

Advance Policy Questions for Gregory Slavonic
Nominee for Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs

Department of Defense Reforms

The National Defense Authorization Acts for Fiscal Year 2017 and 2018 included the most sweeping reforms since the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986.

Do you support these reforms?

Yes.

What other areas for defense reform do you believe might be appropriate for this Committee to address?

At present, I do not have a position on other areas where reform may need evaluation. Given the reforms in the National Defense Authorization Acts (NDAA) for Fiscal Years (FY) 2017 and 2018, the Department of the Navy should absorb these changes in a smooth and timely manner. If confirmed, I will monitor and track these reforms and impact, and make the appropriate recommendations to the Secretary of the Navy.

Duties

Section 5016 of title 10, United States Code, provides that the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs shall have “as his principal duty the overall supervision of manpower and reserve component affairs of the Department of the Navy.”

If confirmed, what duties do you expect that the Secretary of the Navy will prescribe to you?

The U.S. Code states that the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs will provide overall supervision and oversight of manpower and reserve component affairs for the Navy and Marine Corps. This will include responsibility for developing integrated policies and programs related to military personnel (active and reserve components) and the civilian workforce. In addition, the position will provide the necessary oversight of our total force of military, civilians and contractors so as to ensure the Navy and Marine Corps have the most effective and most efficient workforce within Department of Defense.

If confirmed, how do you envision your relationship with the Chief of Naval Personnel and the Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs?

If confirmed, I will maintain a close working relationship the Chief of Naval Personnel and Deputy Commandant of the Marine Corps for Manpower and Reserve Affairs to ensure the manpower, personnel, training and education needs of the Navy and Marine Corps team are met in a timely and effective manner and with the best possible support for Sailors and their families.

What actions will you take to enhance your ability to perform the duties of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs?

If confirmed, I will apply my 34 year naval career (active and reserve), private sector, and legislative experience in reviewing the current Department of the Navy enterprise and then determine an appropriate course of action. I will engage in conversations with the senior leadership at fleet and shore activities along with current Department of the Navy leadership to determine the challenges and the resources necessary to allow the Department of the Navy enterprise to better perform and execute their missions and sustain combat readiness. In addition, I will seek counsel and advice from Members of Congress and their staffs, and together will develop a strategy for success.

Qualifications

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

I have over 40 years of professional experience in a range of leadership and management roles in the military, government and private sector. For nearly four years, I was the chief of staff for U.S. Senator James Lankford. I have had the privilege to see military life from several different vantage points. In 1971, I graduated from college, received draft notice and enlisted in the U.S. Navy. After two Vietnam deployments, I affiliated with the Navy Reserve in 1974, enrolled in graduate school, earned a Master's degree in Education and received a Navy commission. I remained in the Navy Reserve until the fall of 1990 when I mobilized to active duty for the First Gulf War. In 2000 I was selected for flag rank to serve as the sixth Vice Chief for the U.S. Navy's Chief of Information and Director Navy Reserve Public Affairs, and retired in 2005.

If confirmed, I believe the sum of my private sector and military experience; my insight into how to effectively work with both military and civilians on personnel matters; my perspective of understanding the government processes, organizations and dynamics; work with Congressional staffs with House and Senate; and finally my personal experience as an enlisted Sailor in the U.S. Navy and Navy Reserve, and rising through the ranks and earning flag rank has

equipped me with the skills and insights needed to be an effective leader and perform the duties of this position.

Major Challenges

In your view, what are the major challenges confronting the next Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs?

In my opinion, the greatest challenge facing the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs is proper manning for building a 355-ship Navy. This will require balancing military readiness and future requirements, and considering the manpower mix of qualified military, civilian and contractor personnel given possible budget challenges in the current fiscal environment. The Department of Navy must continue to recruit, train and retain the best and brightest, maintain a competitive pay and benefits package that our Sailors and Marines deserve, and provide the best care for our wounded warriors and their families. Since 70% of the earth's surface is covered by water, naval superiority of the seas is the cornerstone for the foundation of American security and global stability. The Navy's ability to project power and forward deploy our Navy-Marine Corps team is integral to our success in winning and war.

If confirmed, how will you address these challenges?

If confirmed, I will work within the Department of the Navy and Department of Defense to address manpower requirements in supporting our uniformed men and women and their families. People are our most expensive and most valuable resource within the Department of the Navy. We must retain them because it is too expensive not to. We must recruit the best and brightest to keep pace with the technology for our 355-ship Navy. I will work and address requirements by bringing together the expertise of the civilian and military leadership within the Department of Navy, the Office of the Secretary of the Navy and the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and seek input from Members of Congress in addressing manpower and recruiting issues.

Relations with Congress

What are your views on the state of the relationship between the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs and the Senate Armed Services Committee in particular, and with Congress in general?

I believe the Department of the Navy at large has a strong relationship with the Senate Armed Services Committee and the Congress. If confirmed, I will follow the lead and direction of the Secretary of the Navy to maintain our strong partnership.

If confirmed, what actions would you take to sustain a productive and mutually beneficial relationship between Congress and the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs?

If confirmed, I will maximize our cooperation and coordination with Congress. The single most important element to continue the great relationship between the Department of the Navy and Congress is to maintain full transparency with the committee through open, timely communications with the Committee Members and professional staff. I am in a unique position of having a close professional relationship with a senior member of the Senate Armed Services Committee Senator Jim Inhofe (R-OK) and his staff. Sen. Inhofe is a fellow Oklahoman and since I came to Washington, DC, in 2014 to work for Sen. James Lankford, both of our staffs have worked closely together. I will strive to maintain this relationship.

Officer Personnel Management

The Navy manages its officer personnel according to the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) of 1980. In the report to accompany the original DOPMA legislation, this Committee said, “Throughout the long history of the United States, the officer corps of the armed forces as a whole has been unready for combat at the time war commenced.” DOPMA was explicitly passed to provide a “fully combat-ready officer corps.”

As the U.S. military confronts a dangerous and dynamic security environment, do you believe the officer corps, as currently organized and managed, is fully prepared for the threats facing the nation?

I understand that Navy faces challenges to maintain required manning and readiness levels and to attract highly-qualified men and women to serve. They continue to assess, develop, train, and educate the force in an environment of constrained resources to deliver the right person with the right skills in the right job at the right time. I believe the Navy team is pulling every force management lever to ensure Navy remains prepared to meet emerging challenges as evidenced by a number of recently announced policy changes designed to help with addressing manning challenges and the prospect of a growing force. Those plans support Navy’s goals of retaining the most talented Sailors and maintaining readiness to continue meeting fleet requirements and the demand signals of the Combatant Commanders.

I understand the Marine Corps as it is currently organized and managed, is well suited to educate, train and lead our Marines. Despite the successes of our officer corps, it is under tremendous strain and conditions are exacerbated by sequestration. Our priorities should focus on improving readiness, lethality, and capability across the Force.

DOPMA mandates officer management policies be uniform across the four military services. In your judgement, do the services need more flexibility to manage their officer personnel?

DOPMA and ROPMA, overall, provide many flexibilities that allow the Department to tailor the force to best suit the mission, while providing the critical stability needed to manage a large force. If necessary changes to personnel management policies lack statutory authority, legislative solutions should be pursued to ensure the Services possess the authorities needed to effectively manage their personnel.

In your view, does the current officer personnel system attract individuals with the skills needed to succeed in future conflicts?

The current officer personnel system provides tools essential to the Department of the Navy's ability to commission, develop, retain and manage a highly talented officer corps capable of effectively leading the men and women who serve our Nation. However, as modern warfare grows increasingly sophisticated, and the needs, priorities and desires of new generations of young men and women continue to evolve, authorities intended to ensure the Department can build and sustain the highly-qualified and talented officer corps needed to effectively lead our All-Volunteer Force in increasingly technical areas and battle environments, must keep pace. Many authorities, and the construct of the system, are now nearly four decades old. Changing times have highlighted the need for some degree of adjustment in the personnel system.

DOPMA mandates a seniority-based promotion system based on predetermined, statutory timelines. In your opinion, what should be the most important consideration in officer promotion decisions?

I believe the most important consideration is that the best and most fully qualified officers, with a sustained record of top performance, are selected for promotion. The promotion system under which the Services operate must afford sufficient flexibility to sustain a highly-qualified and talented officer corps confronted with new circumstances and challenges. Officer promotion must also give high consideration to the demonstration of leadership, performance, and the collective experiences – experiences that often take time – that imbue the officer with the knowledge and understanding needed to succeed in the myriad roles in which the officer will be called on to lead the men and women who serve our Nation. Warfare has grown increasingly technical, so the Department of the Navy needs officers who are skilled and capable of operating effectively in highly technical areas that are prevalent in all aspects of modern warfare. Likewise, the Department needs officers who are fit enough and capable enough

to lead our Service men and women under arduous conditions in hostile and austere environments.

Does Congress need to modernize the legislation that manages officer careers?

While DOPMA and ROPMA have served the Department of Defense well for 37 years, there are elements that need to be amended to preserve the utility of the authorities. Statutes and policies that govern officer force management should be continuously reviewed, and changes recommended to provide the flexibility needed to continue attracting and retaining highly talented young men and women to voluntary service, so as to ensure long-term operational readiness. The Department of the Navy must pursue some measure of greater personnel management flexibility while at the same time retaining much of the stability DOPMA and ROPMA have provided the services for decades.

Section 115a of title 10, United States Code, requires the Secretary of Defense to submit to Congress an annual defense manpower requirements report no later than 45 days after the President submits his annual budget request. To date, this Committee has not received this report for fiscal year 2018.

Did the Department of the Navy provide input to the Office of the Secretary of Defense for the fiscal year 2018 defense manpower requirements report?

The Department of the Navy works closely with the Office of the Secretary of Defense to meet all reporting requirements. The FY 2018 Defense Manpower Requirements Report was completed, and is publically available at DoD's "people.mil" website.

If confirmed, will you ensure the Department of the Navy provides timely and accurate information for future defense manpower requirements reports?

If confirmed, yes, I will ensure that the Department of the Navy continues to provide timely and accurate information for all required reports to Congress. Accurate data on all aspects of the Total Force is essential for making informed decisions, and improving that data management and submission is one of my highest priorities.

If confirmed, you will have significant responsibilities with regard to officer management policies, the promotion system, and recommending officers for nomination to positions of authority and responsibility.

If confirmed, what modifications would you make, if any, to provide the Navy the force management tools necessary to meet the needs of the 21st century joint, all-volunteer force?

If confirmed, I will review the Department of the Navy's use of existing force management tools for their effectiveness in strengthening the Navy and Marine Corps all volunteer force. I will look at private sector best practices for cultivating and retaining exceptional talent to see what might be applicable to making the Department of the Navy the employer of choice. Attracting and retaining the very best Sailors and Marines, in an increasingly competitive talent market, requires flexibility and continuous modernization of force management policies and practices.

Do you believe the current Department of the Navy procedures and practices for reviewing the records of officers pending nomination by the President are sufficient to ensure the Secretary of the Navy, the Secretary of Defense, and the President can make informed decisions?

The Navy's processes and policies outline the eligibility and suitability for appointment or re-appointment of officers, and I believe that these processes and policies provide sufficient information for the Secretary of the Navy, the Secretary of Defense for the President to make informed decisions. If confirmed, I will fully support efforts to enhance personnel suitability screening associated with nominations for appointments to higher positions of leadership, trust and responsibility.

In your view, are these procedures and practices fair and reasonable for the officers involved?

The current procedures for vetting personal and professional information seek to protect the rights of individual officers as well as the interests of the Navy by recommending advancement only for those officers who have clearly demonstrated exceptional character, competence, and commitment to the Nation's values. If confirmed, I will support these vetting processes and, for any changes proposed, I will ensure the due process rights of individual officers are protected.

What modifications, if any, to the requirements for joint officer qualifications do you believe are necessary to ensure that military officers are able to attain meaningful joint and service-specific leadership experience and professional development?

Developing a naval force comprised of officers with both maritime warfighting skills and joint matters expertise is critically important. The recent Secretary of the Navy Strategic Readiness Review found that joint officer qualification

requirements, as implemented by the Navy, may have contributed to a diminished opportunity for officers to master naval skills and has potentially diverted talented officers away from opportunities to build and deepen warfighting readiness. If confirmed, I will review current practices and policies and recommend changes if warranted.

Is the traditional 20-year military career long enough to allow officers to develop sufficient breadth as well as depth of experience in both Navy or Marine Corps and joint assignments?

The Secretary of the Navy's Strategic Readiness Review makes the case that twenty years is not sufficient time for all warfare qualified officers to master both naval skills at a level that provides for optimal fleet readiness and complete the joint education and experience required to qualify as a joint qualified officer. If confirmed, I will review this issue and recommend changes if warranted.

Surface Warfare Officer Career Management

In 2008, the Navy instituted a program called "Fleet Up" that mandated that most surface warfare officers assigned to destroyers serve as the executive officer and captain on the same ship in sequential assignments. The Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) assessed the Fleet Up program and said the need for such a program "began with a substantial gap between control-grade inventory and control-grade manning requirements."

What is your assessment of the Fleet Up program?

I have not had an opportunity to develop my own personal fully-informed assessment of the Fleet Up program. The Comprehensive Review and Secretary of the Navy directed Strategic Review of recent surface force incidents looked holistically at the surface warfare career path. Both reviews made several recommendations that will inform Navy's evaluation of possible career path modifications.

In your view, does the gap between inventory and requirements identified by CNA still exist?

My understanding is that, in the aggregate, the gap between inventory and requirements may have been narrowed. However, I believe there may still be a delta between authorized billets and available inventory of those promoted to captain, but that Navy continues to promote the best and fully qualified officers to each pay grade within DOPMA control grade limits. If confirmed, I will look into the matter to determine the extent to which such a mismatch may continue to exist and, if so, determine the best approach for mitigating it.

Is the proliferation of career broadening and staff assignments contributing to the growth of requirements for control-grade surface warfare officers?

Navy found that, over the last 15 years, there was no substantial increase in the number of career broadening and staff assignments for Unrestricted Line control grade officers. However, changes in force structure and requirements continue to challenge their ability to achieve 100 percent of inventory in the control grades, which continues to necessitate assignment of officers to the most critical billets in which their expertise and experience offer the greatest benefit to the Navy. If confirmed, I will look into the matter, to see the impact they have on readiness and meeting operational requirements.

In its report, CNA stated that one possible negative result of the Fleet Up program is “tour start dates shifting to the right and command-screened officers are waiting to start their command assignments.” This has, in fact, occurred and we are now seeing large sea gaps of five years or more in Fleet Up destroyer captains.

Do you believe the Fleet Up program has created a situation where surface warfare officers are spending too much time away from the waterfront?

My understanding is that, when Fleet Up was implemented, by design, the notional time between department head tours and the start of the executive officer tour was five-and-a-half years. My understanding is that across the Fleet Up program’s tenure, that average has been maintained, as anticipated. The Comprehensive Review and Secretary of the Navy directed Strategic Review of recent surface force incidents looked holistically at the surface warfare career path. Both reviews made several recommendations that will inform Navy’s evaluation of possible career path modifications.

In your judgment, is an extended sea gap a contributing factor in recent destroyer collisions?

While I did not see anything in the Comprehensive Review that specifically pointed to an extended sea gap as a contributing factor, the report identified a number of factors that contributed to the collisions, including in the areas of Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, and Facilities. The report did note several areas within the career path of a surface warfare officer that warrant corrective action, each of which has either already been acted on, or is to be addressed within the next several months.

Do some of the requirements of DOPMA and other related laws reduce the Navy's ability to flexibly manage the surface warfare officer population, especially when it comes to building sufficient levels of technical expertise?

My understanding is that may be the case. Some DOPMA requirements limit the ability to efficiently and effectively manage the officer corps. I believe Navy has done its best to promulgate policies and manpower management strategies to provide surface warfare officers with sufficient levels of technical expertise and experience throughout their careers. I am aware that Navy has been pursuing changes in the personnel system for many years, to offer increased flexibility, opportunity, and transparency. Indeed, Congress, too, recognized this need in enacting a number of DOPMA changes, but I believe additional changes may be necessary. If confirmed, I look forward to participating in the congressionally-mandated review of DOPMA and ROPMA, in collaboration with the Congress, the other military departments, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Officer Accessions

What, in your view, is the appropriate relative distribution from the different commissioning sources to meet the Navy's officer accessions requirements and sustain the viability of the U.S. Naval Academy, Reserve Officer Training Corps, and Officer Candidate School?

I think each commissioning source offers unique characteristics that, together, provide for a diverse and talented fighting force, and that such diversity is essential to military readiness. The option to select from various commissioning sources surely contributes to Navy's ability to attract and access a wider range of young men and women from different walks of life, and who possess distinct attributes, than could otherwise be attained by any one commissioning source. I'm quite familiar with one Direct Commission Officer (DCO) program – the Public Affairs (1655) program which was created in 1973 and has been providing talented and well qualified communications professionals to the Navy/Navy Reserve. This group of communications specialists resides in the Navy Reserve but has been mobilizing to support the active component since the First Gulf War. There is opportunity for those interested, although in very small numbers, to permanently transition from the reserves to an active duty career. If confirmed, I will evaluate other accession programs for their effectiveness and if other communities who do not accept direct commissions can develop a DCO program. I realize a number of officers are commissioned each year from a particular commissioning source, and whether the relative distribution is consistent with the skill and experience requirements necessary to meet current and future fleet requirements.

Section 509 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 authorized the Navy to create a pilot program to award direct officer commissions to individuals with particular cyber-related skills or knowledge.

Has the Navy implemented this authority? If not, when would you expect this authority to be implemented?

While I understand Navy has not created a direct officer commission pilot for cyber-related skills under this authority, Navy may benefit from such a pilot program. There are other potential options to meet the cyber manpower demand that are currently being explored in conjunction with a direct officer commission program. For instance, one such program is to increase the number of commissions from the enlisted rates that have cyber experience.

What is your assessment of the utility of such a pilot program?

Intuitively, it seems to me that such a program would have significant potential for addressing emerging requirements, particularly in the area of cyber warfare, as the newest domain and emerging threat. It makes sense to have such a tool in the kit to be able to respond rapidly as new requirements arise for highly-qualified individuals possessing unique skill sets, the need for which might not yet exist, but which may in the future, and in the absence of direct commission authority, might be otherwise unattainable.

What other officer specialties would be good candidates for direct commission authority?

No specific specialty comes to mind, but I imagine there are STEM skills, particularly in the robotics and artificial intelligence arenas, that may need to be leveraged faster than could be developed internally, but which could potentially be acquired from the private sector, or elsewhere in the public sector, if experts could be adequately incentivized to join the ranks on extremely short notice. I can envision where such a tool would be essential in helping rapidly establish dominance in emerging battle spaces. I note that modifying overall qualification standards for individuals with select skill sets should be thoroughly researched before being considered for implementation once a shortfall is identified.

U.S. Naval Academy

A recent RAND study found that officers commissioned from service academies have the lowest junior officer retention rates among all commissioning sources.

How do you explain this, and given the high cost of a service academy education, do you have any ideas to boost service academy graduate retention?

My understanding is that each commissioning source brings different strengths in terms of prior military experience, academic background, diversity, and indoctrination into the military culture. The existence of different commissioning sources likely makes naval service appealing to a wider range of young men and women than would be attracted by any single program.

Additionally, it is my understanding that the Chief of Naval Personnel recently reviewed retention trends at the 10 and 20 year career marks for Naval Academy (USNA), NROTC, and Officer Candidate School (OCS) accessions; and the trends for all three accession sources indicate increased retention. USNA retention consistently exceeded NROTC retention - the differences averaged 4-5% each year and were statistically significant. The OCS trend was highly variable, exceeding both USNA and NROTC in some years and trailing in others. High OCS retention is likely related to the effect of significant prior enlisted service for many of the OCS officers.

Currently, service academy graduates must serve on active duty for a minimum of five years following graduation.

Is that a sufficient service commitment for an education that costs the Government over \$400,000?

The Naval Academy produces exceptional leaders with a particular set of skills essential to the security of the Nation and the health of our Navy and Marine Corps. Applying a dollar-for-dollar “return-on-investment” to value their contributions - whether they serve for five years or 30 - is difficult. These officers each possess valuable skills and their leadership ability contributes significantly to the military’s continued success.

What is your assessment of the policies and procedures at the U.S. Naval Academy to prevent and respond appropriately to sexual assaults and sexual harassment and to ensure essential oversight?

My understanding is that the United States Naval Academy (USNA) possesses policies and procedures designed to prevent and respond appropriately to sexual harassment and sexual assaults and to ensure essential oversight. I believe it is critical at every level to promote a positive command climate that does not tolerate any form of sexual assault or sexual harassment. I understand that the USNA recognizes this and that the highest levels of school leadership are engaged on this issue. Recent reviews of their programs indicate a robust prevention education program and a response program that is trusted by the

Brigade of Midshipmen. The USNA has played an integral part in the "It's On Us" campaign that addresses prevention of sexual assault on college campuses, and continues to participate in a number of military and civilian institutional forums designed to share best practices. If confirmed, one of my highest priorities will be to support the ongoing efforts to strengthen the USNA programs and policies that attempt to eliminate sexual assault and sexual harassment.

What is your assessment of the policies and procedures at the U.S. Naval Academy to ensure religious tolerance and respect?

It is my understanding that the USNA follows Department of Defense and Department of the Navy policies on religious accommodation and has procedures in place aimed at ensuring religious tolerance, respect, and support for midshipmen, faculty, and staff in their personal faith choices. I fully support this Constitutional right and recognize its importance to our Nation and the Department of the Navy. If confirmed, I will take all the necessary steps to ensure that the Department of the Navy's policies reflect religious tolerance for all faiths.

General and Flag Officer Nominations

Under DOD Instruction 1320.04, adverse and reportable information pertaining to general officers must be evaluated by senior leaders in the services and in the Office of the Secretary of Defense prior to nomination.

If confirmed, what role would you play in the officer promotion system, particularly in reviewing general and flag officer nominations?

The officer promotion system is governed by the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act and the Reserve Officer Personnel Management Act, as well as Department of Defense and Department of the Navy regulations. Current regulations and procedures provide senior civilian oversight to ensure information relevant to prospective nominees is appropriately considered by promotion boards and officials within the recommending chain of command. If confirmed, I will engage with and monitor these processes to preserve the integrity of the promotion system to ensure that the officers promoted are physically, mentally and morally qualified to serve at the highest levels.

What is your assessment of the ability of the services to timely document credible information of an adverse nature for evaluation by promotion selection boards and military and civilian leaders?

Consideration of all information is critical to ensuring the reliability of selection board results. I consider this to be a vitally important responsibility. If confirmed, I will carefully review the selection process for military officers to ensure information of an adverse nature is appropriately considered. I believe that the Navy's process by which credible information of an adverse nature is presented to promotion selection boards provides the promotion selection board sufficient information to make educated promotion decisions. If confirmed, I will review and monitor these processes to determine if there are areas for improvement.

If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure that only the best qualified officers are nominated for promotion to general and flag officer rank?

Pursuant to regulation, a thorough screening process and review is conducted on convening orders for flag and general officer selection boards to ensure clear guidance is provided to all flag and general officer selection board members. If confirmed, I will examine the existing process within the Department of the Navy for developing and promulgating selection criteria for general and flag officers, and will provide the Secretary my frank assessment of the existing processes. If appropriate, I will make recommendations to ensure the best qualified officers are nominated.

Pilot Retention

While the Air Force's pilot shortage continues, there are now emerging signs of a growing aviator shortfall in both the Navy and Marine Corps.

In your judgment, do retention bonuses incentivize pilots who are leaning towards leaving the military to change their minds?

Yes. Retention bonuses are effective and cost-efficient tools for influencing the retention of aviators who otherwise might find it necessary to leave. That said, I am not suggesting that monetary incentives are the sole factor, or even the primary motivation, in such a decision, but they can be an attractive tie-breaker. Monetary and non-monetary incentives should be applied in a complementary fashion. The value of non-monetary incentives, such as improved work-life-family balance, reduction of non-essential tasks, improvements in aviation maintenance, availability of flight hours, opportunity to train, and production - all of which will support increased operational readiness - cannot be underestimated or overlooked.

What is your assessment of a “flying only” track for pilots uninterested or ill-suited for command and high-level staff assignments?

I believe a highly flexible and agile statutory and policy framework for officer development and utilization - part of which may include a “flying only” track in which certain pilots would remain in the cockpit for the duration of their careers - may be a beneficial approach. If confirmed, I would need to study the issue more closely and discuss with uniformed leaders, particularly senior and retired aviators, before making a final determination or recommendation.

Do you agree that aviation incentive pay and bonuses should be tailored to target communities experiencing shortfalls, and not uniformly offered to every pilot at the maximum rate regardless of platform?

Yes, I believe that a comprehensive and competitive compensation package, which includes targeted special and incentive pays and bonuses, combined with quality of life initiatives that ensure the well-being of aviators and their families, is essential to ensuring adequate retention in undermanned, highly skilled, warfare specialties. Over several decades, targeted bonuses have consistently proven among the most effective and cost-efficient tools in addressing retention challenges when judiciously applied to specific communities, platforms, and experience-levels, at career decision points.

Enlisted Personnel Management

Following the recent incidents at sea, the Government Accountability Office has identified that many sailors are working in excess of 100 hours per week while underway. This is a trend that cannot continue.

What changes would you pursue to ensure sailors are not required to work beyond the point of being able to make effective and safe decisions?

If confirmed, safety of our Sailors is paramount for me, particularly with respect to how the Navy has adjusted in the aftermath of the recent tragic incidents. I will examine closely whether recent changes in fatigue and endurance management policy, implementation of fatigue recovery standards, and codifying circadian ship and watch rotation, are working. I will also examine the ongoing assessment of the standard work week to ensure enough has been done to accurately define, properly implement, and monitor the standard work week, whether at sea or in port, and to ensure it is conducive to mission accomplishment in the safest and most-effective manner.

Ready, Relevant Learning

Section 545 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018 requires the Secretary of the Navy to submit an annual certification regarding the Navy's Ready, Relevant Learning (RRL) initiative. The conferees viewed RRL as a fundamental transformation in training, based on 87% of Navy enlisted ratings being affected and more than \$1.0 billion taken from traditional training billets to fund developmental software-based training applications. The conferees believed continued close oversight of RRL and similar initiatives is warranted to ensure training standards and proficiency is maintained.

What is your understanding of Navy's RRL initiative?

It is my understanding that Ready, Relevant Learning (RRL) initiative is about driving fundamental changes into the Navy's approach to Sailor training and development. The goal of RRL is to provide the right training at the right time in the right way. To accomplish this, the Navy will develop a career-long learning continuum for every Sailor, modernize training to maximize impact and relevance, and accelerate our processes for delivering new training to the Fleet. This will transform our industrial-era, conveyer-belt training model into a modern one, with content that meets Fleet-validated learning needs in order to improve Sailor performance and enhance mission readiness.

Based on this understanding, do you support Navy's RRL initiative?

Based on this understanding, I support the RRL initiative.

What is your understanding of the requirements contained in the annual certifications required by section 545 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018?

It is my understanding that the requirements in Section 545 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2018, require the Secretary of the Navy submit—not later than March 1, 2018, and each year thereafter—a certification on the status of implementation of the Ready, Relevant Learning (RRL) initiative of the Navy for each applicable enlisted rating to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate (SASC) and the House of Representatives (HASC). Each certification shall include the following elements.

- (1) A certification by the Commander of the United States Fleet Forces Command that the block learning and modernized delivery methods of the Ready, Relevant Learning initiative to be implemented during the fiscal year beginning in which such certification is submitted will meet or exceed the existing training delivery approach for all associated training requirements.

(2) A certification by the Secretary of the Navy that the content re-engineering necessary to meet all training objectives and transition from the traditional training curriculum to the modernized delivery format to be implemented during such fiscal year will be complete prior to such transition, including full functionality of all required course software and hardware.

(3) A detailed cost estimate of transitioning to the block learning and modernized delivery approaches to be implemented during such fiscal year with funding listed by purpose, amount, appropriations account, budget program element or line item, and end strength adjustments.

(4) A detailed phasing plan associated with transitioning to the block learning and modernized delivery approaches to be implemented during such fiscal year, including the current status, timing, and identification of reductions in “A” school and “C” school courses, curricula, funding, and personnel.

(5) A certification by the Secretary of the Navy that—

(A) The contracting strategy associated with transitioning to the modernized delivery approach to be implemented during such fiscal year has been completed; and

(B) Contracting actions contain sufficient specification detail to enable a low risk approach to receiving the deliverable end item or items on-budget, on-schedule, and with satisfactory performance.

If confirmed, will you commit to conducting a review of the RRL initiative within 60 days of assuming office and making or proposing changes if necessary?

If confirmed, within two months of assuming office I will review the RRL initiative and make or propose changes if necessary.

Navy and Marine Corps End Strength

The President’s Fiscal Year 2018 Budget requested a Navy/Marine Corps total force end strength of 610,400.

In your view, can the Department of the Navy meet national defense objectives at this strength level?

Navy leaders have said that end strength requested in the fiscal year 2018 President's Budget would minimally meet national defense objectives, but that a return to sequestration would not. I am aware that they have consistently testified that sequestration imposes unacceptable reductions in resources and force levels that result in sea duty gaps, cancellation of deployments, reduction in steaming days and flying hours, and reduced training and furloughs of critical civilian workers. Such adverse outcomes cannot be permitted to damage readiness and diminish the capacity of the Navy and Marine Corps to meet National Security objectives.

If budget caps effective in current law remain in place, how will the Department of the Navy's active and reserve component end strengths be impacted?

I am not privy to the internal discussions and deliberations upon which difficult decisions and trade-offs would be based with respect to allocating severely constrained resources, should the budget caps remain in place.

However, it is my broad understanding that the budget caps will have a significant, negative impact on the Department of the Navy's ability to perform its missions, and could necessitate adjustments to end-strength levels for both our active and reserve components. Furthermore, sequestration would impact all aspects of the Department's Total Force, to include the civilian workforce and contracted services that are critical enablers of readiness and warfighting capability. Continued sequestration impacts across all elements of our Total Force (military, government civilians, and contracted support) will directly and negatively affect readiness regeneration and force structure, degrading the mission capabilities brought to bear by our active and reserve components.

If confirmed, I would certainly anticipate playing a key role in the deliberations, and advising the Secretary on such matters, and would not, under any circumstances, support end strength recommendations that might undermine the safety and security of Sailors and Marines.

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

I know the fiscal year 2018 NDAA requires the Secretary of Defense to conduct a review of policies for the career management of regular and reserve officers pursuant to DOPMA/ROPMA, and report the findings and recommendations to the Armed Services Committees later this year. If confirmed, I will assess the extent to which such recommended changes are appropriate and sufficient to provide the Service Chiefs the tools they need to effectively and efficiently recruit, develop, shape, and retain, the high-caliber and talented force necessary to meet mission requirements.

I believe our officer personnel management policies must be continually assessed to ensure they provide the Department of the Navy with the necessary tools and flexibility it needs to meet the dynamic requirements they face.

As the Navy seeks to grow the size of the fleet, what factors will you consider when requesting additional end strength?

Navy is developing specific accession and workforce management plans to support anticipated force structure scenarios, within established fiscal and infrastructure constraints. These plans rely on the demand signal of the anticipated force structure. A request for additional manning will depend on: the rate at which new platforms are procured and constructed, the manning-needs of specific platforms as they come online, required skill-sets of Sailors assigned to those platforms, and the seniority/experience mix needed to operate at peak readiness, efficiency and capability.

In anticipation of a growing force structure, Navy has already begun to lean forward in retaining the experience and talent of its present workforce through recently-announced policy initiatives aimed squarely at retaining top talent such as: increasing High Year Tenure gates, enhancing the Meritorious Advancement Program to reward top performers, and updating reenlistment bonus award levels to retain Sailors with critical skills.

Blended Retirement System

The Blended Retirement System (BRS) will come into effect during fiscal year 2018.

Do you believe BRS offers the Department of the Navy an opportunity to re-evaluate how it determines its desired force manpower profile?

Yes, I believe the BRS will enable more flexibility, over the coming years, in management of the force. This new system will be an attractive recruiting tool, particularly among younger millennials, and the continuation pay bonus provides additional incentive allowing the Services to shape their forces at the critical mid-career waypoint.

How can the Department of the Navy take advantage of BRS to ensure it has the most efficient and effective total force?

The Department of the Navy should highlight the Government-supported Thrift Savings Plan because this attractive benefit will make the Department more competitive with the private sector. The financial preparedness and financial literacy training accompanying implementation of BRS will serve our members

well. And, in addition, the continuation pay bonus will be an important tool for effectively shaping the forces at the critical mid-career waypoints.

What is your assessment of the Department of the Navy's BRS implementation and education efforts?

I understand the Department of the Navy fully implemented BRS on January 1, 2018. I have been informed necessary training has been conducted and the Force is ready for this important transition. If confirmed, I will monitor the Department's implementation progress closely.

Lessons Learned

What do you believe are the major personnel management lessons learned from the last 15 years of sustained combat operations and major budget fluctuations that you would seek to address if confirmed?

The major personnel management lessons learned from long-term combat operations and major budget fluctuations are centered on capacity and readiness. Over the past 15 years, Navy fleet capacity has been decreased as an offset in support of DoD-wide growth in land forces. Based on a changing threat profile, the Nation is entering a maritime era in which global presence on the seas is essential. Navy is tasked with maintaining the same presence it maintained in the mid-1980s, but with 45 percent fewer ships. Over a third of the Navy is deployed on any given day, compared with one-fifth in the 1980s. In addition, budget fluctuations and continuing resolutions inhibit Navy's ability to acquire new platforms and equipment at the lowest possible cost. To offset acquisition challenges, for several years Navy has taken risk in manpower accounts. As noted in the Comprehensive Review of Recent Surface Incidents, maintaining high levels of global presence with fewer ships and people has seriously degraded readiness. Fiscal uncertainty also impacts effective operations, qualifications processes, retention, and morale. Career paths must be structured to refocus on mastering skills crucial to the Navy. Growing the Navy is critical to rebuilding the capacity necessary for maritime tasking in today's environment. Restoring funding stability, and providing incremental growth to Navy funding profiles, will increase capacity and improve readiness.

Suicide Prevention

If confirmed, what role would you play in shaping suicide prevention programs and policies for the Department of the Navy to prevent suicides and increase the resiliency of service members and their families?

Suicide is a preventable tragedy. If confirmed, I will provide my full support to ongoing Department of the Navy efforts to develop, evolve, and provide evidence-based training, support programs, guidance, and policy to reduce suicidal behaviors by promoting early intervention, addressing mental health and stress factors, and fostering a culture where seeking help is a sign of strength.

Military Family Readiness and Support

Sailors, Marines, and their families in both the active and reserve components have made, and continue to make, tremendous sacrifices in support of operational deployments, short notice temporary duties, and frequent relocations. Senior military leaders have warned of concerns among military families resulting from these challenges.

What do you consider to be the most important family readiness issues for Sailors, Marines, and their families, and, if confirmed, how would you ensure that family readiness needs are addressed and adequately resourced, especially in light of current fiscal constraints?

Taking care of Marines, Sailors and their families is a key element of overall readiness and combat effectiveness. I agree with the view that fiscal uncertainty, which adversely impacts fleet readiness and quality of life; eradicating destructive behaviors, including sexual assault, suicide, child abuse and neglect; and responsible maintenance of facilities that support training, operations, and quality of life for Sailors and Marines and their families; are the most important family readiness issues. If confirmed, I will work with Congress, and my counterparts in the Office of the Secretary of Defense to advocate for the resources necessary to mitigate risks associated with these issues, while caring for Sailors and Marines and their families.

How would you balance the military need to frequently relocate personnel with the increasing population of dual-income military families who wish to remain in one location for a longer period of time?

It is my understanding that the Department of the Navy has long maintained detailed policy for developing and maintaining the force at a high degree of operational readiness, providing for equitable personnel rotation and a sustainable base for sea duty and overseas tours of duty, and achieving personal stability while enhancing career development.

While needs of the Department are paramount, quality of life is also important. If confirmed, I will examine assignment policies and all others under my

purview, to ensure they are effective and efficient in their execution, equitable in their application, and suitable to the time and circumstances, to meet the needs of the Department, and the Sailors, Marines and families, to which they apply.

When ordered to undergo a permanent change of station, many Sailors and Marines opt to separate from their family members in order to offer stability for a spouse's job or a child's education. This often increases stress for the family, the service member, and the service member's unit, degrading readiness and effectiveness.

Does the Department of the Navy have the ability to determine how many service members voluntarily separate themselves from their families?

I don't know that there is a means by which to capture the specific reason individuals choose to voluntarily serve in the Navy or Marine Corps, in which family separation is an inherent fact of life. However, I do believe the Services may capture the number of those referred to as "Geographic Bachelors," who, for any number of personal and professional reasons, voluntarily executed unaccompanied Permanent Change of Station (PCS) orders where dependent family members would have been eligible to co-locate with them.

What are some steps you could pursue to reduce the number of such service members in the Navy and Marine Corps?

If confirmed, I would have to look into the matter. The Department of the Navy relies heavily on selfless young men and women dedicating themselves to the mission of defending our nation's vital national security interests. Separation from family has always been, and will always be, an inherent, if regrettable, necessity of service in the Navy and Marine Corps, but the Department can strive to balance personal, professional, and family needs with the needs of the service.

Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR)

If confirmed, what challenges do you foresee in sustaining the Department of the Navy's MWR programs in the current and future fiscal environment of the Department?

MWR programs play a vital role in supporting readiness and retention and enhancing quality of life for military families and single Sailors and Marines. In this fiscally constrained environment, the prime challenge will be finding the right balance between seeking efficiencies in business operations and protecting the vital readiness benefits provided by so many of the Department of the Navy's MWR programs.

Managing the Cost of Health Care

In the President's Fiscal Year 2018 Budget Request, the Department of Defense requested \$53.5 billion in operation and support funding for the military health system, about 9% of the total funding requested for the Department's base budget. CBO has calculated that those costs will reach \$64 billion by 2030 if their growth reflects anticipated national trends in health care costs.

In your view, what is the greatest threat to the long-term viability of the military health system?

The opportunity and challenge is to ensure the Department of the Navy works to optimize the readiness capabilities of the Military Health System, while pursuing sound business reform initiatives. I recognize that the rising cost of healthcare presents a challenge in our country, and the Military Health System is not unaffected by many of the factors that impact the overall level of spending for health care. Nonetheless, I do believe in never losing sight of the fact that our most important work moving forward will be to ensure that military medicine is ready and able to meet its operational missions. Sustaining these capabilities must remain foremost in our efforts to improve processes and drive efficiencies throughout the Military Health System.

What is your assessment of the long-term impact of the Department's health care costs on military readiness and overall national security?

Military Readiness must be the top priority. The Department of the Navy must remain committed to key to ensuring Sailors and Marines are healthy and ready to deploy. Providing care at sea or on the battlefield is integral to protecting and sustaining our warfighters' readiness and these are the primary responsibilities of military medicine.

I know how important the health care benefit is to service members and their families. It helps us recruit and retain our personnel. I do believe there are opportunities to make progress in improving the administration of the health care benefit which can impact overall costs moving forward. It is incumbent on us to be good stewards of the resources provided to us, particularly within the Defense Health Program. If confirmed, I will work with my DoD and Service counterparts to assess and implement process improvements, to include greater standardization and less duplication in our military treatment facilities and throughout the Military Health System.

Mental Health Care

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

My understanding is that the Navy has made significant progress in recruiting and retaining mental health providers, and current overall manning levels reflect this important commitment to ensure access to mental health services. I am also encouraged by what I have learned about several important Navy initiatives including embedding more mental health providers directly with Fleet units and Marines Forces, adding psychologists into primary care settings throughout our hospitals and clinics, and leveraging telemedicine capabilities to reach remotely located personnel and their families. These efforts improve access and reduce stigma.

If confirmed, what actions would you take to ensure that sufficient mental health resources are available to Department of the Navy service members in theater and to service members and families upon return to home station locations with insufficient community-based mental health resources?

If confirmed, I will ensure that access to mental health care for all our beneficiaries remains a key Department of Navy priority. I will build on the progress the Department has been making – improving mental health manning, embedding mental health providers in operational and primary care settings, and leveraging telehealth technology. I am committed to providing programs and services that are responsive to the behavioral health needs our Sailors and Marines and their families.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

What is your assessment of the Department of the Navy's sexual assault prevention and response program?

The Department of the Navy, along with its component Services – the Navy and the Marine Corps – is committed to a culture of dignity and respect, where sexual assault is never tolerated and ultimately eliminated, where all survivors receive coordinated support and protection, and where offenders are held appropriately accountable.

My understanding is that the Department's sexual assault prevention and response program is quite comprehensive, but although it has accomplished a lot, there is still more to do.

Just as in our larger society, culture change is hard and requires a sustained effort. The depth and breadth of the Department's commitment, in partnership with DoD and the other Military Departments, is unmatched in combating sexual assault. Leadership at all levels is visibly engaged in the positive culture change we seek. As evidence, the Department is the only DoD entity with a dedicated SAPR Office (DON-SAPRO) reporting directly to the Department Secretary.

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

In my view, restricted and unrestricted reporting options are important components of a victim-centric program. In particular, the restricted reporting option helps build credibility with every victim of sexual assault; it increases their overall reporting; and it allows us to engage in support of individuals who otherwise might be at high risk for re-victimization. Further, the paradigm offers victims the flexibility to convert restricted reports to unrestricted reports. Across DoD, during FY16, about one-third of reports involving a Service Member victim or subject were initially filed as a restricted report. Among these, at least one-fifth were converted to unrestricted status during the same FY.

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

Preventing sexual assault and supporting its victims are fundamental leadership responsibilities at every level of the chain of command. The chain of command is directly responsible for maintaining a positive and healthy command climate. Our core values of honor, courage, and commitment require the active engagement of every Sailor, Marine, and Department of the Navy civilian.

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

In general, it is my understanding that the Department of the Navy's resources and programs for assisting victims of sexual assault are robust.

I have learned that victims are supported by Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs) and Victim Advocates, all of whom are actively certified by a civilian expert organization; Victims' Legal Counsels; and numerous specially-trained NCIS agents, medical personnel, chaplains, and clinical counselors. The Navy Medical Department has ensured that Sexual Assault Forensic Examinations are quickly available in virtually every setting world-wide.

Although I currently lack the factual basis needed to properly assess the adequacy of the resources and programs supporting victims of sexual assault, I believe such programs and resources are critical. If confirmed, I will explore this issue more in depth to ensure they are sustained at the appropriate level.

What is your view of the Department of the Navy's Victims' Legal Counsel programs?

I support the Department of the Navy's committed to ensuring victims' rights are scrupulously honored and protected. To that end, it is critical that the Navy continues to certify and train Victims' Legal Counsel (VLC) who can advise victims about their rights, provide confidential and privileged legal advice, and assist victims in navigating through the military's disciplinary and administrative systems. Maintaining this program is a crucial step in addressing sexual offenses in the Navy.

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

The Department of the Navy continues to take a broad-spectrum approach to sexual assault prevention by engaging leaders at all levels to drive cultural change and prevent all types of destructive behaviors. Developing innovative training addresses the prevention of destructive behavior by implementing cultural change at the individual and unit level. Ground-breaking work since 2010 at Training Support Command Great Lakes, Illinois has demonstrated that sustained impacts are possible, but they require multiple simultaneous initiatives combined with visible if not intrusive leadership engagement. Those same lessons are now being adapted to other environments.

The Department has used an aggressive program of world-wide oversight visits to build first-hand insights into the perspectives and motivations of individual Sailors and Marines. These have contributed directly to the development of new training tools including video interviews of actual victims, dramatic movies, small-group forums, interactive theatrical formats, a graphic novel, and virtual immersive training.

What is your view of the adequacy of the training and resources that the Department of the Navy has in place to investigate and prosecute allegations of sexual assault?

It is my high-level understanding that Department of the Navy investigators have substantial and sophisticated expertise in the investigation of sexual assault cases. The Department continues to assess adequate manning and resources in light of the scope of their investigative duties and the impact of using Service law enforcement agencies to assist in sexual assault investigations.

As for prosecution of such cases, the Navy launched the Military Justice Litigation Track (MJLCT) in 2007 in response to an increasingly complex litigation practice. Now in its tenth year, the Navy's program is recognized as a model for the other Services, and the FY18 NDAA requires all the Services to pilot a similar program. The goal is for the Services to have a career track that leads to judge advocates with military justice experience in the grade of O-6. As sexual assault prevention continues to evolve, the steps that the Department takes to prevent sexual assaults must also be just as dynamic and be adjusted accordingly.

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

Department of the Navy leadership at all levels must promote a consistent top-down message of intolerance for sexual assault, and support for sexual assault victims. The Department must ensure that unit-level guidance is given to commanders to underscore their primary leadership responsibility for establishing command climates that discourage sexual assault, and for engaging responsibly in the management of alleged sexual assault incidents. Every commanding officer must take each report of sexual assault seriously, immediately refer the allegations to NCIS for investigation, support investigative and criminal justice procedures that enable persons to be held appropriately accountable, and ensure that victims have access to support services and medical care.

If confirmed, what will you do to address the issue of retaliation for reporting a sexual assault?

Sexual assault victims who have the courage to come forward deserve coordinated support and protection.

The first step would be to identify the scope of the retaliation problem. In order to effectively address and respond to retaliation, the DoD must develop uniform processes for reporting, monitoring, and tracking retaliation complaints and outcomes.

As with reporting of sexual assault, victims of retaliation should be provided multiple channels to report retaliation that is related to the report of a sexual assault, including the option to file an informal complaint. This would enable the commands to quickly address and resolve complaints at the lowest level while allowing them to initiate a formal investigation if they discover egregious misconduct associated with the complaint.

Expedited transfer provides an effective tool for mitigating retaliation, but a victim from a small specialty career field may continue to experience retaliation even after moving to a new unit or duty location.

Greater transparency about disciplinary actions taken in response to instances of retaliation would make it clear to all Service members that retaliation will not be tolerated and will increase confidence that action will be taken in response to substantiated retaliation allegations.

In your view, what would be the impact of requiring a judge advocate outside the chain of command, instead of a military commander in the grade of O-6 or above as is currently the Department of Defense’s policy, to determine whether allegations of sexual assault should be prosecuted?

Military commanders play a vital role in ensuring military readiness and combat effectiveness, as well as waging the fight against sexual assault in the ranks. Ultimately, military commanders are responsible for good order and discipline and completion of their units' missions. Their responsibilities often include preparing units for, and leading their units in, combat. Interfering with military commanders' authority risks undercutting their ability to achieve combat effectiveness. Removing a commander's authority over allegations of sexual assault interferes with the ability of commanders to complete their missions. Commanders are called upon every day to make difficult decisions to accomplish their assigned missions while simultaneously protecting the well-being of their subordinates. The authority that commanders exercise under the Uniform Code of Military Justice is important to achieving these goals. Military commanders, who are entrusted with the lives of their subordinates and the security of our nation, can be trusted to make decisions, aided by advice from military lawyers, concerning the referral of charges. In the end, commanders are responsible for the welfare of all of the service members in their units, and commanders will better protect the interests of victims and the accused than a military lawyer who does not share this same responsibility.

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

It may be challenging to maintain our recent progress and momentum in a changing world with competing priorities. The Department of the Navy has come a long way, but there is no precedent for the scale of the goal, especially given the recognition of the fundamental distinctions between victim support and sexual assault prevention. Additionally, the Department has likely “maxed-out” the capacity to just “add on” more well-intended but untested taskings and training. In many ways, the Department may find itself in the vanguard of broader social change, with the opportunity to explore and document what works and what does not. A fresh perspective at this point may be especially valuable.

My priorities would be to candidly assess what the Department has learned and what it is doing to develop new ways to collect or organize available data at the unit or installation level, and to promote pilot sexual assault prevention initiatives with the potential to objectively demonstrate efficacy or lack thereof at the local level. In all of this, I would seek to support the Secretary of the Navy in presenting an unequivocal and visible position of intolerance for sexual assault anywhere in the Department.

Religious Accommodation

U.S. military personnel routinely deploy to locations around the world where they must engage and work effectively with allies and with host-country nationals whose faiths and beliefs may be different than their own. For many other cultures, religious faith is not a purely personal and private matter; it is the foundation of their culture and society. Learning to respect the different faiths and beliefs of others, and to understand how accommodating different views can contribute to a diverse force is, some would argue, an essential skill to operational effectiveness.

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

Yes.

Under current law and policy, are individual expressions of belief accommodated so long as they do not impact unit cohesion and good order and discipline?

Yes.

In your view, does a military climate that welcomes and respects open and candid discussions about personal religious faith and beliefs in a garrison environment contribute in a positive way to preparing U.S. forces to be effective in overseas assignments?

Yes. It is certainly true that a military climate that allows, or even encourages, respectful, open and candid discussions about personal religious faith and beliefs positively impacts the effectiveness of U.S. forces serving overseas, or for that matter, in any environment.

Would a policy that discourages open discussions about personal faith and beliefs be more or less effective at preparing service members to work and operate in a pluralistic environment?

I think stifling open discussion of personal faith and beliefs by policy would actually make service members less effective. U.S. Service members, who by definition work in a pluralistic environment, need to be honest and open with each other in order to develop the trust and cohesion needed to operate together. Sincerely held beliefs are part of that honesty.

In your view, when performing official military duties outside a worship service, should military chaplains be encouraged to express their personal religious beliefs and tenets of their faith freely, or must they avoid making statements based on their religious beliefs?

Military chaplains are professionals who regularly manage and balance the requirements of delivering ministry in the military environment. Their ministry is guided by the needs of the persons who come to them for help. They do their utmost to protect those who may be vulnerable emotionally or spiritually. Our Service members regularly use chaplains to assist them in myriads of ways not directly linked to religion. I believe our chaplains can be relied upon to use professional judgment to determine when it is useful and appropriate to refer to their own religious beliefs.

Do you believe chaplains should be tasked with conducting non-religious training in front of mandatory formations, even if they may be uniquely qualified to speak on the particular topic, such as suicide prevention or substance abuse? If so, do you believe guidance provided to those chaplains on what they should and should not say with respect to their faith is adequate?

I believe that chaplains are able to professionally balance the requirements of military service and their religious requirements. This would include such teaching duties, which chaplains have carried out since the earliest days of the U.S. Navy. The Navy Chaplain Corps continues to advance the training of chaplains in the art and science of professional naval chaplaincy.

Management and Development of the Senior Executive Service

What is your vision for the management and development of the Department of the Navy's senior executive workforce, especially in the critically important areas of acquisition, financial management, and the scientific and technical fields?

The Department of the Navy's diverse and complex mission demands highly-skilled, high-performing senior executives capable of simultaneous innovation and responsiveness to ever-changing demand signals from emerging threats and new technologies. Deliberate management and development of senior executives will allow the Department to acquire systems that enhance the Navy's infrastructure, promote auditability of financial resources, and foster innovation in science and technology. If confirmed, I will work with senior leaders across

the Department to ensure that they, and those they are mentoring in the leadership pipeline, have the opportunities and experiences to be successful leaders in support of mission readiness.

Balance Between Civilian and Contractor Employees

The Department of the Navy employs many contractors and civilian employees. In many cases, contractor employees work in the same offices, serve on the same projects and task forces, and perform many of the same functions as federal employees. Both contractors and civilians make up an integral part of the Department's total workforce.

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

The civilian / contractor mix is an important component in the accomplishment of the Department of the Navy's mission. If confirmed, I will provide oversight to ensure that the Department will have the right workforce mix to accomplish its mission.

In your view, has the Department of the Navy utilized contractors to perform basic functions in an appropriate manner?

The Department of the Navy has an obligation to use its contractor workforce as prescribed by statute and Department of Defense and Department of Navy governing directives and to ensure follow up and compliance to contracts are conducted on contractor work and performance. I am not aware of any issues with the Department of the Navy using its contractors in an appropriate manner.

Do you believe that the Department of the Navy should continuously assess "inherently governmental functions" and other critical government functions, and how they are performed?

The Department of the Navy must comply with the law on not allowing contractors to perform inherently governmental functions. In order to ensure compliance, the Department must continuously assess inherently governmental functions and how they are performed.

What should be the primary factor in determining the allocation of work between the civilian and contractor workforces?

The primary factor in determining the allocation of work between the civilian and contractor workforces begins with understanding our requirements -- requirements that are not only needs-based, but must also take into consideration affordability, risk, and strategy. Retaining flexibility is vital, as our workforce

balance will not remain constant and changes in workforce mix are a complex process.

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

Any restrictions that reduce our flexibility to shift between workforce sectors--whether legally imposed or through policy--all impact the Department of the Navy's ability to efficiently manage the workforce. If confirmed, I will work to remove any artificial constraints placed on the size of the Department of the Navy's civilian and contractor workforce, so that the Department can hire the number and type of employees most appropriate to accomplish its mission.

Currently, the Department of Defense provides very limited information on current and future budgets allocated to fund service contracts. This limits transparency, as well as the Department's ability to actively manage and coordinate disparate service contracting activities.

If confirmed, will you commit to improving the way the Department of the Navy plans, programs, coordinates, and oversees the use of service contracts?

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Research, Development & Acquisition), the Chief of Naval Operations, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and other Departmental leaders to improve the Department of the Navy's use of service contracts.

Headquarters Reductions

The Department of Defense is currently under a mandate to reduce its headquarters staff by 25%.

If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure that the Department of the Navy does not lose personnel with special technical or managerial skills as a result of these reductions?

The Department of the Navy is still in the process of implementing reductions in Major Headquarters Activities (MHA).

If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the Department commands take a holistic approach aligning the Department's mission and objectives with human capital strategies while maintaining essential and critical skills in identified mission-critical occupations. However, a 25% headquarters reduction likely means the

Department will need to take risk in some management areas, and the results of those risks are unknown at this time.

To date, how many Department of the Navy civilians have been divested as a result of this 25% reduction?

Reductions are based and reported on 25% reduction in cost vice reductions in billets, positions or personnel; reductions include non-labor/contractor cost. Major Headquarters Activities (MHA) civilian reduction implementation for each command varies depending on each command's current and future mission requirements. A major emphasis was placed on retaining the most cost effective element of manpower. Commands are still implementing their reduction plans. If confirmed, I will provide more details on the number of civilian billets reduced, or planned for reduction.

What financial options were offered to those employees who were divested? Was VERA/VSIP used?

Generally, I would expect commands to use a combination of workforce shaping tools, such as the Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) and Voluntary Separation Incentive Pay (VSIP) to meet MHA reductions while maintaining mission readiness.

How many have been retrained and moved into other jobs within the Department of the Navy?

Restructuring or retraining of personnel is being executed at the command level. At this time I do not know; however, I will inquire and report back if confirmed.

How many of the positions "reduced" were cuts to unencumbered billeted positions?

Major Headquarters Activities (MHA) reductions are based on a calculated FY16 baseline for total cost of headquarters, as required in the FY16 NDAA. The 25% reduction goals were calculated based on this newly established total cost baseline, which included military, civilian and non-labor/contractor costs. Since this was a reduction of total cost and not a billet reduction exercise, whether a billet was unencumbered had no bearing on the 25% reduction to cost of headquarters.

How many military billets were cut as a result of the 25% reduction?

Military Major Headquarters Activities (MHA) billets have been realigned to meet non-headquarters operational missions within the Department of the Navy.

If confirmed, I will further inquire into the military billet headquarters reductions to determine if end strength adjustments occurred as a result.

Provide examples of functions and activities that were eliminated as a result of the Department of the Navy's 25% headquarters reduction.

To my knowledge the Department of the Navy's approach has been to meet reductions through efficiencies and assumption of increased risk with regard to existing functions and activities. The Department continues to examine possible functions and activities within headquarters activities for possible elimination and/or reduced level of effort.

Acquisition, Technology, and Cyber Workforce

The Department of Defense is in a global competition for the highest quality STEM professionals at the entry-level, mid-career, and senior levels. These individuals are charged with managing billions of dollars' worth of taxpayer resources in complex acquisition programs, directly providing technical support to military operations, supporting the development of technically informed policies and regulations in areas ranging from cybersecurity to use of drones, and performing world class research and engineering functions in in-house labs and centers.

Do you feel that the Department of the Navy can currently compete with the private sector for the highest quality technical performers at the early career, mid-career, and senior levels?

Absolutely. Although we recognize the challenges in hiring and retaining such high-demand personnel, service in the Department of the Navy provides unique opportunities unavailable anywhere else, as well as competitive compensation using new authorities like the Cyber Excepted Service. The Department can do more than just attract STEM talent; it can build it through strong Naval-focused education and training programs. If confirmed, I will closely monitor the health of these specific communities to anticipate and swiftly address any difficulties that arise.

How will you work to enhance policies and flexibilities necessary to allow the Department of the Navy to compete with the private sector for this talent?

If confirmed, I will be evaluating how the Department of the Navy is employing existing and new flexibilities for hiring and retention, and ways to more effectively use them. I will work closely with Congress if any additional authorities prove warranted. I will work to expand and promote the wide array of STEM opportunities that exist in the Department that make them such rewarding organizations in which to work.

Congress has provided the Department of Defense and the Department of the Navy with a number of personnel flexibilities to support building improved acquisition, technology, and cybersecurity workforces.

Do you commit to working to ensure that these flexibilities are used to the fullest extent possible so as to support the mission of relevant Department of the Navy organizations?

I do. If confirmed, I will examine and apply the lessons learned from current implementations, and ensure the Department of the Navy is using them to the fullest extent.

Senior Military and Civilian Accountability

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

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

If confirmed, I will not tolerate abuse of authority and rank; such actions are counter to the Department of the Navy's core values of honor, courage, and commitment upon which the foundation of trust and leadership is built. The success of the Department to meet its mission depends on senior leadership to model positive, professional and personal behavior, consistent with those core values. This issue is of paramount importance and, if confirmed, I will emphasize accountability across the board, including for senior military and civilian leaders.

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

If confirmed, I will support the Department of the Navy's emphasis on meeting high standards of personal and professional conduct and character development. As is currently the practice, every allegation of misconduct involving senior leadership will continue to be investigated, and completed investigations will continue to be reviewed. When supported by the evidence, the completed investigation will be followed by appropriate administrative or disciplinary action. If confirmed, I will be firmly committed to holding senior leaders accountable for their actions and performance as warranted.

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.

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

Yes.

Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear before this Committee, or designated members of this Committee, and provide information, subject to appropriate and necessary security protection, with respect to your responsibilities as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs? Yes.

Do you agree to ensure that testimony, briefings, and other communications of information are provided to this Committee and its staff and other appropriate committees in a timely manner?

Yes.

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

Yes.

Do you agree to answer letters and requests for information from individual Senators who are members of this Committee?

Yes.

If confirmed, do you agree to provide to this Committee relevant information within the jurisdictional oversight of the Committee when requested by the Committee, even in the absence of the formality of a letter from the Chairman?

Yes.