

Advance Policy Questions for Admiral John C. Aquilino, USN
Nominee for Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command

Duties and Qualifications

What is your understanding of the duties and functions of the Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM)?

The Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, is responsible for deterring attacks against the United States and its territories, possessions, and bases, to protect Americans and American interests and, if deterrence fails, win our nation's wars. These duties also include expanding security cooperation with our allies, partners, and friends across the Indo-Pacific region and being prepared to defend allies according to mutual defense treaties and agreements.

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

I have been honored to serve my nation for 37 years, and I believe my command experiences as Commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet and U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, and my duties as U.S. Pacific Fleet Director of Operations, and the Director of Operations, Plans and Strategy for the Chief of Naval Operations have prepared me to assume command of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.

Multiple global deployments, service in senior Joint Staff and OPNAV staff billets, and command of a Carrier Strike Group have also prepared me to work collaboratively across the joint force, in line with Department of Defense (DoD) guidance, and closely with our allies and partner nations.

Major Challenges and Priorities

In your view, what are the major challenges that will confront the next USINDOPACOM Commander?

The Indo-Pacific is the most consequential region for America's future, and remains the United States' priority theater with China as our pacing threat as the Chinese Communist Party actively seeks to displace the established rules-based international order. Residing here are four of the five priority security challenges identified by the DoD: China, Russia, North Korea, as well as violent extremist organizations. The Indo-Pacific Region also experiences frequent natural and manmade disasters, the negative impacts of climate change, rapid population growth, drug and human trafficking, and disease and pandemic.

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

If confirmed, I will ensure that forces in USINDOPACOM are both credible and lethal, and complement the administration's focus on deterring through diplomatic, development, and economic means, to ensure our presence and posture defend against China's hegemonic rise. I believe that the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) is the foundational approach to advancing capabilities and capacity in lethality, force design and posture, logistics, exercises and

experimentation, while strengthening our allies and partnerships for an integrated joint force west of the International Date Line (IDL).

If confirmed, what broad priorities would you establish in terms of issues that must be addressed?

If confirmed, my priority will be to execute credible military deterrence against our competitors to maintain stability, peace, and prosperity in the region. Fielding an integrated joint force west of the IDL, interoperability with our regional allies and partners, and evolving the current exercise and experimentation program are essential to maintaining our advantages while increasing doubt in our competitor's ability to meet their objectives through military means.

Chain of Command

In accordance with Title 10, U.S. Code, the President and Secretary of Defense exercise authority, direction, and control of the Armed Forces through two distinct branches of the chain of command.

One branch runs from the President, through the Secretary of Defense, to the combatant commanders for the execution of missions with forces assigned to their commands. For purposes of organizing, training, and equipping forces, the chain of command runs from the President, to the Secretary of Defense, to the Secretaries of the Military Departments.

Do you believe this dual structure provides for clear and effective chain of command?

Yes. I have worked in this dual structure at both Military Service and Joint commands, and I believe it is effective, practical and clearly understood throughout the Department.

If confirmed as a Combatant Commander, on what types of issues and decisions would you coordinate with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and civilian officials within the Department of Defense?

USINDOPACOM performs his duties under the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense. He is directly responsible to the Secretary of Defense for the Command's ability to carry out missions assigned.

If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of Defense, OSD, as well as the Chairman and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to ensure I have the guidance and achieved the alignment to carry out the mission of the Indo-Pacific Command. I will maintain a close relationship with the other functional and geographic combatant commanders to ensure applicable national and defense strategic guidance execution is characterized by mutual support, frequent contact, and productive information exchanges on critical issues.

The successful execution of USINDOPACOM's mission responsibilities also requires coordination with the Service Chiefs. The Service Chiefs are valuable sources of judgment and advice for the combatant commanders. If confirmed, I will provide frank and transparent explanations of my most pressing warfighting needs through direct consultation with each Chief as their staff prepare and develop their budget profiles.

As a subordinate unified commander, the Commander, U.S. Forces Korea, receives missions and functions from USINDOPACOM. I recognize his role as Commander, Combined Forces Command, and United Nations Command and fully support his actions in that sensitive and demanding role.

Among other notable leaders and organizations within DOD who may require close coordination on occasion are the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel, and the Chief of the National Guard Bureau.

National Defense Strategy (NDS)

Does the NDS accurately assess the current strategic environment in the USINDOPACOM area of responsibility (AOR), and if not, what changes need to be made?

The 2018 NDS provides a candid assessment of the strategic environment, the priority it places on preparing for great power competition, the enduring value of alliances and partnerships, and readiness and lethality. As the Department reviews its strategy, adjustments could reinforce U.S. force design and posture requirements to improve our qualitative advantage.

From the USINDOPACOM perspective, what capabilities do you believe the Joint Force needs to prevail in competition with China, as described by the NDS?

USINDOPACOM requires a combination of advanced multi-domain systems that are capable of operating in highly contested environment—including sensors, weapons, and the requisite Command, Control, Communications, Computers & Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) to support those systems.

These systems must be fully integrated across the joint force, and where applicable, fully interoperable with coalition partners. This interoperability provides credible deterrence and maintains a healthy competition with China.

What does "expanding the competitive space," as referenced in the NDS, mean for competition with China?

"Expanding the competitive space" describes the United States' ability to seize the initiative in great power competition by exploiting areas where we possess advantages over our competitors, and identifying where we can work with others in the U.S. interagency and allies and partners to address shared challenges. The United States can expand the competitive space by investing in next-generation capabilities (e.g., long-range, ground-based munitions, space and cyber). Expanding the competitive space also speaks to the need to develop a global, integrated whole-of-government approach toward countering malign Chinese influence across all instruments of national power. This includes working with the U.S. interagency to build partnerships and identify areas of economic, technological, and informational opportunities.

Do you believe additional resources or new authorities for USINDOPACOM are required to support this line of effort associated with "expanding the competitive space"?

PDI, combined with service efforts, provides the initial resources needed to deliver combat credible deterrence, build partner capacity, and field an integrated joint force. If confirmed, I will assess the need for any additional authorities.

In your view, what non-military elements of national power need to be strengthened to effectively compete with China?

Competing with China requires all elements of national power to be strengthened. The Interim National Strategic Security Guidance asserts that we invest in our people, economy, and democratic institutions. We must compete in economic, diplomatic, military, legal, and information spaces to be effective against China.

Force Posture

In your view, is the current U.S. force posture in the Indo-Pacific region sufficient to support our security strategy in the region? How would you restructure the U.S. security posture in the Indo-Pacific best to compete with China, reassure allies and partners, and deter Chinese aggression? Please explain your answer.

Increased persistent presence through forward-based and rotational joint forces inside the first island chain is the most credible way the military can demonstrate our commitment and resolve to competitors, deter unwanted aggression, and assure allies and partners. Forward posture locations should be capable of supporting operations and exercises and projecting combat power. Distributing a forward-deployed, joint force across the battlespace, while balancing lethality and survivability, helps demonstrate the capability, capacity, and design to rapidly and seamlessly transition from competition to crisis or conflict.

How important is a forward basing strategy to the ability of USINDOPACOM to execute its day-to-day mission? What about its operational contingency plans?

Sufficient capability, postured forward to deter with the capacity and readiness to respond should deterrence fail is essential. The force posture recommendations identified in the Section 1251 Independent Assessment provide the foundation for fielding an integrated joint force west of the IDL and a sophisticated improvement in interoperability with our regional allies and partners.

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

The Indo-Pacific geography is expansive and access throughout the region is essential, requiring close associations with our allies and partners. The Department's global posture review represents an opportunity to focus on a broad range of basing options and alternatives for persistent presence of forward-based and rotational joint forces west of the IDL.

In the event of a contingency, do you have any concerns about the timing and readiness of follow-on forces arriving in USINDOPACOM to meet operational plans? If yes, what are they, and how can they be resolved?

Being ready and on-time are required to respond to any contingency. I do have concerns about the manning, training, and equipping of all of our follow-on forces. Credible deterrence is based on a highly trained, properly equipped, quick-response and surge force. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for the necessary forward-deployed forces and the associated readiness to meet our nation's most pressing needs. I will also continue to advocate for improvements in strategic sea and airlift to reduce the timeline necessary for surge forces to arrive in the theater.

How do you view the relative value of permanent versus rotational forces in the USINDOPACOM AOR?

Permanent, forward-based forces provide the most visible sign of U.S. resolve and commitment to supporting regional peace and stability. Rotational forces allow us to maintain a high level of readiness without sacrificing the ability to respond quickly and effectively to contingencies. USINDOPACOM requires a mix of rotational and permanently stationed forces and a recalibrated force posture to be able to mass effects without the vulnerabilities associated with fixed forces' concentration.

How does the planned relocation of U.S. forces from Okinawa to Guam and other locations in the Pacific align with U.S. security objectives in the USINDOPACOM AOR?

The Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI) strengthens our alliance with Japan and maintains the right permanent forces that enhance our deterrence and interoperability, while ensuring the joint force is prepared to fight and win should deterrence fail. It allows the joint force to disperse and enable quicker responses to areas outside Okinawa. Additionally, the relocation to Guam also provides increased training opportunities with allies and partners.

Joint Force Requirements

What, if any, are the major U.S. capability or capacity gaps you assess in the USINDOPACOM theater that are needed to enhance deterrence against Chinese aggression?

To adequately compete and defend American interests, the most critical are those that address the gaps in force protection, homeland defense, joint force lethality, long range fires, ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance), training, and logistics enablers. Additionally, we must enable modernized integration and information sharing across all domains with our allies and partners.

What capability and/or capacity shortfalls in the current Joint Force present the most significant challenge to addressing the broader range threats in the Indo-Pacific?

The tyranny of distance from CONUS to forward operating locations in the western Pacific makes sustainability the biggest challenge. This requires a sophisticated balance of distribution capacity to sustain the joint force. Access in the First and Second Island Chains offer is needed to support crisis and contingency operations in establishing dispersal locations, airfield repair capabilities, C4I (Command, Control, Communications, Computers & Intelligence), munitions storage, mobility procession, and fuel storage. We must also improve interactions, coordination, and command and control with our allies and partners.

Which programs, in your assessment, are the highest priorities for mitigating current and emerging warfighting capability and/or capacity shortfalls in the Joint Force?

If confirmed, and as outlined in the PDI, ensuring the protection of our force, fielding an integrated joint fires network, interoperability with allies and partners, as well as improved ISR and logistics enablers would be my highest priorities.

The NDS specifically mentions challenges posed by robust anti-access, area-denial capabilities (A2/AD). What would be your approach to overcoming these challenges in the USINDOPACOM AOR?)

If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for investment in technologies that negate our competitor's A2AD capabilities. Additionally, adding long-range offensive networked fires would put any potential adversaries on the defensive. We must be able to operate in contested space at the time and place of our choosing.

Pacific Deterrence Initiative

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2021 (FY 2021) authorized \$2.2 billion for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) to support the stability and security of the region and deter Chinese aggression.

In your view, is PDI a useful tool to improve U.S. posture in the Indo-Pacific?

Yes, PDI investments will improve our posture and it is a powerful tool in identifying the resources necessary to meet identified operational requirements in the region.

PDI investments will have an effect on deterring our adversaries' decision calculus while reassuring our allies and partners that the United States is a reliable partner, focused on ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific. PDI also encourages other like-minded nations to be net-providers for regional security, working multilaterally to reinforce the security architecture the region has benefited from for over 75 years.

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

Defending Guam as U.S. territory, including the infrastructure to manage an integrated joint force west of the international date line, should be PDI's number one priority. This includes establishing a distributed force posture, establishing a Mission Partner Environment (MPE), and advancing Pacific Multi-Domain Training and Experimentation Capability (PMTEC) to modernize our ranges.

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

Yes. The funding profiles provided for FY21 in the 1253 Independent Assessment and the most recent 1251 for FY22 outline the funding requirements through FY27. Dedicated, sustained resources will effectively support NDS initiatives to provide credible deterrence.

Missile Defense

How would you assess the threat to U.S. forces and bases from Chinese and North Korean missile forces and our ability to address such threats? In your assessment, have U.S. investments, concepts of operations, and posture shifts sufficiently addressed this threat?

Although the ballistic missile threat facing U.S. interests in Northeast Asia remains significant, we are well postured to protect against existing and emerging DPRK threats. Additionally, U.S. Forces Korea continues to benefit from the significant investment and performance enhancements to their current ballistic missile defense systems.

However, the ballistic and cruise missile systems of China and the development of hypersonic weapons increase the risk and cause challenges. Continued investment in integrated air-missile defense is imperative as we seek to proactively defend against such threats while simultaneously integrating offensive and defensive fires. Discussions regarding concepts of operations and posture shift require discussion at a higher classification level.

Do you assess that rotational missile defense capabilities such as THAAD, Patriot, and Aegis ships, that need to be deployed to protect major combat projection platforms such as air bases are adequate to deter Chinese aggression given anticipated indication and warning timelines?

No rotational missile defense capabilities are currently postured that will adequately address the threats we face from China, and a more robust defensive posture is the most pressing priority for the Indo-Pacific. The People's Liberation Army Rocket Forces have a growing inventory of medium and intermediate-range ballistic missiles that can threaten U.S. bases in the region, including those in South Korea, Japan, and Guam, as well as naval forces operating inside the Second Island Chain. Additionally, China is constantly evolving its missile technology, increasing its range, survivability, accuracy, and lethality.

What additional steps, if any, would you recommend to address the emerging threat that highly maneuverable hypersonic glide vehicles pose to U.S. and allied forces across the region?

The Hypersonic Glide Vehicle threat poses a serious threat to the U.S. and Allied forces in the region and we require a near-term initial defense capability to meet this challenge. If confirmed, my aim is to work with the DoD to develop capabilities, including survivable and resilient space-based sensors to detect hypersonic threats and enable ground and sea-based defenses.

Contested Logistics

Over the last several years, DOD and USINDOPACOM have conducted or sponsored several studies on contested mobility and logistics which have resulted in more than 50 recommendations. However, the GAO recently found that DOD has failed to implement many of these recommendations. As a result, DOD and USINDOPACOM may be missing an opportunity to leverage existing knowledge on mobility challenges in contested environments and increase resilience for major conflicts as envisioned in the National Defense Strategy and as part of the Joint Warfighting Concept. Given the "tyranny of

distance" in the Pacific, there are significant challenges specifically related to energy and munitions requirements in a contested environment, some of which could be mitigated by making targeted investments and operational energy improvements to both military platforms and installations.

If confirmed, how will you implement the multitude of recommendations and take actions necessary to decrease the logistics vulnerabilities in a contested environment?

Our efforts to improve our ability to sustain the joint force must build off our efforts to move toward a more distributed force posture and increase the locations and availability for naval and air forces to rearm and refuel during exercises and access these locations during contingencies. If confirmed, I will work to implement appropriate recommendations of the report to maximize key logistics enablers.

How will you implement recommendations to make significant operational energy improvements throughout USINDOPACOM?

If confirmed, I will work with the Services, Combatant Commands, the Joint Staff, and OSD to enhance Indo-Pacific energy resilience. I support the Secretary of Defense's focus on investing in energy RDT&E and incorporating energy resilience into emerging joint operational concepts through exercises, war-games, modeling and simulation, and other means. An ever-increasing energy demand, currently based on fossil fuels, is our greatest logistics distribution challenge and directly impacts force effectiveness. The pressures on fuel requirements, in particular, are a significant concern and I will review the operational risks and ongoing planning efforts related to sustaining the joint force and identify specific actions we must take to address our shortfalls.

Information Operations

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

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

With coordinated Information Operations across the Interagency, the information environment can be an asymmetric advantage for the U.S. I understand the Department is updating the 2016 Strategy for Operations in the Information Environment. A posture review will inform this update of capabilities, the current defense strategy, and an Irregular Warfare Annex designation of information operations as a joint function. If confirmed, I will support the development and implementation of this strategy and ensure the Command's efforts are appropriately coordinated and appropriately aligned with the Interagency.

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

DoD efforts throughout the information environment cross traditional department and agency lines. USINDOPACOM has strong relationships with the Department of State, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), U. S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). If confirmed, I intend to sustain these relationships and make information operations a force multiplier.

What organization with the U.S. Government do you assess would have the overall lead to integrate information operations during day-to-day competition below the level of armed conflict in the Indo-Pacific in order to defend U.S. interests against malign influence activities?

As the U.S. Government leverages DoD information operations capabilities in day-to-day competition against malign influence activities, the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance has identified the U.S. State Department as the lead in shaping and driving information operations across the U.S. government. My assessment is DoD information operations require effective interagency coordination in order to elevate diplomacy and other whole-of-government approaches to defend U.S. interests. If confirmed, I will work with DoD to complement civilian departments and agencies with critical roles and responsibilities to engage the public domain and protect against malign influence activities.

Does DOD and USINDOPACOM have sufficient authorities and resources to conduct information operations effectively? If not, what additional authorities and resources would you request, if confirmed?

At this point in time, I am not currently aware of new authorities required, but I understand that an Information Operations posture review is being conducted pursuant to the FY20 NDAA. If confirmed, I will regularly assess our authorities, resource availability and allocation, and strategic alignment to prioritize essential information operations.

China

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

The United States and China have different visions for the future that put us in a competitive relationship. Theirs is in stark contrast to our free and open vision centered on democratic values, and while the United States can cooperate with China on issues such as North Korea, counterpiracy, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief, etc., it is increasingly evident that China wants to shape a world aligned with its authoritarian model inconsistent with the rules-based international order.

What is your assessment of the current state of U.S.-China military-to-military relations? What do you believe should be the objectives of U.S.-China military-to-military dialogue?

What are the limitations on this kind of dialogue? Consistent with Interim National Security Strategic Guidance and DOD guidance, I will continue to seek a constructive, stable, results-oriented defense relationship with the PRC that reduces the risk of misperception and miscalculation. The limitation to this type of dialogue is that military-to-military dialogue's

effectiveness depends on both militaries approaching a security dialogue in a candid, transparent, and genuinely willing manner.

What do you believe are the objectives of China's steady increase in defense spending and its overall military modernization program? In what technology areas are you most concerned about the erosion of U.S. advantages?

China's military modernization is a critical component in China's overall strategy to achieve "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" by 2049. While China has clearly articulated this, there are indications this strategy is being reassessed and may be accelerated to achieve its ends within this decade. This strategy, designed to displace U.S. access and influence, includes economic, political, social, and military efforts to expand China's national power, push its governance system, and revise the international order by changing the value system of international norms, rules, and laws. PRC leaders have repeatedly stated that transforming the PLA into a "world-class" military is an essential element of this strategy.

Today, every domain – air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace – is contested. The pace at which the PRC is fielding advanced capabilities is accelerating at an alarming rate, and working hard to exploit any perceived vulnerabilities to gain an economic, diplomatic, and military advantage while remaining below the threshold of conflict. Our advances in AI, offensive fires, directed energy, hypersonics, and quantum computing must keep pace.

What is your assessment of China's militarization and other aggressive activities in the South and East China Seas? What challenges do these activities pose to USINDOPACOM's current operations and operational plans?

China's militarization in the region and aggressive activities creates additional contested space, endangering free flow of trade, limiting freedom of navigation, threatening the sovereignty of our allies and partners, and undermining regional stability. This aggressive posturing challenges operations and maneuver, extends their influence, and ultimately challenges U.S. presence and credibility in the region.

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

China's expansive infrastructure projects are designed to expand its influence worldwide and establish a more robust overseas logistics and basing infrastructure for the PLA. Greater access to foreign ports and airfields enable China to pre-position the logistics support necessary to sustain military operations abroad, including naval deployments in the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean Sea, and the Atlantic Ocean. A global PLA logistics network will enable Beijing to project and sustain military power at greater distances from China, interfere with U.S. military operations, and provide flexibility to support offensive operations against the United States.

What is your assessment of the strategic and military implications of China's Belt and Road Initiative? For the United States? For countries in the USINDOPACOM AOR?

One Belt, One Road provides the PLA an opportunity to expand its global reach by gaining access to foreign air and maritime port facilities and foreign economic markets. The One Belt, One Road initiative produces only ONE winner – China, in their effort to gain broader access and influence. For the United States, this means loss of access, influence and credibility in the region. For our allies and partners in the region, this means pressuring nations to deny U.S. forces basing, transit, or operational and logistical support, thereby making it more challenging for the United States to preserve international orders and norms.

The smaller number of nuclear weapons possessed by China relative to the United States and Russia is often cited as an impediment to nuclear arms control talks with China. What do you think could motivate China to participate in nuclear arms control negotiations in a genuine and meaningful way?

As China strives to become a nuclear power with parity, I believe it is increasingly critical that Chinese leaders take the responsible approach and begin arms control negotiations. Active participation in arms control negotiations is not simply about placing limits on nations but gaining more significant insights, removing ambiguity about potential competitor capabilities, increasing confidence, and reducing the potential for miscalculation. Pressure from the international community would motivate China's participation in arms control talks.

Recent public reports point to updated satellite imagery which indicates China is increasing the pace of its nuclear force modernization and expansion.

This acceleration comes less than a year after the Defense Intelligence Agency assessed China would at least double the size of its nuclear arsenal by 2030. Do you believe China sees nuclear parity with the United States as in its interests? What do you believe would be the impact on regional and strategic stability if China were to achieve such a goal?

As China strives to achieve conventional parity, it is logical to expect China's ambition to become a "world class" military will include a similar approach to its nuclear forces. Three "at-parity" nuclear powers would complicate global deterrence.

Taiwan

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

China continues to pressure Taiwan through increased air and maritime operations across centerline of the Taiwan Strait. The United States can help prevent miscalculation by sustaining a forward deployed, credible deterrence force, demonstrating continued support of the Taiwan Relations Act, to include military sales, deepening ties with democratic Taiwan, and advocating for like-minded allies and partners to inspire Taiwan's confidence in cross-strait relations.

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

What do you believe should be the priorities for U.S. military assistance to Taiwan? Do you think Taiwan is making appropriate investments in its defensive capabilities and if not, what changes would you recommend?

The military threat to Taiwan is increasing. The PLA continues to field a broad array of advanced weapons and systems as part of ongoing force modernization specifically intended to achieve decisive overmatch against Taiwan. Taiwan is committed to strengthening its reserve forces, and I am encouraged by its continued funding of foreign and indigenous acquisition programs, as well as near-term training and readiness. If confirmed, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command will continue to advise Taiwan on the military's capabilities, interoperability, readiness, and professional development through security cooperation and foreign military sales in accordance with the Taiwan Relations Act. Taiwan should prioritize acquisition of asymmetric systems that are highly mobile, distributable and lethal to enable Taiwan to defend themselves against attack.

Some have argued that the time has come to explicitly state that the United States would respond militarily to any Chinese use of force against Taiwan as a means to deter such actions. In your view, what would be the benefits and risks of such a policy change?

The United States maintains its longstanding commitments as outlined in the Three Communiqués, the Taiwan Relations Act, and the Six Assurances. We will continue to assist Taiwan in maintaining a sufficient self-defense capability.

If confirmed, I would be open to conversations with the Secretary of Defense to understand the risks and rewards of a potential policy change to ensure our efforts are supporting Taiwan and contributing to our ultimate objective to maintain peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and within the region.

Republic of Korea

What is your assessment of the U.S.-South Korea security relationship? What measures, if any, would you take to improve this security relationship?

The U.S.-Republic of Korea alliance is ironclad and serves as the linchpin of peace and security on the Korean peninsula. Our partnership continues to grow by promoting economic cooperation, mitigating threats to regional stability, and fulfilling our commitments to other allies and partners in the region. The mutual benefits derived from this alliance given today's security challenges are enduring and I believe it important that the United States facilitates an increased role for the ROK, commensurate with its economic status and influence, in as many multilateral venues as possible. If confirmed, I will work hard to maintain close contact with USFK and ROK military and civilian leadership to further develop this essential security partnership.

Do you believe the transfer of wartime operational control from the U.S. to the Republic of Korea should be conditions-based? If confirmed, what threshold requirements for transfer of control would you establish?

Both the U.S. and ROK are fully committed to a conditions-based OPCON transition and continue to work toward that end. The requirements for transfer are outlined in the 2015 Conditions-based OPCON Transition Plan (COTP) and the 2018 update to COTP (Change One). If confirmed, I intend to fully comply with the existing plan and ensure the alliance is ready and well-prepared for the transition when that time comes.

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

The U.S. and ROK have recently reached an agreement in principle of a new six-year defense sharing Special Measures Agreement (SMA). This year, the ROK agreed to contribute over one billion dollars, the highest increase since 2004, with subsequent year increases pegged to the annual percent increase in the ROK defense budget. Overall, I believe this new SMA represents the ROK's pledge to provide a fair defense sharing of the cost of the U.S. presence in South Korea. The contributions to the alliance are not limited to cost-sharing alone. The ROK forces have served with us in Iraq and Afghanistan, continue to support the U.N. Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) enforcement mission, and execute counter-piracy operations near the Strait of Hormuz.

Do you believe South Korea is investing appropriately in its defensive capabilities?

The ROK continues to demonstrate its commitment to enhancing its conventional deterrence through the development and procurement of modern and interoperable capabilities, some of which are core capabilities to support the conditions-based wartime operational control transition. Their defense expenditures remain the highest among our allies and partners as a percentage of their GDP. Although the ROK continues to acquire significant U.S. systems and platforms worth billions of dollars, it also prioritizes a substantial share of its resources to develop indigenous defense capabilities, industry, and export. Even with the introduction of their indigenous capabilities, both the U.S. and ROK are committed to maintaining interoperability, so the indigenous investments contribute to the combined deterrence and defense posture.

North Korea

What is your assessment of the strategic and military risks of a potential conflict with North Korea?

There are both enormous strategic and military risks, and enormous costs associated with a potential conflict on the Korean Peninsula, despite efforts to lower tensions. The country has taken no meaningful steps toward denuclearization, despite promising signs of de-escalation in 2018. Kim Jong Un continues to advance both his conventional and strategic capabilities, recently parading new tanks, rockets, and missiles. Risk identification, management, and mitigations are integral parts of all military planning efforts, and this is no exception. If confirmed, I will make regular assessments of the risk and report that risk to the National Command Authority. Internal to USINDOPACOM, I will simultaneously pursue efforts to reduce the risk to U.S. strategic objectives and U.S. military forces should deterrence fail. As a critical element of these objectives, I will also continue the work of previous commanders on noncombatant evacuation operation (NEO) planning as the Korean Peninsula situation develops.

In your assessment, what changes, if any, to U.S. force posture and activity in the USINDOPACOM AOR would improve U.S. deterrence against North Korea?

Our current posture and presence in the ROK provides for the ROK's mutual defense while deterring North Korean aggression against the U.S. and our allies and partners. I support bilateral efforts to modernize forces, equipment, and enduring locations to ensure combat credible forces

in the ROK, particularly those that counter the DPRK's asymmetric capabilities. We must also continue to explore, improve, and resource our missile defense capabilities. Our airborne ISR allocation is less than what we require to support the theater's multifaceted problem-set and to enhance deterrence by detection; furthermore, development of the Combined/Joint Multi-Purpose Range Complex (CJMPRC) would provide air and maneuver space for a realistic coalition, joint, live-fire exercises for alliance armed services. In sum, a modernized, well-trained force positioned on the Korean Peninsula, paired with a credible, rapid reinforcement capability assigned and postured forward in the region, offers the greatest deterrent effect vis-à-vis the DPRK.

What is your assessment of the Joint Force's ability to secure North Korean weapons of mass destruction sites in the event of a contingency? What capability and/or capacity shortfalls present the most significant challenge to executing such an operation?

Without transparency and clarity into the North Korea's nuclear program, it is difficult to assess our ability to secure North Korean weapons of mass destruction sites in the event of a contingency. If confirmed, I will review the major operational plans, contingency plans, and associated execution orders outlining the joint force's ability to counter and secure North Korean weapons of mass destruction. I will work with our regional partners and allies—including Australia, Japan and the Republic of Korea—as well as with partners across the Interagency—to include the State Department and Department of Energy—to forge a comprehensive approach to addressing the North Korean nuclear, weapons of mass destruction, missile, and proliferation threats.

What is your assessment of the Joint Force's ability to conduct a noncombatant evacuation of approximately 250,000 U.S. citizens from South Korea in the event of a contingency? What capability and/or capacity shortfalls present the most significant challenge to executing such an operation?

Conducting noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO) in South Korea is highly challenging and dependent on the level of support, amount of warning and resources from South Korea and Japan. Inside South Korea, we are dependent upon their transportation assets to move noncombatant evacuees (NCEs) from assembly points to relocation centers and to air/seaports of departure from the peninsula. Still, if there are any delays in movements off the Korean Peninsula, USFK may be challenged to provide additional support to NCEs awaiting transportation. In Japan, we are dependent on their capacity and capability to receive, shelter and support NCEs as a temporary safe haven. Synchronization and coordination for access and use of these resources requires constant engagement with our partners in both countries.

In your opinion, will sanctions alone lead to the denuclearization of North Korea? If not, what other incentives or disincentives could help lead to better outcomes?

I do not believe sanctions alone will lead to the denuclearization of North Korea. Still, economic sanctions, combined with diplomacy and UNSCR enforcement, should continue to be applied to convince the regime to return to meaningful negotiations. I understand an interagency North Korea policy review is currently underway, and the discussion of incentives or disincentives will undoubtedly be one component of the review. I believe that a robust force posture throughout

the region to ensure the United States engages North Korea from a position of strength would be essential.

Japan

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

The U.S.-Japan alliance is the cornerstone of regional security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. I view our military-to-military relationship with Japan as stronger than ever. If confirmed, I will continue to work to strengthen the U.S.-Japan defense relationship.

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

The U.S. and the Government of Japan (GoJ) remain closely aligned on North Korea, long-term strategic competition with China, and maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific. Our alignment has led to closer coordination and cooperation in addressing both current and future security challenges, while also expanding U.S.-Japan security relationship to new domains such as cyber and space.

The Japan-South Korea relationship remains strained due to historical and cultural issues. While Japan and South Korea must work through these issues on their own, I am concerned that others may try to exploit the situation and drive a wedge between the United States and either ally.

What steps, if any, do you believe Japan ought to take to improve its capability and capacity to deter and, if necessary, respond to North Korean aggression? What about Chinese aggression?

The GoJ, working through its self-defense forces, must continue to invest in improvements to interoperable air and missile defense, air dominance, maritime security, and ISR capabilities. As Japan improves its capability and capacity, we must continue to execute the Joint Exercise Program and operate together frequently.

Given the buildup of Chinese ballistic and advanced cruise missiles, how important is it for Japan to be able to defend itself against such missiles and do you see potential to reinvigorate U.S.-Japan cooperative missile defense efforts?

Japan's ability to defend itself is vital both for its own security and to enhance maneuver and positional advantages of U.S. and allied forces in the region. Cooperation in this critical capability will inevitably strengthen our deterrence. If confirmed, I intend to work with my Japanese counterparts to improve discrimination capabilities, sensors for detection, and the ability to defend against hypersonic weapons.

Current plans call for the Marine Corps Air Station's closure on Okinawa after the construction of a Futenma Replacement Facility (FRF) at Camp Schwab.

What is your opinion of the prospects for the successful construction of the Futenma Replacement Facility at Camp Schwab on Okinawa?

While the project has experienced delays, I believe both governments remain committed to completing the FRF and DPRI. Land returns to Japan remain dependent upon the successful relocation from Futenma to Camp Schwab.

Is the cost-sharing arrangement between the United States and Japan to pay for the relocation of U.S. forces from Okinawa to Guam and the costs associated with the continued presence of U.S. forces in Japan equitable and appropriate? Why or why not?

I believe that Japan is contributing in accordance with our agreement to relocate forces from Okinawa to Guam. Besides paying a significant portion of the cost of the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan, the GoJ took the unprecedented step of funding construction for U.S. forces on Guam—equaling more than \$3 billion. The GoJ is also proceeding with land acquisition in Western Japan to construct a new installation to support U.S. Field Carrier Landing Practice operations and has extended the current Host Nation Support agreement by one year to March 31, 2022.

What is your understanding of the ability of U.S. forces planned to be transferred from Okinawa to Guam to be able to train for full-spectrum combat, and are there mitigation plans to address potential training shortfalls?

It is my understanding that training sites in Guam and its neighboring islands will be adequate to meet training requirements for the Marines who will be stationed there. The Marines would also benefit from training opportunities with implementation of the Pacific Multi-Domain Test and Experimentation Capability (PMTEC). If confirmed, I will work to better understand any future needs and plans to address potential training shortfalls.

Australia

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

Australia is a reliable friend and ally with a 100-year history of supporting the United States in every major global conflict. The “unbreakable” alliance is key to promoting regional and global security and anchors Southeast Asia and the South Pacific Islands. This Alliance is key to promoting regional peace, security, and prosperity, and is vital to advancing multilateral dialogues.

With regard to priorities interoperability between U.S. and Australian forces is a top priority for both countries. If confirmed, USINDOPACOM will have an essential role in building greater interoperability with Australia through engagements, training and exercises to ensure combined readiness between our forces.

What is your assessment of Australia's relations with China? What impact does that relationship have on the U.S.-Australia alliance?

Australia’s relationship with China has been strained due to Australia’s opposition to China's illegal and unfounded territorial and maritime claims in the South China Sea, its investigation into the COVID-19 outbreak, their ban on the Chinese made 5G network, and China’s

crackdowns in Hong Kong, China has exacted economic retribution against Australia in response. Australia has articulated its belief in the importance of transparency, the maintenance of a rules-based international order, and adherence to international norms. Strains in Australia's economic, trade, and diplomatic relations with China are unlikely to affect Australia's close and longstanding relationship with the U.S.

India

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

The U.S.-India military relationship is at the best level in years, and we continue to experience growth in both bilateral and multilateral engagements and exercises, high profile joint operations, and an increased number of senior level engagements. Recent operations by the PRC have helped highlight the threat to regional security that China's actions pose to all nations, including India. The conclusion of enabling agreements over the past several years has allowed us to operate more closely, and we are able to work together more than ever before to secure a free and open Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, my priorities would be to maintain the momentum that has been generated by my predecessor and build info sharing and security agreements, support India's defense transformation efforts through exchanges and exercises, continue to encourage India's acquisition of U.S. equipment to promote interoperability, and increase military-military contacts throughout standing dialogues, senior leader contacts, and working-level exchanges.

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

The mistrust between China and India is at an all-time high. In addition to the rupture of bilateral relations as a result of the LAC skirmish, and India is deeply suspicious of PRC activities as a part of the One Belt One Road initiative (OBOR). China's posture initiatives in both Gwadar, Pakistan, and Hambantota, Sri Lanka, also cause India concern. As is the case across the Indo-Pacific, PRC's lack of transparency and duplicitous actions in the Indian Ocean region threaten stability and security in the region.

If confirmed, what steps, if any, would you take to ensure the close coordination of U.S. security policy with respect to South Asia—much of which is in the CENTCOM AOR?

If confirmed, I will continue to coordinate across the combatant command boundaries to synchronize and maximize opportunities for expanded cooperation. Recognizing that security in South Asia is influenced by events across the Indian Ocean Region—a diverse ethno-linguistic, political, historic, and economic region with 24 African, Middle Eastern, and Asian nation-states—my coordination would include both CENTCOM and AFRICOM.

Philippines

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

In this 70th year of our Mutual Defense Treaty, the Republic of the Philippines remains a strategic ally. If confirmed, I intend to pursue deeper military cooperation and integration as we work with the Government of the Philippines to seek full reversal of the Visiting Forces Agreement termination process.

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

I believe the United States' primary goals should be to strengthen the alliance with the Philippines and help build and maintain the capabilities of its Armed Forces to deter unwanted aggression against their sovereignty. It is also in the United States' national interest to encourage the Philippines to develop its counterterrorism capabilities, improve its maritime domain awareness, and lead multilateral approaches toward greater peace and stability across the region.

What is your assessment of the relationship between the Philippines and China? What impact does that relationship have on the U.S.-Philippines alliance?

Bilateral relations between the Philippines and China have increased since 2016 with the implementation of new government policies intended to diversify the Philippines foreign partners and gain outside investment to include One Belt One Road initiatives. While the Philippines continues to seek closer economic ties with China, rival territorial claims in the South China Sea complicate bilateral relations. The Philippines' growing economic outreach to China has complicated its longstanding partnership with the U.S. That said, we continue to honor our Mutual Defense Treaty, a key tenant of our Indo-Pacific strategy.

What is your assessment of the effectiveness of the U.S. military assistance being provided to the Philippines armed forces in its fight against violent extremist groups?

U.S. Military Assistance to the Philippine Security Forces is very effective in directly confronting ISIS in Southeast Asia. This assistance enhances the Government of the Philippines' ability to build and maintain internal stability, allowing for allocation of more resources to counter threats to its national sovereignty. USSOF assistance specifically to the Armed Forces of the Philippines Counter-Violent Extremist Organization efforts has provided a high return on a relatively small investment.

What areas, if any, do you see that have potential to increase defense cooperation with the Philippines armed forces?

If confirmed, I look to increase the scope and depth of bilateral exercises to address training and readiness requirements with a renewed focus on territorial defense, counter-terrorism, and maritime domain awareness, and cyber engagement opportunities. The Armed Forces of the Philippines investment in high-quality U.S. defense equipment provides additional training opportunities. A General Security of Military Information Agreement between the U.S. and the Philippines will also provide increased opportunities for information sharing. Continued emphasis on the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement projects will improve U.S. force posture in the region and better position response time for humanitarian assistance/disaster recovery (HA/DR) events.

Thailand

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

The United States and Thailand alliance is America's oldest in the Indo-Pacific and has the opportunity to expand as outlined in the U.S. Thai co-signed Joint Vision Statement 2020. If confirmed, I intend to continue pursuing interoperability efforts as Thailand modernizes its force and to take full advantage of opportunities provided by the reinstatement of international military education and training funding.

What is your assessment of the relationship between Thailand and China? What impact does that relationship have on the U.S.-Thailand relationship?

Thailand's cooperation with China has notably increased since the coup of 2014. China pursues influence through military cooperation and economic investment in Thailand to include OBOR initiatives. In terms of military cooperation, China continues to lobby Thailand's Defense Ministry to procure various military equipment—including main battle tanks, armored personnel carriers, and submarines. China and Thailand have also broadened bilateral training and exercises. Thailand is careful to remain neutral amid the intensifying great power competition in the region and prefers to maintain a traditional balanced foreign policy approach and remains a vital U.S. ally, thanks to its 200-year relationship with the United States.

Vietnam

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

The U.S.-Vietnam security relationship has advanced exponentially since the 2016 lifting of the lethal weapons ban. The 2018 and 2020 aircraft carrier visits were historic milestones that were unimaginable just five years ago. Both sides continue to take progressive steps towards building a sustainable defense partnership that includes major defense sales and technology transfers. Vietnam has been vocal in its support for freedom of navigation and overflight, as well as the development of a legally binding Code of Conduct for the South China Sea. Vietnam's demonstrated commitment to stand up for the international order, especially in the face of coercive behavior by China, deserves our support.

If confirmed, I would prioritize areas of common interests, such as War Legacy issues, maritime security, maritime domain awareness, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief. I would also support new areas of cooperation, such as cyber, defense trade, and collaboration between joint forces.

What is your assessment of the relationship between Vietnam and China? What impact does that relationship have on the U.S.-Vietnam relationship?

Vietnam balances both economic cooperation with China and security cooperation with the United States. Vietnam is concerned over territorial disputes in the South China Sea, increasing People's Liberation Army influence in Laos and Cambodia, and impacts in the Mekong Delta

region. Due to these concerns, Vietnam is the most vocal ASEAN country in multilateral forums, supporting rules-based international order, and Freedom of Navigation, and the binding code of conduct in alignment with U.S. values.

Indonesia

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

U.S.-Indonesia mil-to-mil relations continue to progress and mature. In 2020, the United States and Indonesia agreed to execute over 220 bilateral activities focused on five areas of cooperation: maritime defense, institution building, peacekeeping operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and counter-transnational threats, making the United States Indonesia's largest bilateral defense partner. If confirmed, we will continue to prioritize events that support these five focus areas and look for additional engagement opportunities by all components.

What is your assessment of the relationship between Indonesia and China? What impact does that relationship have on the U.S.-Indonesia relationship?

Indonesia has a significant economic relationship with China and simultaneously balances its security relationship with the United States. Territorial disputes in the South China Sea, Chinese operations in Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and safety concerns for Indonesian fishermen generate friction between Indonesia and China. These identified areas of concern have provided opportunities for cooperation as Indonesia seeks increased engagements and defense purchases from the United States.

Strengthening Alliances and Attracting New Partners

In your view, how can USINDOPACOM more effectively cultivate multilateral cooperation in the AOR?

The regional network of alliances and partnerships is a strategic advantage that our competitors cannot match and critical to maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific.

If confirmed, increased multilateral events will be a priority. Implementation of PDI, specifically the Mission Partner Environment, would provide opportunities for increased multilateral collaboration, planning, information sharing, and operations.

What is your assessment of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue between the United States, Japan, Australia, and India? How can such efforts be strengthened, and what do you view as the challenges to doing so?

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is an important venue for four Indo-Pacific democracies with common values to address shared interests. Addressing political, economic, and development opportunities will inform security priorities and increase the likelihood for more collaborative mil-to-mil activity among the four nations.

Challenges to the Quad could come in information-space activity by any nation threatened by the Quad's objectives.

In your view, what are our strategic objectives in building the capacities of partner nations in the USINDOPACOM AOR? How would you prioritize the types of programs or activities that should receive support under these security assistance authorities?

The strategic objectives in building the capacities of partner nations are to build relationships, enable our partners to promote stability in the region, and ensure access and influence.

If confirmed, I would prioritize building partnership capacity authorities to support security cooperation initiatives or activities, and bolstering our partners' land, maritime, and air forces to resist coercion and protect critical information. Foreign Military Financing (FMF), International Military Education and Training (IMET), and the Global Peace Operations Initiative are critical tools to meet these objectives.

Given the emphasis on strengthening U.S. alliances and attracting new partners in both the National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy, do you believe we need to reevaluate our security cooperation funding to ensure it properly prioritizes the Indo-Pacific region?

Given the critical nature of the region and the global impact regional instability would generate, continuous reevaluation of Security Cooperation funding would be helpful in making USINDOPACOM more competitive for FMF, IMET), and other security cooperation funding (Title 10 Section 332, Section 333, Maritime Security Initiative, and Asia-Pacific Regional Initiative).

What is your assessment of the Maritime Security Initiative (MSI)? How can MSI be leveraged to build shared maritime domain awareness capabilities and build multilateral cooperation amongst participating nations?

The Indo-Pacific MSI has increased maritime security, improved regional Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), supported the development of a common regional maritime picture, increased regional information sharing, and provided reassurance to regional partners while helping to build and sustain maritime relationships. It has accomplished this by increasing the scope, scale, complexity, and value of maritime exercises with MSI recipient nations; assessing capacity and capability and filling gaps with focused training and security assistance. MSI has been and will continue to be leveraged to augment our existing exercises to promote information sharing technologies, platforms, and procedures that allow our partners to experience first-hand the benefits of shared maritime awareness while operating in a coalition with the U.S. and other like-minded nations.

Over the last several years, China has exerted its influence with our partner nations throughout the USINDOPACOM region regarding competition over economic resources, fishing areas, access to water, concerns over rising sea levels, and elsewhere. Often due to a lack of U.S. engagement, some of these nations have voluntarily or involuntarily turned to support from China.

If confirmed, how will USINDOPACOM seek to engage with partner nations to better support their ability to protect their sovereignty and natural resources?

If confirmed, I will continue engagements with allies and partners to ensure alignment with the rules-based international order as identified in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Speaking with a common voice directly helps to protect the sovereignty and natural resources of allies and partners.

I will ensure we maintain our military presence in the region, especially in the South China Sea where we conduct regular combined maritime operations and exercises with our allies and partners to enhance MDA capabilities, and improve interoperability to maximize preparedness of all allies and partners

Respect for human rights has long been a core principle of United States foreign and security policy.

In your view, what role does U.S. military engagement, including efforts to help professionalize foreign partner militaries, play in encouraging respect for human rights?

U.S. military engagement with allies and partners in the region plays a critical role in the development of professional military standards and demonstrates our values including respect and dignity of human rights for all.

Law of the Sea

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

If so, why?

I support U.S. accession to UNCLOS. Accession would reinforce the customary rights and freedoms reflected in the Convention, and support the free and open international order. Accession would not impose any additional constraints on the U.S. military's ability to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows, but would give the United States greater credibility when calling on other states to adhere to the same rules. Protecting freedom of navigation and overflight world-wide is vital to the defense of our national security interests, and is necessary to maintain the mobility of U.S. forces in all areas of the globe. Accession to the Convention puts the U.S. in the best position to do so.

Would U.S. accession to the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention benefit the U.S. military's mission in the Asia-Pacific region? If so, how?

Accession to UNCLOS directly benefits the military mission in the Asia-Pacific region. Accession would formally establish the customary rights and freedoms reflected in the Convention and support a free and open international order. Accession also directly aligns us with our allies and partners in the region and provides us the legal means to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

The Department of Defense has developed comprehensive policies and procedures to improve the prevention of and response to incidents of sexual assaults, including providing appropriate resources and care for victims of sexual assault.

What is your view of the steps taken to prevent and respond to sexual assaults in USINDOPACOM, including assaults by and against U.S. civilian and contractor personnel?

As leaders, we owe all personnel a respectful and inclusive work environment in which to execute their mission and fulfill their oath to the Constitution. We must continue our work to eliminate sexual assault and sexual harassment.

I have seen great focus by DoD on the prevention of incidents and the immediate response to reported incidents, but despite continued efforts, sexual assault remains a significant problem and many victims do not feel supported by their command nor safe reporting crimes. We need to do more.

I agree with Secretary Austin that the challenges posed by sexual assault constantly evolve and that our efforts must also continue to adapt.

I fully support the work of the Secretary's Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault (IRC), headed by Lynn Rosenthal, which is re-evaluating the full spectrum of sexual assault prevention and response policies and procedures with all options on the table to making meaningful and lasting progress.

What is your view of the adequacy of USINDOPACOM policies and procedures to protect victims of sexual assault from retaliation for reporting the assault?

I believe that USINDOPACOM has strong policies and procedures in place to protect victims of sexual assault from retaliation, and if confirmed I intend to reinforce them. USINDOPACOM has created its own SAPR Program Manager on staff to improve support for sexual assault victims and to strengthen the larger SAPR programs within the theater.

If confirmed, my expectation is that commanders under my cognizance will create a culture of belonging where every member feels valued and is treated with dignity and respect and will be intolerant of retaliation. Setting the right unit climate encourages cohesion and discourages harmful behaviors. If these behaviors are to occur, the reporting of any crime or misconduct, and ending retaliation is crucial to effectively addressing sexual assault in the military.

USINDOPACOM will fully support the 90-day IRC and will benefit from the review of all current policies and programs.

What is your view of the adequacy of the training and resources in place in USINDOPACOM to investigate and respond to allegations of sexual assault?

Each of the services has established guidelines for a 24 hour, seven-day-a-week sexual assault response capability in all locations. Additionally, USINDOPACOM provides oversight for ensuring that adequate resources are present at deployed locations to maintain the ability to appropriately respond to incidents. I understand that the IRC will make further recommendations in this area as the Department evolves its policies to continue to meet the challenges posed by sexual assault.

What is your view of the willingness and ability of military leaders to hold service members accountable for sexual misconduct?

Sexual assault and other forms of sexual misconduct are crimes under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). I believe military leaders take their responsibilities under the UCMJ to ensure good order and discipline seriously. However, we must not relent until we are able to eliminate sexual assault from our ranks. If confirmed, I will ensure we not only have a force at USINDOPACOM that embodies our expectations for good order and discipline, but that we hold our leaders, at all levels, accountable for these expectations.

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

The services have enhanced the availability and effectiveness of Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, Victims' Legal Counsel (VLC) Programs, and care and treatment for victims of sexual assault. From my perspective, these high-priority, mission-readiness support services have been effective, but I welcome any findings and recommendations of the IRC.

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

Positively engaged commanders are vital to providing the necessary support to those in their unit who have been harmed. Beyond this, commanders are responsible for maintaining a climate of inclusion, respect, and where any form of retaliation or reprisal is unacceptable. Leaders are accountable to get this right.

What is your view about the role of the chain of Command in changing the military culture in which these sexual assaults have occurred?

My view is that the culture of a command is ultimately the Commander's responsibility. Change starts, and momentum continues, from the top— but it takes leadership at all levels of an organization to fully implement and sustain changes in culture.

What is your assessment of the potential impact, if any, of proposals to remove disposition authority from military commanders over felony-level violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, including sexual assault?

Commanders are accountable to the personnel assigned to them and responsible for maintaining the welfare, discipline, and combat readiness of all in their commands. Traditionally, the UCMJ is the Commander's tool for enforcing standards of expected behavior and performance.

This important question is being studied as part of the Secretary of Defense's 90-day Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault. It would be appropriate to await that commission's results to inform further analysis of this issue. I personally support and welcome all efforts to cultivate a safe environment for our DoD professionals to execute their mission and fulfill their oath to the Constitution.

Do you consider the current sexual assault policies and procedures, particularly those on restricted reporting, to be effective?

Yes. Restricted reporting allows victim care to be a top priority. Victims of this crime can come forward and receive needed medical and support services while maintaining confidentiality. Without restricted reporting, some victims would not have an avenue to access needed services.

If confirmed, what actions will you take to reassess current policies, procedures, and programs and to ensure senior level direction and oversight of efforts to prevent and respond to sexual assaults in USINDOPACOM?

If confirmed, I will ensure compliance with DoD's policies and procedures for leaders at all levels to take action to prevent sexual assault, and protect and support victims. I will set the example by establishing a command climate in which a victim can report a sexual assault without fear of retaliation and I will continue the programs and policies in place at USINDOPACOM which are designed to ensure necessary visibility and oversight within the theater.

I will monitor the IRC and support the Secretary of Defense's plan of action to expand the Department's prevention and response initiatives.

What methods for monitoring overall trends and gauging the sufficiency of component commanders' efforts in preventing and responding to incidents of sexual assault do you consider appropriate and intend to implement as USINDOPACOM Commander?

I will emphasize the importance of command climate with respect to sexual assault to ensure sexual assault response capabilities continue to be available at all locations in the AOR.

I will not allow sexual assault to injure our personnel, friends, and families, destroy our professional values, or compromise readiness. Zero is the only acceptable number for sexual assaults in our military.

I will also monitor the IRC and incorporate guidance from the President and the Secretary of Defense on the best way forward.

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, and other communications of information.

What are your views on the state of USINDOPACOM's relationship with the Senate Armed Services Committee in particular, and with Congress in general?

If confirmed, I will assess USINDOPACOM's relationship with Congress in general and the Senate Armed Services Committee in particular. My expectation is that these relationships will continue to be cooperative, productive and respectful of the Congress's oversight responsibilities.

If confirmed, what actions would you take to sustain a productive and mutually beneficial relationship between Congress and USINDOPACOM?

If confirmed, I will sustain the productive relationship between Congress and USINDOPACOM by maintaining open communication and information sharing. I will keep an active legislative affairs program to facilitate effective interactions and be personally available to Members of Congress and their staffs.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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