengthen the ability of our Naval assets to avail themselves of the rights and freedoms provided by other States under the Convention and challenge activities by our adversaries that are inconsistent with the Convention's legal framework.

118. In your view, what impact, if any, would U.S. accession to the Law of the Sea Convention have on ongoing and emerging maritime disputes, such as in the South China Sea and in the Arctic?

If the United States were to accede to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, I believe objections to unlawful maritime claims, such as those made by our adversaries in the Arctic and the South China Sea, would be more effective.

Extremism

119. What is your view of the prevalence of extremism within the armed forces?

I believe the vast majority of Sailors and Marines serve with honor and integrity respecting the oath that they took to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. A small number of individuals engaging in extremist activities can pose significant challenges to safety, unit cohesion, and trust in the military. If confirmed, I will support efforts already underway across the Department of the Navy to counter extremist activity and promote a culture of respect, trust, and professionalism.

120. If confirmed, what would you recommend the Secretary of the Navy do to eliminate extremism within the ranks?

If confirmed, I will support the Department of the Navy's efforts already underway to counter extremist activity. Even a small number of individuals engaging in extremist activities may have a disproportionate impact on public safety and trust in the military. Focusing on activities instead of beliefs counters extremism and avoids infringing on constitutionally protected liberties. Leadership plays a significant role in preventing extremism, particularly in the creation and sustainment of command climates grounded in professionalism and respect. Department leadership must discourage extremist activity and hold those engaged in such activity accountable.

Diversity and Inclusion

121. In general, what is your assessment of the diversity of the Department of the Navy military and civilian workforces?

While the Department has made progress in advancing a culture that fully supports diversity, equity, and inclusion, I understand that under-representation remains among senior military and civilian leadership ranks across the enterprise. I also understand that the Department is building the capability to identify under-representation in its military and civilian occupational series. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing efforts with Navy and Marine Corps leadership to develop lawful data-informed solutions to ensure we have the most capable and diverse Department possible.

122. If confirmed, to what extent would you seek to increase diversity and inclusion within the Department of the Navy writ large?

If confirmed, I would seek to advance efforts to increase diversity and inclusion within the Department of the Navy. I will work closely with services and leaders across the Department of the Navy to continuously assess the efficacy and rate of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) capabilities and progress and to leverage authoritative data and other indicators to identify opportunities to advance and lawfully implement DE&I efforts.

123. If confirmed, to what extent would you take actions to ensure that the Navy and Marine Corps, at all levels, especially within the senior officer ranks, reflect the broad diversity of those eligible to serve?

If confirmed, I will continue to emphasize and strengthen the Department of the Navy's commitment to improving diversity, equity, and inclusion and the responsibility of leadership to instill these ideals. I would work closely with leaders of the Navy and Marine Corps to continue to assess under-representation. If confirmed, I will work to ensure these efforts are lawfully advanced and that equal opportunity is provided to all members of the Department of the Navy.

124. If confirmed, to what extent would you seek to increase diversity and inclusion in the Department of the Navy's civilian workforce, especially at the senior General Schedule and Senior Executive Service levels?

If confirmed, I will work with leaders across Department of the Navy to continue development of strategies to optimize talent management systems to improve diversity in the senior civilian ranks. Notwithstanding the ability to hire from external sources, I believe a focus on internal development programs would also provide an effective pool of leadership talent from which to fill these important positions.

125. If confirmed, to what extent would you seek to increase geographical diversity in the Navy and Marine Corps—promoting the accession or enlistment of persons from areas of the country and local communities that are currently underrepresented in the armed forces?

I recognize the importance of generating interest in the military as an employer of choice for today's youth and how valuable geographical diversity is to the Department of the Navy. I am also aware of Service initiatives applying various tools and approaches to increase diversity within their ranks. If confirmed, I will work to foster partnerships with community leaders and other influencers and assess marketing and outreach mechanisms to ensure we recruit diverse talent from all postal codes.

Gender Integrated Training in the Marine Corps

The FY 2020 NDAA requires the Marine Corps to gender integrate basic training at Parris Island within five years, and at San Diego within eight years.

126. In your view, can the Marine Corps fully execute the gender integrated basic training mandate, on the timeline prescribed by the NDAA, while maintaining the readiness and lethality of the Corps?

It is my understanding that the Marine Corps is committed to getting every aspect of gender integrated entry level training right to create a more lethal and diverse force, and is on track to

meet the timelines associated with the recruit training gender integration requirements of the FY20 NDAA. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Commandant to ensure the integration plan remains on track and complies with the FY20 NDAA requirements.

127. What lessons have been learned from the integration progress and effort to date?

I am aware both Marine Corps Recruit Depots (MCRDs Parris Island and San Diego) have integrated their Regimental, Battalion, Company, and Support Instructor Staffs and the previously gender-segregated 4th Recruit Training Battalion at MCRD Parris Island now has male recruits and drill instructors. If confirmed, I look forward to understanding the Marine Corps' lessons learned from both recruit depots' experiences and seeking opportunities to apply best practices.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

128. In your view, to what extent are Department of the Navy policies, programs, and training regarding the prevention of and response to sexual assault in the Navy and Marine Corps adequate and effective?

Sexual assault and other harmful behaviors must never be tolerated. Offenders must be held accountable and Marines, Sailors, and civilians who experience sexual harassment and/or sexual assault should have access to the support they need. I understand that both Services within the Department are unyielding in their pursuit to reduce the prevalence of these behaviors and ensuring comprehensive care to those who seek help. It is my understanding that the Department of the Navy is implementing the approved policy changes recommended by the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military, as well as implementing changes mandated by the FY 22 NDAA. It is also my understanding that the Department's commitment to sexual harassment and sexual assault prevention is comprehensive and includes a heavy focus on strengthening healthy relationships skills across the career cycle to increase respect, trust, communication, esprit de corps, and accountability. There is more to be done and, if confirmed, I will prioritize these programs, ensuring they have the support and resources they need to succeed and ensuring we hold leaders accountable for fostering healthy climates and recognizing and addressing issues early and before they escalate. I will focus on promoting healthy and positive environments, in which Service members and civilians have the opportunity to thrive and ensure there is appropriate accountability for those who cause harm.

129. If confirmed, to what extent would you take actions to increase focus on the *prevention* of sexual assaults in the Navy and Marine Corps?

If confirmed, I will continue the Department's efforts to address risk factors related to sexual assault to include everyday disrespects, sexual harassment, gender discrimination, and other negative behaviors that set the conditions for sexual assault to occur. I will leverage data to identify areas where there is high risk and will ensure we have the appropriate resources aligned to support changes and hold leaders accountable. I will focus on innovative and evidenced-

informed prevention programs that hold the most promise for working in the unique context of the military. The Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military recommended dedicated prevention personnel, and I support that recommendation. I will increase emphasis on addressing emerging problematic behaviors before they escalate. I will continue to prioritize leadership and professional development, promoting the skill-building and proficiencies to foster positive behaviors at all ranks. I will also continue to create policies that support those who come forward and/or need help and ensure accountability for perpetrators of sexual assault.

130. What is your assessment of the Department of the Navy’s implementation of protections against retaliation—most notably social ostracism and reputation damage—against sailors and marines who report sexual assault?

Retaliation and reprisal are detrimental actions that negatively impact the well-being of our people. In addition to the significant harm the individual victim experiences, there is also a loss of trust within the unit and a substantial degradation to its overall mission readiness. The Department of the Navy has a responsibility to prevent retaliation and reprisal and hold leaders accountable when victims’ lives and careers are harmed because they reported sexual assault or harassment. I understand that the Department of the Navy has recently placed greater emphasis on identifying instances of retaliation and reprisal. If confirmed, I intend to continue these efforts and identify other ways to train and educate our total force on how to identify and report instances of retaliation and reprisal so that we can better protect victims’ rights and hold leaders accountable when they fail to do so.

131. The recently enacted National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022 makes significant changes to how the military will investigate and prosecute certain offenses, including sexual assault. What is your understanding of these changes and your role, if confirmed, in implementing these reforms?

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022 directs the Secretaries of the Military Departments to create Offices of Special Trial Counsel within each Military Service. These offices will be led by a Flag/General Officer Judge Advocate who will report directly to the Secretary without intervening authority. The specialized and expert Judge Advocates who staff this independent office will be responsible for the investigation and prosecution of certain covered offenses under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, to include sexual assault, domestic violence, murder, and other serious crimes. Among other responsibilities, these special trial counsel will have the exclusive authority to refer charges alleging these covered offenses to trial by special or general courts-martial. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the Department of the Navy’s Offices of Special Trial Counsel within the United States Navy and United States Marine Corps are staffed and equipped to begin their work upon the statute’s effective date in December 2023.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently found that the timing, amount, and mix of legal training provided to commanders may not be meeting the

commanders' needs.

132. In your view, do military and civilian leaders within the Navy and the Marine Corps have the training, authorities, and resources needed to hold subordinate commanders and supervisors accountable for the prevention of and response to sexual assault and retaliation?

Sexual assault, sexual harassment, and other destructive behaviors undermine unit cohesion and individual readiness. We cannot tolerate these actions within the Department of the Navy. I wholeheartedly support efforts to finally eliminate this destructive scourge.

While I am aware of the GAO report and its findings, as a nominee I have not had the opportunity to thoroughly review the training, authorities, and resources provided to Department of the Navy commanders and civilian leaders to hold subordinate commanders and supervisors accountable for the prevention of and response to sexual assault and retaliation. If confirmed, however, you have my commitment that I will be personally involved on this critical issue.

133. If not, what additional training, authorities, or resources do you believe are needed, and why?

As a nominee, I have not had the opportunity to thoroughly review the training, authorities, and resources provided to Department of the Navy commanders and civilian leaders. If confirmed, however, I will ensure that each of these are examined with an eye toward improvement. If that examination identifies that our leaders need additional training, authorities, or resources to hold subordinates accountable for the prevention of and response to sexual assault and retaliation, I commit to exploring every feasible avenue to do so.

134. If confirmed, to what extent would you take action to improve legal training for commanders?

The commander is responsible for all that occurs within his or her unit and is critical to its ability to execute its assigned mission. Among other things, commanders are charged with enforcing standards to shape a culture of excellence. To ensure their success—and mission accomplishment—the Department of the Navy must provide all commanders with the tools they need. If confirmed, I will study the training provided commanders by the Department of the Navy, including training of legal topics, to identify areas in which it might be improved. If that study identifies training gaps, I will work to improve training for the sake of our commanders and the larger Department of the Navy community.

Child Abuse and Domestic Violence in Military Families

Recent press reports indicate that the number of incidents of child abuse and domestic violence in military families has increased.

135. What is your understanding of the extent of the problem with child abuse in the Navy and Marine Corps, and if confirmed, what actions will you take to address it?

Understanding the unique pressures of the military lifestyle, to include the impact of deployment and extended family separations, is vital to addressing these issues. Child abuse has no place in the Navy and Marine Corps. If confirmed, I will work with Navy and Marine Corps leadership to ensure Sailors, Marines, and their families have access to resources and skill development in order to cope and adjust to military life stressors.

136. What is your understanding of the extent of the problem with domestic violence in the Navy and Marine Corps, and if confirmed, what actions will you take to address it?

Domestic violence has no place in the Navy and Marine Corps. The unique pressures of the military lifestyle, coupled with the youthful demographics of the Services, call for early and frequent engagement by command leadership. If confirmed, I will work with Navy and Marine Corps leadership to ensure Sailors, Marines, and their families have access to resources and skill development that help them to recognize and cope positively with military life stressors.

Suicide Prevention:

The number of suicides in each of the Services continues to concern the Committee. Over the past few years, five sailors assigned to the *U.S.S. George H.W. Bush* committed suicide.

137. What actions has the Navy taken to address suicides in the wake of the *Bush* suicides, and what lessons have been learned?

It is my understanding that the Navy conducted a comprehensive review of the *Bush* suicides. I have not reviewed the report and cannot comment on the individual findings or initiatives. It is my understanding that the Navy and Marine Corps have launched year-long campaigns designed to decrease access to lethal means, eliminate stigma related to help-seeking behaviors, and increase the availability of resources for those seeking support.

If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring the wellness of all Sailors, Marines, and civilians and continue to support the Department's current efforts to reduce unnecessary stressors, encourage individuals to ask for support when they need it, eliminate stigma associated with help-seeking, and reduce barriers to accessing care.

138. If confirmed, what actions would you take to prevent suicides within the Navy and Marine Corps, including within the Navy and Marine Corps reserve components, and within the families of sailors and marines across all Components?

The loss of any Sailor, Marine, or civilian to suicide is one too many. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring the wellness of all Sailors, Marines, and civilians and continue to support the Department's current efforts to encourage individuals to ask for support when they need it, eliminate stigma associated with help-seeking, and reduce barriers to accessing care. I will ensure the Department's efforts align with the President's National Strategy on Reducing Military and Veteran Suicide to address upstream risk and protective factors long before suicide is a consideration. In addition to prioritizing suicide prevention strategies that are evidence-based and grounded in data, if confirmed, I will address the health of our unit climates and hold leaders accountable for setting unit conditions that promote trust, connectedness, esprit de corps, healthy communication, and the safety and well-being of our Sailors and Marines. I will also listen to the valuable insights of our Sailors, Marines, their leaders, and the family members who are often the first to notice suicidal ideations or behaviors in our Service members. I will listen to our providers who care for our Service members and their families and will ensure that resources are available to Service member when and where they are needed.

139. If confirmed, what would you do to enhance the reporting and tracking of suicide among family members and dependents of sailors and marines across all Components?

If confirmed, I will review the reporting and tracking tools used by the Navy and Marine Corps and work with the Services to enhance our use of military and civilian data and ensure we have the appropriate talent to leverage existing data and advance our suicide prevention efforts. Further, if confirmed, I will collaborate with key stakeholders across the Department of Defense and other federal agencies such as the Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as thought leaders in academia, glean best practices, identifying trends, and sharing resources. Collaboration across organizations, industries, and disciplines is critical for approaching these challenges with the novel and diverse perspectives needed to continue to advance suicide prevention approaches.

Family Readiness and Support

140. What do you consider to be the most important family readiness issues for service members and their families?

Family readiness is a key component to ensure Service members can deploy far from home and know that support programs and resources are in place for their families during these absences. Military families serve alongside their Sailors and Marines, and I believe that family readiness is inherently tied to unit readiness and our ability to achieve the National Defense Strategy mission. If confirmed, I will be devoted to programs that support military spouses and families, such as employment initiatives, child care, personal financial readiness, and other life skills development.

141. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to ensure that military families are provided with accessible, high-quality childcare, at an appropriate

cost?

The shortage of accessible, high-quality childcare is a national issue that I believe could impact the readiness and retention of Sailors and Marines. It is my understanding the Navy and Marine Corps are exploring a variety of efforts and initiatives to address the high demand for childcare, to include expanding fee assistance, renovating older facilities, and nurturing community partnerships that may expand capacity. I understand some installations are collaborating with local municipalities as well as local and national agencies to expand daycare. If confirmed, I will examine these efforts and explore other innovative ways to address this critical issue.

142. If confirmed, how would you ensure that sailors and marines with family members with special needs are assigned to duty stations where services are available to address those needs?

I understand the importance of providing families with the necessary resources to thrive. The Exceptional Family Member Program is one such program that supports Sailors and Marines who have military dependents with special needs. It is extremely important that Sailors and Marines are assigned to locations where the required medical services and educational support are available for dependents with special needs. If confirmed, I will work with Navy and Marine Corps leaders to ensure this program is poised to best support Sailors, Marines, and their families.

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

Commanding Officers and Senior Enlisted Advisors enable Sailors and Marines to access resources and support for special needs dependents. Understanding barriers and challenges that military families face in accessing support is essential when considering how we are best postured to overcome them. If confirmed, I will work with Navy and Marine Corps leaders to understand these challenges and potential solutions to ensure our military families with special needs dependents have the support they deserve.

Senior Military and Civilian Accountability

While representative of a small number of individuals in the Department of Defense, reports of abuses of rank and authority by senior military and civilian leaders and failures to perform up to accepted standards are frequently received. Whistleblowers and victims of such abuses often report that they felt that no one would pay attention to or believe their complaints. Accusations of unduly lenient treatment of senior officers and senior officials against whom accusations have been substantiated are also frequently heard.

144. What are your views regarding the appropriate standard of accountability for senior civilian and military leaders of the Department of the Navy?

If confirmed, I will support the Department of the Navy's emphasis on meeting high standards of personal and professional conduct and character development. The Department of the Navy's

most important assets are its personnel. If leaders conduct themselves in a way that demeans, abuses, and strips people of their dignity, the ability of any organization to perform its mission will quickly erode. The success of the Department to meet its mission depends on senior leadership to model positive professional and personal behavior, consistent with its core values of honor, courage, and commitment. If confirmed, I will emphasize accountability across the board, including for senior military and civilian leaders.

145. If confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure that senior leaders of the Navy and Marine Corps are held accountable for their actions and performance?

Accountability for results and personal conduct are the foundation of all successful organizations. If confirmed, I will clearly articulate my vision and expectations for senior leaders, in alignment with the Secretary's vision. I will not tolerate abuse of authority and rank. Such actions are counter to the Department of the Navy's core values of upon which the foundation of trust and leadership is built. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring every allegation of misconduct involving senior leadership is thoroughly investigated. If confirmed, I will be firmly committed to holding senior leaders accountable for their actions and performance as warranted.

Management and Development of the Senior Executive Service

The transformation of the armed forces has brought with it an increasing realization of the importance of efficient and forward-thinking management of senior executives.

146. What is your vision for the management and development of the Navy and Marine Corps senior executive workforce, especially in the critically important areas of acquisition, financial management, and the scientific and technical fields?

The management and continuous development of the senior executive cadre is critical to the Department of the Navy's mission. I believe that the Department of the Navy must invest in the development of its workforce. If confirmed, I will work with the leaders of the Navy and Marine Corps to modernize the talent management process and develop training opportunities and tools in support of continuous learning.

147. Do you believe that the Department of the Navy has the number of senior executives it needs, with the proper skills, to manage the Department into the future?

If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary and ASN(M&RA) to examine the current Senior Executive Service end-strength and its alignment to the Departmental goals and objectives. I will look at recruitment, selection, and development programs, focusing on selecting leaders who possess expert leadership and technical skills as well as strong business acumen to lead with

competence and compassion and deliver results. I will also examine the diversity of the Department's Senior Executive Service cadre to identify and mitigate barriers to underrepresented groups being appointed to these important, highest-level leadership positions.

Relations with Congress

148. What are your views on the state of the relationship between the Department of the Navy and the Senate Armed Services Committee in particular, and with Congress in general?

In general, it is my view that the Department of the Navy has established a good relationship with Members of Congress and their staffs, to include oversight committees such as the Senate Armed Services Committee. However, in my former capacity as the majority clerk for the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, I recognized that there were certainly opportunities where that relationship could be enhanced. If confirmed, I am committed to further strengthening this relationship based on transparency, trust, and accountability.

149. If confirmed, what actions would you take to sustain a productive and mutually beneficial relationship between Congress and the Department of the Navy?

I believe that transparency, trust, and accountability are foundational principals in ensuring the Department of the Navy and Congress have a productive and mutually beneficial relationship. As someone who was directly a part of this relationship in my previous capacity, I fully understood the importance of developing and sustaining a mutually supporting and beneficial relationships to ensure the security of our Nation. Accordingly, if confirmed, you have my personal commitment to building upon these principals and working closely with the Members of Congress and their staffs.

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.

150. 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

151. 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

152. 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

153. 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

154. 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

155. 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

156. 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