

**Senate Armed Services Committee**  
**Advance Policy Questions for Lieutenant General Michael E. Kurilla, USA**  
**Nominee to be Commander, United States Central Command**

**Duties and Qualifications**

**What is your understanding of the duties and functions of the Commander, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM)?**

The USCENTCOM commander exercises command and control over assigned forces and is directly responsible to the President and Secretary of Defense for the performance of assigned missions and the preparedness of the command. Additionally, the commander organizes and provides authoritative direction to subordinate commands and forces necessary to carry out missions assigned to the command by the Unified Command Plan signed by the President as well as those tasked from the National Command Authority through the Secretary of Defense.

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

I have been honored to serve our Nation and our service members and their families for 34 years. During that time, I have commanded at every level, from platoon to corps, serving in positions of leadership in combat and peacekeeping, and on operational deployments. I have commanded conventional and special operations forces and worked alongside allies and partners within the USCENTCOM area of responsibility (AOR).

As the USCENTCOM Chief of Staff, Joint Special Operations Command Director of Operations and Assistant Commanding General, and the Joint Staff Deputy Director for Special Operations and Counterterrorism, I have worked extensively with the interagency, policy, and intelligence communities and with the embassy country teams throughout the USCENTCOM AOR.

Along with formal military education, these experiences allowed me to develop a clear understanding of the manner in which the military instrument of power supports national strategic objectives, the importance of building relationships across the interagency and with regional allies and partners, and effective command and control at the combatant command level.

**Do you believe that there are any steps that you need to take to enhance your expertise to perform the duties of the USCENTCOM Commander?**

If confirmed, I am ready to assume command and will take the necessary additional steps to refine my understanding of critical issues within the region. If confirmed, I will consult with USCENTCOM Headquarters, Joint Staff, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), interagency partners, and other key stakeholders to increase my knowledge of the AOR. While I am a strong proponent of continuous learning and self-improvement, I am not aware of significant gaps that would preclude me from performing the duties of the USCENTCOM commander to the standard expected by members of the command, the chain of command, and the American people.

**Major Challenges Problems, and Priorities**

**If confirmed as the commander of USCENTCOM, you will be responsible for all the military operations in that region. These operations include deterring Iran, ensuring that terrorist groups cannot use Afghanistan as a base to attack the United States and our allies, ensuring the lasting defeat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, and partnering with, and building the institutional capacity of, foreign security forces that promote the development of democratic values within the militaries of the region.**

**In your view, what are the major challenges and opportunities that you would confront if confirmed as the next Commander of USCENTCOM?**

If confirmed, I will conduct an initial assessment of the challenges and opportunities for USCENTCOM. This assessment will involve traveling to consult with allies, partners, and embassy country teams across the region. It will also include a thorough review of all USCENTCOM operations and capabilities and intelligence assessments for the region. In conducting this assessment, I will consult with the Joint Staff, OSD, interagency partners, and other key stakeholders.

Once this assessment is complete, I will provide my insights and observations to the Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the major challenges and opportunities facing USCENTCOM. I will also share my insights with our defense oversight committees and other interested congressional members and staff.

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

If confirmed, the assessment I will conduct will inform any plans to address these challenges and problems.

**If confirmed, what broad priorities would you establish and how would you define success and failure of your core missions in tangible terms?**

If confirmed, I will prioritize the objectives outlined in the National Defense Strategy and those directed by the President and Secretary of Defense. Success will be defined by USCENTCOM's ability to meet those objectives while protecting America's national security interests in the region.

**If confirmed, how would you work to ensure that Department of Defense (DOD) efforts in your AOR complement the efforts of civilian agencies?**

If confirmed, I will work closely with United States ambassadors and embassy country teams across the region to ensure our efforts complement and support a whole-of-government approach to advance U.S. national security objectives with the Department of State and U.S. diplomats in the lead. Our efforts to secure the region are strengthened when closely aligned with our diplomatic, economic, informational, intelligence, and humanitarian goals.

### **National Defense Strategy and Global Posture Review**

**The 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) and the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance prioritized the long-term, strategic competition with revisionist powers China and Russia as the primary challenge with which the United States must contend, while also recognizing the need to deter and counter rogue regimes like North Korea and Iran and move to a more resource-sustainable approach to counterterrorism. Implementing the NDS will require the Secretary of Defense and combatant commanders to carry out missions efficiently and make hard choices.**

**What impact, if any, do you assess this strategy has on the operations and activities of USCENTCOM?**

The 2018 National Defense Strategy placed increased emphasis on operating with and developing the capabilities of allies and partners in the region to counter the increasing influence of China and Russia and deter aggression from Iran. The strategy also articulated a need to promote regional stability and freedom of access to global commons. President Biden's 2021 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance amplifies the focus on China as the pacing challenge and Russia as a disruptor, as well as the global challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change.

If confirmed, I will evaluate the implications of the forthcoming 2022 National Defense Strategy for the USCENTCOM AOR. As Secretary Austin has said publicly, the next NDS will advance the concept of integrated deterrence to address the compounding and concurrent challenges we face in the strategic environment. If confirmed, I will place emphasis on opportunities to build integrated deterrence approaches across domains in collaboration with our interagency and regional partners. This will require more meaningful integration of allies and partners into our theater-level defense planning to draw on our collective sources of strength.

Finally, if confirmed, I will seek opportunities to fill capability gaps and create opportunities for the Joint Force through cooperation with allies and partners. Moreover, I will aim to align operations, activities, and investments within the USCENTCOM AOR in a manner which disciplines our approach to campaigning and preserves warfighting readiness for the Joint Force.

**In what ways do you assess the 2018 National Defense Strategy has shaped U.S. force posture in the Middle East?**

The 2018 NDS recognized an increasingly complex global security environment and rightfully prioritized China and Russia as the most concerning challenges for the Department of Defense. And, while the NDS reprioritized the focus towards the INDOPACOM AOR, it acknowledged the continued challenges and threats emanating from the Middle East and aligned forces appropriately.

**Given the hierarchy of prioritization on great power competition laid out in the 2018 National Defense Strategy and in the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, in what ways can USCENTCOM counter Russia's growing influence in the Middle East?**

I assess that the key to countering Russia's growing influence in USCENTCOM rests in developing and sustaining enduring coalitions and partnerships and working by, with, and through allies and partners. Moving forward, the command must continue to refine its country security cooperation plans to focus operations, activities, investments, and engagements on countering Russian influence. In addition to maintaining strong relationships and security cooperation, we must continue to expose malign Russian activities and highlight the risks and hidden costs our partners encounter when they pursue false Russian promises.

**In what ways can USCENTCOM counter China's growing influence in the Middle East?**

China's growing ambition and exploitative behavior within the Middle East are best countered through enduring coalitions and partnerships. Constraining Chinese military, diplomatic, informational, and economic influence requires a whole-of-government approach that reinforces our commitments through operations, activities, investments, and engagements. Most importantly, we should contrast predatory Chinese activities that demonstrate Beijing's treatment of nations as "clients and customers" with the U.S. national commitment to partnerships and alliances. In so doing, the U.S. will remain the security partner of choice in the region.

**What is your assessment of the GPR impacts on USCENTCOM's posture requirements? Please be specific.**

As part of my initial command assessment, I will evaluate the forces and assets required to accomplish the missions assigned to USCENTCOM and protect our national security interests in the region. A realignment of assets within the USCENTCOM AOR, whether in the maritime, ground, air, space, or cyber domain, may reduce U.S. capabilities in the region. It is therefore critical that we widen our circles of partner cooperation to address shared security challenges. This must also be analyzed against the forthcoming NDS and any subsequent reviews directed by the Secretary of Defense.

**The review directed DOD to conduct additional analysis on enduring posture requirements in the Middle East. If confirmed, what role would you expect to play in that review?**

If confirmed, and as part of my initial assessment, I will have a direct role in this process and provide my recommendations to the Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the USCENTCOM requirements for missions assigned and USCENTCOM enduring posture requirements, as well as the risk associated with that posture.

**Afghanistan**

**As the military mission in Afghanistan has concluded, what do you view as U.S. strategic interests in Afghanistan?**

In my view, the primary U.S. strategic interest in Afghanistan remains preventing Afghanistan from becoming a terrorist safe-haven that threatens the U.S. homeland. Additionally, enabling the continued relocation of American citizens, lawful permanent residents, and designated personnel from Afghanistan and supporting the State Department's continued diplomatic engagements with Afghanistan remain vital to U.S. national interests in Afghanistan.

**Reflecting on the mission in Afghanistan, in your view, what are some of the major strategic missteps? How would you apply those lessons learned in future military operations?**

In my view, with the military mission in Afghanistan ending five months ago, we are in an early assessment period and the strategic implications of that war are not yet fully understood.

I am aware that USCENTCOM is actively evaluating the strategic and operational impacts of the Afghanistan mission and providing its best military assessment and inputs to the Secretary of Defense-directed After Action Review. Additionally, I anticipate the recently established Afghanistan War Commission will contribute to identifying major strategic missteps, actionable recommendations, and lessons learned. If confirmed, I will ensure USCENTCOM operations and activities are fully informed by these findings.

**In your view, what factors do you assess as leading to the Taliban’s ultimate success in returning to power in Afghanistan?**

While the Afghanistan War Commission represents an opportunity to analyze, identify, and understand the factors that led to the Taliban’s return to power, it is clear, in my view, that the Taliban successfully exploited ethnic, tribal, religious, and political fissures within all levels of the Afghan government.

Any review must evaluate the underlying factors that led the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) leaders and soldiers to lose the will to fight, particularly the failures of Afghan government leadership.

**In your opinion, what are the implications of the collapse of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) for future advise, train, and assist missions?**

I anticipate the Afghanistan War Commission will allow a full understanding of the factors that led to the dissolution of the ANDSF and the broader implications for our national security.

**In your view, can the United States conduct effective “over the horizon” counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan without a partner force on the ground? Please explain your answer.**

Over-the-Horizon-Counterterrorism (OTH-CT) operations are, in my experience, difficult but not impossible. Though a partner force on the ground significantly improves the effectiveness of counterterror operations, OTH-CT has many benefits. Most critically, through employment of airborne intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets, OTH-CT allows us the ability to degrade terrorist groups that pose a direct threat to the United States and our allies in places in which we lack physical access.

**Pakistan**

**In your view, what do you consider to be the major challenges in the U.S.-Pakistan strategic relationship?**

Pakistan is a difficult but necessary partner. Our relationship has seen progress and improved over the last few years. The major challenges in the U.S.-Pakistan strategic relationship include regional tensions between two nuclear-capable powers, India and Pakistan, a tension which complicates our work toward regional stability. Adding to this complication are the pressures of territorial and resource disputes, growing Chinese, Russian, and Iranian influence, and a humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan along Pakistan’s western border. Lastly, Pakistan’s reliance on Chinese economic and military support challenges American ties in the country.

**What is your assessment of the strategic relationship between the United States and Pakistan? Do you assess that those strategic aims have changed as a result of the transition of U.S. forces from Afghanistan? If so, please describe the changes.**

The strategic relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan is complex, but necessary. We share an important partnership given the many areas in which our interests converge. Pakistan is a nuclear power that sits at the nexus of Russian, Chinese, Indian, and American geopolitical interests. Stability in South Asia region remains the most important mutual strategic interest for both the U.S. and Pakistan, and we must continue to constructively engage with Pakistani leadership to work towards achieving success on this mutual interest.

While the U.S. remains Pakistan's partner of choice, China's influence in Pakistan is growing, this may increasingly challenge our relationship.

The advancement of nuclear weapons in Pakistan, India, and China, has increased tension in the region and has regional security implications. Ambiguity or a miscalculation of the other side's capabilities or intentions could have catastrophic consequences.

**In your opinion, what would you consider to be areas of shared strategic interest between the United States and Pakistan?**

In my view, the U.S. and Pakistan share a number of strategic interests, including regional stability and the threat posed by violent extremist organizations. Finally, both nations also share a concern of addressing the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

**If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you recommend enhancing U.S. relations with Pakistan, particularly in terms of military-to-military relations?**

Primary among the avenues to continue enhancing the U.S. relationship with Pakistan is in the area of counterterrorism partnership. If confirmed, I will evaluate the U.S.-Pakistan military-to-military relationships during my initial assessment of risks and opportunities in the region for such partnership opportunities. I will provide recommendations regarding this relationship to the Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and, as requested, to our defense oversight committees and other interested congressional members and staff.

**Central Asia**

**What is your understanding of the role Russia and China are seeking to play in the Central Asian states? Do you assess that their strategic aims have changed following the end of the U.S. combat mission in Afghanistan?**

It is my understanding that Russia and China seek decisive roles in Central Asia. I assess the end of the U.S. combat mission in Afghanistan created a void in Central Asia that Russia and China will seek to fill. In particular, Russia and China are likely concerned over the potential for growth and expansion of violent extremists in Afghanistan with the US withdrawal and fall of the former government, and are therefore incentivized to increase influence in the country.

In addition, Russia considers Central Asia as firmly within its sphere of influence and views the region as a security buffer against unwanted foreign interference, particularly on the part of the U.S., Europe, and China. The recent crisis in Kazakhstan marked a major milestone for the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and demonstrates Moscow's intent to ensure the region remains stable and reliant on Russia as its sole security guarantor. Russia retains an advantage in the region through extensive bilateral engagement with all five Central Asian states leveraging social and historical ties, established intelligence networks, economic dependences, and military relationships.

Meanwhile, Beijing seeks access to Central Asian natural resources to meet Chinese industrial demands, to expand the use of Central Asian transportation infrastructure and to counter perceived security threats. China invests in industry throughout the Central Asian region. Since 2016, China increased security engagement with the region bilaterally and through China-dominated security structures, exemplified by the Quadrilateral Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism that allows China to jointly patrol the Tajikistan-Afghanistan-China border region. Beijing does not want to be a regional security guarantor and is focused only on threats that directly affect China while capitalizing on Russia's approach to perceived threats across the region.

Central Asian states will likely continue to maintain their relationships with the U.S. and allies, both as a hedge against excessive external influence, and as leverage to elicit advantages and concessions from Russia and China.

**In your view, do you consider Central Asia as a place where the United States is in long-term strategic competition with Russia and China? If so, what can USCENTCOM do to tip the regional balance in favor of the United States?**

Yes, given that strategic competition with Russia and China remains a global priority, it is my view that Central Asia presents significant opportunities. Based on geography and history, Russia and China possess an outsized impact politically, economically, and militarily within Central Asian States. Influence and access to Central Asia requires that USCENTCOM participate in whole-of-government commitment to strengthen our relationships in Central Asia. Increased cooperation should continue to focus on areas where U.S. and partners' interests intersect.

**In your opinion, what are the potential consequences for U.S. access and interests in the region if the U.S. does not actively engage with Central Asian partners?**

Advancing U.S. interests in the CENTCOM region requires active engagement with Central Asian partners. Given advanced Chinese and Russian influence, durable partnerships that benefit our mutual security assume increased importance.

By contrast, curtailed engagement with Central Asian partners could cede American access and influence. Russia actively seeks to maintain influence in the region and endeavors to bolster its position as the perceived security provider of choice in Central Asia. Russia continues to foment the idea of U.S. abandonment of Central Asia in the aftermath of American withdrawal from Afghanistan. Similarly, China, through its calculated investments in the region, seeks economic advantage.

**Iraq and Syria**

**What is your assessment of the current threat posed by ISIS?**

In my view, ISIS remains a serious threat to U.S. interests. In 2021, ISIS maintained 17 publicly recognized branches and claimed responsibility for attacks in dozens of countries. While a loss of key leaders and a lack of resources have severely hindered the organization, ISIS sustains a capable threat to the security of the USCENTCOM AOR, as evidenced by the recent attack on the al-Hasakah detention facility. ISIS remains a learning, adaptable and committed organization with a dedicated core. Consistent pressure by the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) in Iraq and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in Syria, enabled by U.S. and Coalition forces, prevents ISIS from expanding and conducting external attacks. Displaced persons and refugees are susceptible to exploitation and radicalization by ISIS. ISIS also seeks opportunities in Afghanistan where the group has gained considerable personnel and resources.

**What is your assessment of the current security situation in Syria?**

The security situation in Syria is complex and tenuous. Syria's military and Pro-Regime Forces (PRF) have a decisive advantage over the remaining opposition groups and the Assad regime is positioned to end the civil war militarily. However, the underlying causes of the conflict, including political disenfranchisement, poverty, water scarcity, and economic instability, will likely persist beyond the conflict's end. Most critically, ISIS remains a threat to both the U.S. and partners in the region.

**In your view, what are the U.S. national security objectives in Syria? To what extent does continued U.S. force presence in Syria support those objectives?**

The military's mission in Syria is to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS. Although the so-called physical caliphate is territorially defeated, the group transitioned to an insurgency that poses a continued threat to the U.S. homeland, our allies, and the stability of our regional partners. This continued threat is exemplified by recent attacks and attempts to free thousands of ISIS fighters from prisons in Syria.

Our presence supports a whole-of-government approach to achieve other strategic objectives in Syria, including countering Iran and Russia. Tehran's military, paramilitary, and proxy involvement in Syria should be of concern, as it directly threatens Israel and Jordan, and risks dangerously escalating regional tensions. Lastly, our security presence allows for provision of humanitarian assistance by international and non-governmental organizations that would otherwise not be possible.

**In your view, should U.S. troop levels in Syria be tied to the achievement of certain conditions on the ground? If so, what conditions do you believe should factor into decisions about U.S. troop levels in Syria?**

Mission requirements drive troop levels in all operations and there are always a series of operational factors that must be considered. Risk to force and risk to mission must be considered in locations such as Syria where minimal U.S. and partner force footprints exist. Any modification of troop levels should take into account the SDF's capability to prevent ISIS from reestablishing a base of operations.

**What additional military steps, if any, should the United States be taking to advance the process for a political solution in Syria?**

While political solutions require a whole-of-government approach, from a military perspective, it is critical that USCENTCOM and Combined Task Force-Operation INHERENT RESOLVE (CJTF-OIR) continue to support our partner forces as they provide local military security and time and space for the continued development of local governance and security structures.

**What role, if any, do you believe U.S. military advisors should play in transitioning Syrian Defense Forces (SDF) to conduct local security vice offensive operations to clear territory held by ISIS?**

U.S. military advisors play a critical role in the development of the SDF, to include in their ability to provide local security.

**What is your assessment of the current security situation in Iraq?**

My assessment is that Iraq's security and political situation is fragile. Government formation is the national priority following the October 2021 elections that resulted in the Sadrist bloc gaining a plurality in the new Parliament. As the process continues, Iranian-aligned political parties and militia groups may escalate violence, particularly if they perceive diminishing opportunity to influence the course of government formation. ISIS in Iraq remains a credible threat to Iraqi security; the group uses complex attacks and subverts the local and provincial governments to grow its influence and expand its insurgency. Iran and its associated militias present the most direct threat to U.S. personnel and interests in Iraq.

**What is your understanding of the current U.S. strategy and objectives in Iraq?**

My understanding is that the primary U.S. objectives in Iraq include the enduring defeat of ISIS and maintenance of a strategic partnership with the Government of Iraq. The strategy relies on a whole-of-government approach, to include a military focus on the development of capable, self-reliant, and accountable security forces, supported by the Government of Iraq.

**All U.S. forces in a combat role have transitioned from Iraq. Going forward, what do you envision to be the missions and size of the U.S. military presence in Iraq?**

Although U.S. and coalition forces have transitioned from combat, ISIS elements remain active with an ability to regenerate and reconstitute. If confirmed, my initial assessment will include an evaluation of force requirements based on the missions and tasks given to USCENTCOM by the President and Secretary of Defense.

**What steps would you recommend for normalizing security assistance to the Iraqi Security Forces in the coming years?**

If confirmed, I will assess the advisability and feasibility of normalizing security assistance to the Iraqi Security Forces in the coming years. I would do so in close consultation with Embassy Baghdad and the Commander of Combined Joint Task Force Operation INHERENT RESOLVE (CJTF-OIR) and will provide my advice to the Secretary and Chairman to inform the interagency discussion and legislative considerations of authorities and funding. The Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF) represents a crucial component of the United States whole-of-government approach to the enduring defeat of ISIS; any changes to this important funding source must be carefully analyzed to ensure our partner-based approach remains effective.

**What do you see as the appropriate role for NATO in Iraq? What adjustments would you make, if any, to NATO's current mission in Iraq?**

If confirmed, a key component of my initial assessment will include an evaluation of the role for the NATO Mission in Iraq. If confirmed, I will maintain a collaborative approach with NATO headquarters to ensure our forces on the ground forces maintain their close relationships.

**In your view, what should the United States do regarding the repatriation of ISIS prisoners currently detained by the Syrian Democratic Forces and the Government of Iraq?**

Repatriation is among the primary challenges USCENTCOM faces in Syria, as demonstrated by the recent ISIS attack on the al-Hasakah detention facility and subsequent SDF operations to recapture ISIS escapees. This issue requires a whole-of-government approach focused on engagement with allies and partners. The thousands of ISIS detainees of foreign descent represent an ISIS Army-in-waiting and, if confirmed, I will address this vulnerability together with interagency partners and allies.

**Iran**

**What is your assessment of the current military threat posed by Iran?**

Iran remains the primary and enduring threat in the USCENTCOM area of operations due to its use of its increasingly sophisticated military capabilities, broad proxy network, and periodic willingness to use force against the U.S., our allies, and partner forces. Iran's rapidly expanding military capabilities enable it to coerce its neighbors, threaten international trade, and exploit instability throughout the region.

Tehran's primary power projection tools are ballistic missiles, UAVs, and expanding maritime capabilities. Iran's missile inventory includes both medium-and short-range ballistic missiles capable of holding many regional targets at risk. Iranian surface-to-air missiles pose a significant threat to U.S. intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets operating in international airspace. Additionally, naval cruise missile technologies will strengthen Iran's Anti-Access Area Denial efforts and increase Tehran's ability to hold critical sea lines of communication at risk and threaten countries in the region with greater speed, precision, and lethality. Iran also leverages a network of proxy forces to advance its power base and build strategic depth. Iran repeatedly demonstrates a willingness to share advanced conventional weapons with Shia militant proxies and partners throughout the region.

**Are U.S. military forces and capabilities currently deployed to the USCENTCOM AOR adequate to deter and, if necessary, respond to threats posed by Iran?**

If confirmed, I will conduct a careful assessment of forces required in the region with consideration for the significant military capabilities and threats emanating from Iran. This assessment will examine force levels necessary to deter and, if necessary, respond to Iranian threats and assess risks and mitigating strategies.

**What is your assessment of U.S. national security interests associated with the growth of Iranian influence in the Middle East?**

My assessment is that Iran's negative influence in the region continues to grow and is incompatible with U.S. national interests, as well as those of our allies and partners. Iran views the U.S. as its greatest enduring threat and continues a multifaceted approach to remove U.S. forces from the region while avoiding escalation into major conflict. The risk of miscalculation and escalation remains high.

**If the United States returned to compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), what concerns, if any, would you have for regional security?**

Iran is, in my view, the single biggest contributor to instability in the region and any agreement must fully prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. Without knowledge of the specific terms of ongoing diplomatic negotiations, it is premature to assess the outcomes on regional security. Renewed negotiation efforts must consider the significant changes that have occurred in the security and geopolitical environments since the 2018 American withdrawal from the agreement.

**What actions, if any, do you believe the United States and the international community could undertake to counter Iran's increasing conventional military capabilities?**

It is my view that together with the international community and our Middle East partners, the U.S. maintains a shared objective in countering Iran's proliferation of Advanced Conventional Weapons and its support to proxies. In addition to continued diplomatic engagement, I assess that USCENTCOM must continue its efforts to enhance interoperability with allies and partners to deter and, when required, defeat Iranian conventional military capability across multiple domains. Finally, we must continue investing in technology, to include Artificial Intelligence and machine learning platforms and programs, to increase our ability to detect, defend, and respond to conventional Iranian military capabilities.

**In your view, what risks, if any, are associated with reducing U.S. military presence in the Middle East with respect to the threat posed by Iran?**

If confirmed, I will assess whether a reduction of U.S. force presence impacts our ability to achieve objectives for the region and undermines the assurances we provide allies and partners. Part of this assessment will address key areas in which partners, allies, or interagency elements can fill capability gaps or further enable efforts. It is my view that the current U.S. military posture in the Middle East serves as an important role in unifying a coalition of regional partners and provides a counterbalance to Iran's malign regional influence. If confirmed, I would ensure USCENTCOM continues to work hard in sustaining enduring military, security, and intelligence ties with our regional partners.

**What is your assessment of the purpose and threat posed by Iran's ballistic missile program? To what extent is the U.S. and our partners in the region postured to counter the Iranian ballistic missile threat?**

If confirmed, I will assess whether U.S. and our partners' integrated air and missile defense capability is adequate to counter Iranian ballistic missile threats in the short term. I intend to prioritize working with regional partners on their air defense systems with the aim of fully integrating air and missile defense across the region.

**In your view, what role, if any, should USCENTCOM play in countering Iran's support of international terrorism and proxy forces throughout the USCENTCOM AOR?**

It is my view that USCENTCOM should support a whole-of-government approach to countering Iran's support for international terrorism and proxy forces. The Iranian regime leverages the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps-Qods Force in managing proxies in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon through the proliferation of advanced weapons technology and destabilizing actions. USCENTCOM will counter Iranian efforts with continued operations, activities, investments, engagements, and support to partners in the region.

**Yemen**

**What is your assessment of the threat posed by al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and ISIS-Yemen to the United States?**

My understanding is that Al-Qaeda's capabilities have been significantly weakened and appear to be on a declining trajectory. AQAP threatens the U.S. primarily through its ability to inspire lone actors to carryout high-profile attacks.

**What is your assessment of the current U.S. strategy to counter AQAP and ISIS-Yemen?**

Yemen is a complex environment that will continue to evolve. If confirmed, I will use my initial assessment to evaluate our strategy and determine the resources and tools necessary to counter violent extremist organizations in Yemen. It is my view that a sound strategy requires close coordination with partners within DOD, the intelligence community, the interagency, and our allies and partners to assess and address threats emanating from Yemen.

**In your view, what are the U.S. national security interests in Yemen?**

As I understand it, U.S national security interests in Yemen are to prevent an attack on the U.S homeland or U.S. allies and partners in the region, reduce human suffering resulting from the humanitarian disaster, promote regional stability, and protect global economic trade routes.

**What is your assessment of the Iran-backed Houthi ballistic missile, unmanned aerial vehicle, and other threats emanating from Yemen to U.S. regional partners, U.S. interests, and freedom of navigation?**

It is my view that the Houthi threat to U.S. and partner interests in the region remains high. The risk to U.S. personnel, citizens, partners, and interests is substantial given the Houthis' capabilities to inflict harm and demonstrated willingness to conduct complex strikes against major urban areas, including Riyadh and Abu Dhabi.

**What do you see as the implications of the Biden Administration's decision to cease offensive support operations to the Saudi-led coalition?**

I believe there is no purely military solution to the current crisis in Yemen. If confirmed, I will include in my initial assessment an evaluation of the current state of Saudi-led coalition operations in Yemen and will provide these insights and recommendations to the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and keep the Congress fully informed as requested.

**In your view, what role, if any, should the United States play in supporting the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen?**

This is a question of national significance for elected officials and U.S. policymakers. It is my understanding the U.S. government is working closely with the UN Special Representative (UNSR) and the UN Special Envoy for Yemen to support the ongoing diplomatic efforts to bring the Yemeni conflict to a negotiated end.

**Egypt**

**What is your assessment of the security situation in Egypt, including the Sinai Peninsula?**

Egypt's political and security situation is stable. Like most nations, Egypt faces domestic challenges, including a weak economy, poverty, and water scarcity. Sinai-based extremist threats are largely contained, and, with continued counterterrorism pressure, ISIS-Sinai should remain a manageable concern for Cairo. I assess the historically strong U.S. and Egyptian military-to-military relationship remains our most reliable option to assist and positively influence security with this critical regional partner.

**What is your assessment of the U.S.-Egypt security relationship?**

The U.S.-Egypt security relationship is strong. If prioritized and resourced, this relationship will endure as a critical pillar of regional stability. Within this context, we should continue to share our values of accountability with our partners.

**What is your assessment of the role Egypt plays with respect to regional stability?**

Egypt's standing as the largest Arab nation and its strategic location at the nexus of North Africa and the Middle East means Cairo must remain a positive contributor to regional stability. Egypt's military routinely contributes to regional security, participating in multinational exercises and sustaining cooperation with the U.S. and other important partners.

**What is your assessment of Egypt's counterterrorism operations?**

If confirmed, my initial assessment will include an evaluation of Egypt's counterterrorism operations. Egypt's effort to counter ISIS-Sinai made meaningful progress in 2021. If confirmed, I will continue efforts to support the development of Egyptian counterterrorism forces and our commitment to building a more capable, self-reliant, and accountable partner force.

**How do you assess the threat of the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Qaeda, and the ISIS affiliate Wilayat Sinai, respectively, to the security situation in Egypt and the stability of the Sisi government? To what extent do you believe that countering each of these groups should be a focal point of U.S. engagement and strategy in Egypt?**

I assess the Sisi government remains capable of degrading violent extremists in Egypt, including the Sinai. U.S. military efforts should be focused on groups, including al-Qaeda and ISIS's Sinai affiliate, which pose threats to U.S. and regional security. The U.S. should continue to support the development of Egyptian counterterrorism forces into capable, self-reliant, and accountable forces.

**Lebanon**

**What is your assessment of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), including their ability to act as the sole guarantor of Lebanon's security and sovereignty?**

I assess that a lack of government funds since September 2019, emanating from Lebanon's economic and political crises, resulted in a consistent decrease in LAF troops available for operations, thereby degrading LAF capabilities. If confirmed, I intend to seek opportunities to strengthen the partnership with the LAF and fully assess their capabilities.

**In your view, what is the appropriate role for the U.S. military in Lebanon?**

In my view, the appropriate role for the U.S. military in Lebanon is in providing security cooperation with the LAF. The U.S. military security cooperation relationship with the LAF is critical in Lebanon and has broader impacts for the region. Based on previous assignments, I understand that the LAF has a strong record of safeguarding U.S.-provided equipment, and the organization keeps meticulous records of such equipment.

The LAF serves as a reliable U.S. security partner. The U.S.-LAF partnership is increasingly critical, given expanding influence by Lebanese Hizballah, Iran, Russia, and China, in the country. If confirmed, I will seek opportunities to strengthen our partnership with the LAF.

**What is your assessment of the effectiveness of U.S. security assistance provided to the LAF in recent years, including the ability of the LAF to appropriately utilize and maintain accountability of U.S.-provided equipment?**

U.S. security assistance to the LAF is critical to the continued stability of Lebanon and the region. The LAF has demonstrated the ability to avoid sectarianism while using and maintaining accountability of U.S.-provided equipment to enhance security in Lebanon. If confirmed, I will include in my initial assessment an evaluation of the effectiveness of U.S. security assistance provided to the LAF.

**What is your assessment of the LAF's relationship with Hizballah?**

The LAF and Lebanese Hizballah are not in partnership with each other. The LAF remains the most trusted and only defense institution in Lebanon with diverse sects. The organization serves all the Lebanese people while Hizballah is a sectarian militia. While the organizations cooperate and deconflict operations when necessary to avoid directly antagonizing each other or infringing on each other's established territory, relations between the two are distant.

**Combating Terrorism**

**In your view, within the USCENTCOM AOR, what do you consider to be the highest counterterrorism priorities?**

The highest priority for counterterrorism operations is protecting the homeland, followed by mitigating threats to U.S. interests and those of our allies and partners in the region.

**What is your assessment of the threat posed by ISIS, al Qaeda, and their associated forces to the U.S. homeland and U.S. interests overseas?**

ISIS and al-Qaeda remain a serious threat to the U.S. homeland and U.S. interests overseas. Neither group has forsaken its ambitions, nor their direct hostility toward the United States. ISIS continues to encourage its networks, branches, and supporters to inspire, enable, or direct attacks worldwide. ISIS uses its media capabilities to preserve its global brand appeal despite territorial losses in Iraq and Syria.

Al-Qaeda remains avowedly hostile to the U.S., with continued aspirations to attack the U.S. homeland. Across the USCENTCOM AOR, al-Qaeda is comprised of disparate groups with uneven centralized control, but still maintains its goals to attack U.S., allies, and partner interests across the region

**What is your understanding of the Department's role in the U.S. strategy to combat terrorism in the USCENTCOM AOR?**

Within the whole-of-government approach to combatting terrorism, the Department of Defense sets policy for and implements the military component of national power to defeat our enemies and protect our interests and citizens. If confirmed, I will implement the military component of the counterterrorism strategy in the USCENTCOM AOR in close consultation with the Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Commander, USSOCOM.

**Given your current knowledge of USCENTCOM operations and activities, do you believe the Command's resources are aligned in a manner consistent with counterterrorism priorities?**

If confirmed, I will conduct an initial assessment which will help me determine whether the resources provided to USCENTCOM are aligned with counterterrorism priorities. Defeating terrorists and preventing threats to the homeland from the USCENTCOM AOR is the priority counterterrorism mission. Building partner capacity to address threats emanating from the region is necessary for long-term stability.

**If confirmed, do you foresee any counterterrorism efforts in the USCENTCOM AOR that may be constrained due to the 2018 National Defense Strategy prioritization of long-term strategic competition with Russia and China over countering VEOs?**

If confirmed, I will assess any impact of resourcing decisions on the ability of USCENTCOM to conduct counterterrorism operations. This will identify USCENTCOM's ability to achieve all its assigned missions, including counterterrorism, and will provide my insights, concerns, assessment of risk, and advice to the Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and keep the Congress fully informed as requested.

**To what extent, if any, do you consider the Muslim Brotherhood to constitute a terrorist threat within the USCENTCOM AOR?**

The Muslim Brotherhood constitutes a minimal threat to U.S. personnel and our military presence in the USCENTCOM AOR. The organization is more likely to focus on priorities internal to the countries in which it operates.

**Building Partner Capacity and Security Assistance**

**In the past few years, Congress has provided DOD a number of authorities to provide security assistance to partner nations. In your view, what should be our strategic objectives in building the capacities of partner nations in the USCENTCOM AOR?**

Our strategic objectives should be designed to develop partner nation capabilities; optimize U.S. influence, access, and freedom of action; and, build a network of capable partners who will work together in stabilizing the region. All these actions are consistent with the National Defense Strategy and USCENTCOM Campaign Plan. Ultimately, we want partner nations who are capable, self-reliant, accountable, and interoperable with partner forces. Security cooperation is essential to conducting counterterrorism operations and promoting regional stability within the USCENTCOM AOR.

**What would be your priorities, if confirmed, for building partner capacity, including institutional capacity, and other security cooperation efforts in the USCENTCOM AOR?**

If confirmed, I will prioritize efforts that directly aid in establishing a capable network of allies and partners consistent with U.S. strategy and objectives. In general, this means undertaking efforts that increase interoperability at all levels, prioritizing equipment commonalities and common doctrine. We will remain focused on building forces that are capable, self-reliant, and accountable. At the institutional level, priorities include developing planning, logistics and sustainment, command and control, and sustainable resourcing.

**In your view, what is the appropriate balance between efforts to build partnership capacity at the tactical and operational level and at the institutional and ministerial level?**

Partner capacity at the tactical, operational, institutional, and ministerial levels are inextricably linked and vital to the overall capabilities we strive to build. Before investing in partner capacity, we must first evaluate several conditions. It is critical that we ensure partners are willing and able to obligate the required resources and make appropriate organizational changes to implement capability at the tactical, operational, institutional, and ministerial levels. Developing a partner's institutional capacity is our ultimate goal and often the most challenging aspect of force development.

**In your view, how should our security cooperation be modified, conditioned, or restricted with countries in which there is significant corruption at the institutional and ministerial level?**

Ultimately, the decision to restrict, condition, or modify security cooperation is a complex question involving U.S. laws and policy makers. If confirmed, I will execute security cooperation as directed in full compliance with Department of Defense policy guidance, directives, and authorities.

If confirmed, I will provide military advice to policy makers, through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, explaining the operational opportunities and risks to our national objectives presented by working with or restricting assistance to countries in a highly competitive FMS market.

**In your view, how should USCENTCOM approach building partner capacity with host nation militaries that have been tasked to take on the role of police and internal security forces?**

I believe all forms of security assistance should be evaluated and executed consistent with law and policy. Within the region, many defense forces carry a dual role of providing both internal and external security. Understanding the nature of those roles and authorities is critical to effectively building partner capacity.

### **Civilian Casualties**

**If confirmed, how would you ensure civilian casualty allegations are adequately and promptly investigated by USCENTCOM?**

USCENTCOM has a standardized process to assess civilian casualty allegations. If confirmed, I will review and, if necessary, improve USCENTCOM's processes for reporting and investigating allegations of civilian casualty incidents. Furthermore, I will serve as an active participant in the development of the Department's Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Plan, as directed by the Secretary of Defense on January 27, 2022.

**Do you believe credible civilian casualty incidents should be independently investigated by personnel who are sufficiently removed from the unit or chain of command associated with the incident? Please be specific in your response.**

In my assessment, credible CIVCAS incidents should be investigated by personnel sufficiently removed from the chain of command and independent from the unit at the heart of the incident.

**What is your understanding of USCENTCOM's obligation to report civilian casualty incidents to Congress?**

USCENTCOM will report civilian casualties to the Department of Defense in support of the Secretary of Defense's statutory obligation to report to Congress and be open and transparent with our oversight committees. If confirmed, I will ensure compliance with all Department policies and procedures for reporting civilian casualty incidents.

**What is your understanding of USCENTCOM's current policies with respect to public transparency, and if confirmed, what policies would you seek to establish in this regard?**

If confirmed, I will ensure the fullest appropriate measure of transparency across USCENTCOM operations. This includes full compliance with departmental reporting requirements across all aspects of operations, including instances of civilian harm, as well as conducting regular media engagements and updates to congressional committees.

**Under what circumstances do you believe it is appropriate to provide ex gratia payments when civilian casualties or other civilian harm result from U.S. military operations?**

If confirmed, I will follow the applicable law and Department of Defense policies as set forth in Section 1213 of the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act and the Under-Secretary of Defense's Interim Regulations for Condolence or Sympathy Payments to Friendly Civilians for Injury or Loss. I will ensure USCENTCOM policies are clearly articulated and effectively implemented to comply with both the law and Department policy, including supporting the Secretary of Defense's reporting statutory requirements.

**Strategic Communications and Information Operations**

**Over the past decade, DOD has funded an increasing number of military information support operations and influence programs.**

**What is your assessment of DOD's military information support operations, influence programs, and other information warfare efforts in the USCENTCOM AOR?**

The information environment is key terrain in USCENTCOM. USCENTCOM's military information support operations and information warfare programs advance U.S. interests in the AOR by offering information advantage in countering competitors and adversaries.

**If confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure information operations activities conducted by USCENTCOM comply with DOD guidance and are in support of military objectives?**

If confirmed, I will ensure information operations activities are well-coordinated, aligned with military objectives, and comply with department policy guidance. USCENTCOM provides quarterly and annual reports on all activities related to Information Operations. If confirmed, I will continue to employ these practices while complying with all regulatory requirements.

**Do you believe USCENTCOM and other agencies within the U.S. Government are appropriately organized to respond effectively to the messaging and influence efforts of ISIS, al Qaeda, and other violent extremist groups?**

If confirmed, my intent is to conduct an initial assessment, which will specifically include an evaluation of USCENTCOM messaging and influence efforts to determine if they are appropriately organized to respond effectively to the messaging and influence efforts of violent extremist organizations.

**Given that long-term strategic competition with China and Russia is a top-tier National Defense Strategy priority, what is USCENTCOM doing to counter Chinese and Russian strategic narratives across the AOR?**

If confirmed, I will conduct an initial assessment which will include an evaluation of USCENTCOM efforts to counter Chinese and Russian strategic narratives across the AOR.

**In your view, is countering a violent extremist group's messaging an important aspect of counterterrorism? Which media platforms do you view as most conducive to disseminating violent extremist group's messaging, and what steps do you believe USCENTCOM could take to counter this messaging?**

Counter-messaging focused on extremist ideology is an important aspect of countering violent extremism. Social media channels are generally the most effective recruitment and coordination platform for violent extremist organizations within the USCENTCOM AOR. USCENTCOM regularly coordinates with the FBI and the Department of State Global Engagement Center to identify and report malign use of social media. Likewise, USCENTCOM works with the interagency to more effectively counter extremist recruiting, communication, and misinformation.

### **Interagency Collaboration**

**The collaboration between U.S. Special Operations Forces, general purpose forces, and other U.S. Government departments and agencies has played a significant role in the success of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations in recent years. However, much of this collaboration has been ad hoc in nature.**

**What do you believe are the most important lessons learned from the collaborative interagency efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and elsewhere?**

The establishment of partnerships that integrated all instruments of national power at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels was essential to our campaigns in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, as well as our broader counterterrorism efforts in the last 20 years. Through these collaborative partnerships, we learned lessons on the importance of information sharing, the value of pairing complementary authorities, and the criticality of bringing a range of organizational capabilities to bear on a problem. During service as both a general purpose force and special operation commander, I found that transparency, direct coordination, and development of a mutually agreed upon operational framework enabled success. It is imperative we carry these lessons forward and apply these constructs in future conflicts.

### **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 USCENTCOM, including assaults by and against U.S. civilian and contractor personnel?**

The USCENTCOM climate and policies surrounding sexual assault prevention and response will be part of my initial command assessment. I take the prevention of and response to sexual assault against any person seriously. Sexual assault is abhorrent; it is not only against our values, but also harms military readiness. Sexual assault exists along a continuum of harm, so we must also ensure that we do not tolerate other types of behaviors, such as sexual harassment, that at times can escalate.

If confirmed, I will work to ensure prevention and response is a top priority for all commanders and members of the USCENTCOM community. I will also ensure our efforts are properly resourced, and that all programs, policies, and training are supportive of Department's five lines of effort (LOEs), which include:

- 1) prevention;
- 2) victim assistance and advocacy;
- 3) investigation;
- 4) accountability; and
- 5) assessment.

Fundamentally, sexual assault is a safety and readiness issue, and will always receive my direct attention.

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

As part of my initial command assessment, I will review both the adequacy of USCENTCOM policies and procedures for protecting victims of sexual assault from retaliation, but also the effectiveness of the training and implementation of such policies and procedures. Every leader and every member of the force must support a climate in which survivors can report these claims without fear of retaliation or blame for the unlawful actions of others.

We all must encourage climates in which victims feel comfortable coming forward to report their experiences so they can connect with restorative care and aid in our efforts to hold offenders appropriately accountable. I will continue a zero-tolerance policy for any type of sexual assault, harassment or retaliation.

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

An important aspect of my initial command assessment will be the adequacy of the training, resources, and climate surrounding sexual assault prevention and response. While commanders have an absolute responsibility to address command climate issues, I also believe every member of our Armed Forces can contribute to an environment in which we make clear that sexual harassment and sexual assault are absolutely unacceptable. I will work hard to empower all members of our community with the necessary tools, skills, and abilities to ensure the safety of all. When confronted with instances of sexual assault, I will ensure that survivors receive the necessary support and treatment they require without fear of retaliation.

Critical to sexual assault prevention is training for supervisors regarding incident response and the warning signs of retaliation. Indeed, training all members of the command to recognize retaliation is critical.

I am committed to bringing to bear the resources required throughout the AOR to ensure thorough and complete investigations are conducted. I am also fully committed to survivor care and offender accountability.

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

In my career, I have observed a strong willingness by military leaders to hold service members appropriately accountable for sexual misconduct. Yet we are still not where we need to be and more must be done. Disciplined, fit, and cohesive teams can be built only upon a foundation of trust. Sexual misconduct destroys trust and the cohesion so necessary for a ready and lethal fighting force. I remain committed to bringing to bear the resources required in the AOR to ensure service members responsible for sexual misconduct are held appropriately accountable.

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

Congress has been a critical partner in helping the Department of Defense ensure we have a robust response system and the resources available for survivors. However, support to victims is an area in which we constantly must reevaluate and assess our effectiveness in helping ensure they have access restorative care. We must constantly reassess where we are; as such, I emphasize my support for Secretary Austin's initiatives surrounding sexual assault, to include survivor support. Commanders play a critical role in this capacity.

The Department of Defense provides commanders with the many resources and programs to care for our personnel and their families. We continue to pursue the most useful tools that will expand our ability to support victims with quality medical, psychological, and legal help. Part of my initial command assessment will include issues surrounding services provided to victims of sexual assault. If confirmed, I will ensure commanders and leaders at all levels within USCENTCOM are not only personally aware of all available resources but that they actively inform their subordinates of their availability.

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

Taking care of our people is critical to effective leadership. If confirmed, I will ensure USCENTCOM continues to reduce, with the ultimate goal of eliminating, the crime of sexual assault.

My strategic approach to sexual assault is "prevention first." However, if a sexual assault occurs, I have an unwavering commitment to survivor care and offender accountability.

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

While leaders at every level are responsible for culture, organizational culture starts at the top. As I have for 34 years, I embrace the obligation to ensure our military culture reflects our core values and ethos. My commitment is, as it has long been, to building disciplined, fit, cohesive teams, wherein everyone is treated with dignity and respect. Those who volunteer to serve in uniform are our nation's sons and daughters, and I am absolutely determined to ensure they can serve in environments in which they will be treated with dignity and respect.

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

The current sexual assault policies and procedures on restricted reporting are effective. This reporting option allow us to wholly commit to survivor care, while also supporting any desire for privacy.

**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 USCENTCOM?**

If confirmed, I will initiate an assessment of policies, procedures, and programs to prevent and respond to sexual assaults within USCENTCOM. I am fully committed to the prevention of sexual assault throughout the organization. In the event of a sexual assault, however, I will ensure a timely, appropriate, and sensitive response and that survivors' resources commensurate with their needs. I will also fully commit to supporting Secretary Austin's initiatives regarding prevention of sexual assault and sexual harassment.

**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 USCENTCOM Commander?**

It is my understanding that USCENTCOM has a robust program for prevention of sexual assault, inclusive of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Stand-downs, team building events, values-based training, active bystander intervention, and leadership training sessions.

USCENTCOM component commanders evaluate and report trends of sexual assault incidents. If confirmed, my goal will be the elimination of any incidents of sexual assault. I will also fully commit to supporting Secretary Austin's initiatives regarding prevention of sexual assault and sexual harassment.

### **Relations with Congress**

**If confirmed, what actions would you take to sustain a productive and mutually beneficial relationship between USCENTCOM and Congress, and in particular the congressional defense committees?**

Combatant commanders must maintain strong and transparent relationships with the defense committees. As a former USCENTCOM Chief of Staff, I am acutely aware of the mutual benefits of a robust Congressional Engagement Plan (CEP) that establishes an operational framework across the legislative year. If confirmed, I plan to execute a robust CEP, inclusive of quarterly calls with the chairs and ranking members of the defense committees. If confirmed, would also welcome member and staff visits to the USCENTCOM headquarters.

**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.**

**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.

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**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.