

Senate Armed Service Committee
Advance Policy Questions for General Eric M. Smith, USMC
Nominee for Reappointment to the Grade of General
and to be Commandant of the Marine Corps

Duties

Section 8043 of title 10, U.S. Code, describes the duties and functions of the Commandant of the Marine Corps and requires that the officer nominated for appointment to the position have had significant experience in joint duty assignments, including at least one full tour of duty in a joint duty assignment as a general officer.

1. What is your understanding of the duties and responsibilities of the Commandant of the Marine Corps?

Section 8043, Title 10, U.S. code defines the duties and responsibilities of the Commandant of the Marine Corps. Subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of the Navy, the Commandant shall preside over Headquarters, Marine Corps, transmit the plans and recommendations of Headquarters, Marine Corps to the Secretary, and advises the Secretary regarding such plans and recommendations. The Commandant facilitates the recruiting, organizing, training, and equipping of the Marine Corps to support military operations by the Combat Commanders. The Commandant will perform such other military duties, not otherwise assigned by law, as are assigned by the President, the Secretary of Defense, or Secretary of the Navy. As a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Commandant shall advise the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense.

2. What background and experience, including joint duty assignments, do you possess that you believe qualify you to perform these duties?

I have served in a variety of key service and joint assignments in my career spanning more than 36 years. I served as the Senior Military Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Defense. As a General Officer, I have commanded Marines at all levels including as the Commanding General, Marine Forces Southern Command; Commanding General, 1st Marine Division; Commanding General, III Marine Expeditionary Force; and as the Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration and as the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps.

3. Do you meet the joint duty requirements for this position?

Yes

4. Do you believe there is any action that you need to take to enhance your ability to exercise the responsibilities of the Commandant of the Marine Corps, particularly in regard to serving as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and assisting the Secretary of the Navy in performing certain acquisition-related functions?

No, but I am a lifelong student and seek to improve my skills daily.

5. If confirmed, what innovative ideas would you consider providing to the Secretary of Defense in your role as a member of the Armed Forces Policy Council?

The Armed Forces Policy Council, as an advisory group to the Secretary of Defense, has the ability to shape departmental efforts to make our armed forces better. At this time in history, it is critical that our innovation efforts are carried out with maximum speed. This allows us to stay ahead of the many threats we face. As a member of the council, my position would be to remove any and all barriers which prevent the most rapid experimentation and fielding of concepts, organizations, and equipment which will bring victory on the battlefield.

6. If confirmed, what innovative ideas would you consider providing to the Secretary of the Navy for enhancing the organization, training, and equipping of the Marine Corps?

The Marine Corps, as a part of the Naval Service, must be the most agile of any of the armed forces. We are by design smaller, lighter, and more lethal than any other organization. Working with the Secretary of the Navy and the Chief of Naval Operations, I would seek to ensure that the Marine Corps is best positioned for rapid and seamless transition from competition to crisis and back again. In terms of training, I would maximize the technological tools available to make each Marine's training more realistic and each unit's training more meaningful against a peer threat. Any equipment that I would advise our Secretary to pursue would ensure that every Marine enters a completely unfair fight against an adversary because of the range, accuracy, and lethality of the systems that we procure.

7. What are your goals, if confirmed, for the transformation of the Marine Corps to meet new and emerging threats?

The Marine Corps must continue to lead in terms of innovation and rapid movement to organizations, equipment, and concepts that produce outsized benefit for our Marines and our nation and which place our enemies in a position of disadvantage. The ability to rapidly develop concepts for victory, wargame, experiment, and modify those concepts is vital to ensure the Marine Corps stays ahead of our adversaries. I would ensure that our wargaming and experimentation continue at an accelerated rate in order to enhance our warfighting ability.

8. In addition to the duties enumerated in section 8043, the law provides that the Commandant of the Marine Corps shall perform such other military duties as are assigned to him by the President, the Secretary of Defense, or the Secretary of the Navy. In light of the lines of effort set forth in the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS), what other military duties do you anticipate the Secretary of Defense or the Secretary of the Navy will assign to you, if confirmed?

The Marine Corps, as the nation's force in readiness, has the responsibility to respond to crises outside of existing guidance. This responsibility requires force modernization, capability development, and organization aimed to deter, campaign, and build enduring advantage. Each of these elements require closer integration with allies and partners as well as synchronizing broader Department of Defense efforts and aligning them with other instruments of national power. Similarly, if confirmed, I anticipate being assigned the duty of coordinating Marine Corps modernization efforts with those of the Joint Force.

9. If confirmed, what duties and responsibilities will you assign to the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps?

The Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, has the authorities and duties with respect to the Marine Corps as the Commandant may delegate or prescribe, with approval of the Secretary of the Navy. If confirmed, the Assistant Commandant will work to manage the critical processes of the Marine Corps. The Assistant Commandant would serve as my advisor and perform my duties during any period of unavailability.

Marine Corps Organization

10. Section 8063 of title 10, U.S. Code, requires the Marine Corps composition to include not less than three combat divisions and three air wings, and such other land combat, aviation, and other services as may be organic therein. The Marine Corps shall be organized, trained, and equipped to provide fleet marine forces of combined arms, together with supporting air components, for service with the fleet in the seizure or defense of advanced naval bases and for the conduct of such land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign. Do you agree that these requirements remain relevant as an organizational and operational employment framework? Why or why not?

Yes, these requirements remain relevant as an organizational and operational employment framework that provides the necessary flexibility to adapt to the threat environment and needs of the Nation. Over the past two decades the Marine Corps contributed to an enduring land campaign. Strategic guidance and the threat environment have allowed the Marine Corps to reorient as a naval expeditionary force in readiness to support fleet commanders within the overall naval and joint campaign. Through the help of Congress, the Marine Corps continues to maintain operational and tactical relevance on the modern battlefield through our modernization efforts. For example, over the years the Marine Corps has established Space and Cyber commands to meet the changing threat environment. Additionally, the Marine Corps has three Marine Littoral Regiments planned to be fully established by FY27. These modern formations provide force structure at the tactical level to remain relevant in the current threat environment. This flexibility and the assistance of Congress is critical to maintain pace for the necessary operational employment of forces.

11. How does Force Design 2030 nest within title 10 requirements?

Force Design adheres to the requirements set forth in Title 10 of the United States Code. The Marine Corps regularly assesses its force structure, capabilities, and readiness to ensure that it can fulfill its obligations as outlined in Title 10. Force Design seeks to optimize the Marine Corps' force structure to meet the demands of modern warfare. This plan was informed by the threat environment and developed with the direction and oversight of senior civilian and military leaders.

Force Design 2030 aims to create a more agile, flexible, and lethal force that is better equipped to operate forward, compete, project power, and influence as directed by the National Defense Strategy and other strategic guidance documents. This includes enhancing the Marine Corps' ability to conduct expeditionary and amphibious operations, improving its ability to operate in contested and denied environments, and increasing its capacity to conduct distributed operations with joint and allied partners.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff

- 12. Section 921 of the FY17 NDAA made changes to section 151 of title 10, U. S. Code, concerning the service of members of the Joint Chiefs (other than the Chairman) as military advisors to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense. What is your assessment of the authorities of, and process by which members of the Joint Chiefs (other than the Chairman) provide military advice and opinions to the President, National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and civilian leadership of the Department of Defense?**

Whereas the Chairman must provide advice, if confirmed, in my role as a member of the Joint Chiefs, I would be permitted to provide advice to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, or the Secretary of Defense on a particular matter in the capacity as a military advisor. Members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff may provide such advice after first informing the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman. As a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (other than the Chairman), if confirmed, I may submit to the Chairman advice or an opinion in disagreement with, or advice, or an opinion in addition to, the advice presented by the Chairman to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, or the Secretary of Defense. In instances where a member submits such advice or opinion, the Chairman shall present the advice or opinion of such member at the same time he presents his own advice to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, or the Secretary of Defense, as the case may be. The Chairman is responsible for establishing procedures to ensure that the presentation of his own advice to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, or the Secretary of Defense is not unduly delayed by reason of the submission of the individual advice or opinion of another member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. If confirmed, I would be comfortable that my views would be represented; I will be attentive to the process and prepared to offer additional views in future engagements with this committee.

- 13.** If confirmed, would you commit to provide your best military advice to the President, National Security Council, Homeland Security Council, and civilian leadership of the Department of Defense, even when your advice and opinions might differ from those of the Chairman or the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

Yes.

Use of Military Force

- 14.** In your view, what factors should be considered in making recommendations to the President on the use of military force?

The use of military force is a policy decision made under certain domestic or international legal bases. The domestic legal bases for the use of military force reside with Congressional and Presidential powers under Articles I and II of the U.S. Constitution, respectively. The international legal basis for the use of military force falls under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, via Article 42 (U.N. Security Council Resolutions) and Article 51 (Self-Defense).

The decision to use military force will always be informed by the facts and circumstances ruling at the time. Factors to be weighed and considered are whether a vital national security interest is threatened, whether there is a clear and attainable objective, whether the use of military force is supported by the American public, and whether the United States acts alone or in concert with partners and allies.

As the U.S. military is only one instrument of our national power, it is my hope that military force is used as a last resort, when diplomatic, informational, and economic measures fall short of national objectives.

Major Challenges and Priorities

- 15.** What is your vision for the Marine Corps of today? For the Marine Corps of the future?

My vision of the Marine Corps is a force that is ready to respond to any crisis tonight while simultaneously preparing itself for potential state-on-state warfare. Achieving that goal will require ironclad discipline from each individual Marine and each unit. These two ideas are complementary, not contradictory. A well-trained Marine Corps ready to deal with crises tonight is in fact best positioned to transition to conflict tomorrow. While the threats which confront the nation will change, the Marine Corps' unique role as the crisis response force and the "First to Fight" force for major conflict will not change, today or in the future.

- 16.** What do you consider to be the most significant challenges you will face if confirmed

as the Commandant of the Marine Corps?

I believe the most significant challenges in the near term will be recruiting and retaining the high-quality Marines required to fight and win the nation's battles. Our greatest asset is and always will be the individual Marine. Our formations and weapons systems depend on the very best that America has to offer serving as U.S. Marines. This is likely to be a long-term strategic challenge that must be overcome.

Additionally, the ability to respond immediately to crisis or conflict using organic mobility is a challenge that the Marine Corps must face head on. Our unique ability to organically move ourselves is vital because it enables time for the remainder of the joint force to organize for its own deployment.

17. What plans do you have for addressing each of these challenges, if confirmed?

I will continue to place the highest quality Marines in our recruiting force and reward their exceptional performance. I will continue to uphold the Marine Corps' very high standards because it is those high standards that attract so many of America's finest to our Corps. I will continue to organize and equip our Marine Corps and work with our shipmates in the Navy to guarantee that when crisis or conflict comes, the organic mobility required to win is present.

18. Given the major challenges you identified above, what other priorities would you set for your term as Commandant of the Marine Corps, if confirmed?

I would prioritize the acceleration of our organization, training, and equipment developments to meet the demands of the operating environment. This will ensure that our highly skilled and talented Marines are outfitted, trained, and equipped for victory on the battlefield. I would further prioritize coordination with our Navy shipmates to ensure the inventory of our amphibious warships enables Marines to continuously train and sustain our abilities and capabilities to respond to crises as the "Fight Tonight" force.

2022 National Defense Strategy

19. The 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) identified China as the "most consequential strategic competitor and the pacing challenge for the Department" and stated that Russia poses an "acute threat," as illustrated by its brutal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. The NDS also identifies "[m]utually-beneficial Alliances and partnerships" as "an enduring strength for the United States." In your view, does the 2022 NDS accurately assess the current strategic environment, including prioritization among the most critical challenges and enduring threats to the national security of the United States and its allies? Please explain your answer.

Yes, the current strategic environment is characterized by an era of great power competition with China and Russia presenting the most significant threats. The 2022 NDS assessment of the critical challenges in the coming decade is not only supported by the 2023 Intelligence Community (IC) annual threat assessment, but also by the actions of Russia and China. Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine has demonstrated that the era of nation-state competition and conflict is still a defining characteristic of the current threat environment. However, China has the intent, capability, and capacity to challenge U.S. interests and change the rules-based order.

- 20.** In your view, does the 2022 NDS correctly specify the priority missions of the DOD and the capabilities by which DOD can achieve its objectives in the context of the current strategic environment? What do you perceive as the areas of greatest risk?

Yes, I believe the 2022 NDS identifies the priority mission of the DOD and lists appropriate categories of capabilities the joint force must have without being overly prescriptive. Among areas of highest risk to our forces are cyber threats, threats to space-based assets, and the large numbers of adversary surface-to-surface long-range weapons. We must maintain a naval power projection capability that is expeditionary and sustainable to compete.

Another area of significant risk is time. The pacing threat is not confined to international norms and regulations and, thus, can increase their influence in competition and rapidly modernize military capabilities with the necessary capacity. The Services must be capable of accelerating modernization to get relevant capabilities in the hands of warfighters to test, train, and gain proficiency prior to employing them in combat.

- 21.** Is the Marine Corps adequately sized, structured, and resourced to implement the 2022 NDS and the associated operational plans? Please explain your answer.

Yes, the Marine Corps is sized, structured, and resourced to implement the 2022 NDS. While some of our objectives will still take time to fully field or organize, the pathway to so do is clear.

- 22.** If confirmed, how will you address any gaps or shortfalls in the ability of the Marine Corps to meet the demands placed on it by the 2022 NDS and the operational plans that implement the strategy?

If confirmed, I will ensure that the Marine Corps remains focused on identifying and then filling gaps in our capabilities. Our current robust concepts, wargame, and experiment process is well suited to highlight gaps.

- 23.** If confirmed, what changes or adjustments would you advise the Secretary of the Navy to make in the Marine Corps' implementation of the 2022 NDS?

Going forward, congressionally authorized multi-ship procurement must be employed for amphibious warfare ships. Affordability is maximized with this procurement strategy and provides cost savings through industrial base stability and improves current maintenance and readiness levels.

Currently, amphibious warfare ships are being decommissioned faster than they are procured and delivered. Inventory will decrease to an average of 28-29 ships over the next five years. The current 30-year shipbuilding plan projects an amphibious warfare ship inventory that drops and stays below the congressionally mandated floor of 31 ships. Amphibious warfare ships require a balance between new construction (2-year centers for LPDs, and 4-year centers for LHAs) and retention of LSDs to maintain no less than 31 ships.

- 24.** Does the Marine Corps have the requisite analytic capabilities and tools to support you, if confirmed as the Commandant of the Marine Corps, in developing and implementing the force structure, sizing, and shaping plans required to position the Corps to execute the operational plans associated with the 2022 NDS? Please explain your answer.

Yes. The Operations and Analysis Division, along with many seasoned experts across the Corps, provide exceptional insights and advice to support the force structure, sizing, and shaping plans required to execute the operational plans associated with the 2022 NDS. Through Force Design modernization initiatives, the Marine Corps has developed additional processes and analytic capabilities to speed up assessments.

The Marine Corps modernization strategy has been threat informed, concept based, and analyzed throughout our campaign of learning. We have complete 25 wargames and 42 integrated planning teams with subject matter experts from across the Marine Corps in support of Force Design 2030. These teams grappled with an immense challenge, as they sought to modernize the Marine Corps as a naval expeditionary force that effectively deters our competitors, while remaining ready to respond to a range of crises. This calendar year, we will conduct another nine wargames, primarily focused on reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance, as well as deploying and sustaining a MEF in support of major combat operations.

To support our wargaming efforts, we anticipate the opening of the Marine Corps Wargaming and Analysis Center next year. This state-of-the-art facility will significantly enhance our capability development, concept development, operational plan assessment, training, and advanced technology evaluation. Sustained funding will be required to support IT services and the necessary personnel to staff the analysis center.

Overall Readiness of the Marine Corps

- 25.** How would you assess the current readiness of the Marine Corps—across the domains of materiel and equipment, personnel, and training—to execute the 2022 NDS and associated operational plans?

The Marine Corps is more ready to execute the national defense strategy and OPLANS than it has been in the past, and we are only getting better.

Personnel: Our single greatest asset remains the individual Marine; Force Design 2030 has allowed the Marine Corps to optimize the force at approximately 172,000 while focusing on the retaining the best and brightest Marines. We met our FY22 recruiting and retention goals with all indications pointing towards the Service doing so again in FY23. We have not and will not lower the standard. With Talent Management 2030, we fundamentally redesigned our personnel system, which was empowered by the new statutory authorities granted by Congress. These changes were implemented with a focus on retaining the best Marines, specifically the NCO and junior officer corps. We have been able to build from the inside, mature the force, and capitalize on the best talent that America has to offer.

Training and education have been a focal point of the current CMCs tenure and the service has been able to make massive strides. One of our greatest improvements has been the expansion of our infantry school from 8.5 weeks to 14. We have a 10:1 student to instructor ratio now. We have our best NCOs instructing squads and returning to the fleet as the best squad leaders in the Corps. These Marines now train every day for 14 weeks and go to the fleet together. Who you train with is now who you fight with, the unit cohesion makes me question why we had not started this 30 years ago.

Materiel and equipment: We are currently fielding systems that will enable the Joint force, of today and in the future, to execute the tasks set forth in the National Defense Strategy. Under our current leadership, we invested heavily in the next generation of future systems. We now have the most capable radar in the world, the TPS-80 G/ATOR, that can gain and maintain custody of adversary targets and hold those targets at risk. With the support of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering's Joint Capability Technology Demonstration Office, we are rapidly developing new systems at low cost to further enhance our warfighting capabilities. As Marines, we will continue to innovate to put our adversaries in complex situations and your Marines are ready to fight tonight.

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

The Marine Corps is our nation's force in readiness, and premier crisis response force. As an expeditionary force in readiness which is amphibious in character, the Marine Corps must prioritize readiness to conduct amphibious operations globally today and into the future. The Amphibious Ready Group and Marine Expeditionary Unit remain a flexible, scalable, and multi-role capability for our Combatant Commanders. The training, readiness, and deployment of these formations support day-to-day activities in critical theaters, as well as provide a rapid response capability for contingency operations around the globe. The Marine Corps must prioritize training that enables naval integration and amphibious operations in order to alter the trajectory of any adversaries plans and to win if deterrence fails.

- 27.** In what specific ways has the Marine Corps improved or not improved its state of readiness across the domains of materiel and equipment, personnel, and training?

Congress has greatly assisted the Marine Corps readiness recovery efforts with increased topline funding over the last 4 years, which has allowed us to rebuild readiness and increase lethality in support of the National Defense Strategy. We have accelerated aviation readiness recovery, which has led to an increase in average monthly flight time for our aircrews, an increase in mission capable rates of our aircraft, and an improvement of our aggregate aviation Training readiness rating. With sustained Operations and Maintenance funding, we have made significant gains in ground equipment readiness rates, where our aggregated ground equipment and readiness of reportable equipment have improved in both availability and serviceability. We have also seen moderate gains in materiel and equipment readiness across the force from modernization efforts as a result of Force Design 2030 and Presidential Drawdown Authority actions which have enabled us to reduce and/or replace legacy maintenance-intensive equipment and aging munitions. Combined with our focused structural changes, we have made enhancements to meet the requirements of the evolving operational environment. However, there is risk involved as we rebuild capacity in high demand capability areas. Finally, we have invested in Service-level, Joint, and Multilateral training exercises and enhancements to training ranges and live immersion training capabilities that prepare our Marines to defeat peer adversaries and ensures the Marine Corps is “most ready when the Nation is least ready.” A lack of available amphibious shipping continues to challenge our ability to attain advance training standards in many of our formations and appropriately respond to crises.

28. If confirmed, what would you do to restore full spectrum Marine Corps readiness, and under what timelines?

If confirmed, I will ensure to the extent a budget is passed on time, that readiness accounts are maintained at very high levels. Sustained and predictable budgetary authority over the last few years has enabled the Marine Corps to recruit, retain, equip, and train the highest quality people possible, which directly contributes to lethality and readiness. We will sustain the gains made in materiel and equipment readiness, while increasing efforts in Talent Management, and accelerating efforts to modernize our training and warfighting capabilities. I would also ensure that our training ranges and service exercises challenge our Marines for state on state conflict. I will also continue to work with the Navy to improve amphibious shipping availability to meet training and operational readiness requirements. The Marine Corps is ready now, and if confirmed, I will ensure that we continue to be ready for missions in any clime and place.

Budget

29. If confirmed, by what standards would you measure the adequacy of the Marine Corps budget?

The current and future readiness of the Fleet Marine Force against the pacing threat is the standard by which I would measure the adequacy of the budget. I cannot stress enough that sustained, adequate, predictable funding is the single most effective way to achieve this and to maintain our critical strategic momentum in implementing the National Defense Strategy. This financial stability is key to our ability to continue our Force Design modernization efforts, while

ensuring that forward deployed Marine forces are ready to respond to crisis and provide the integrated deterrence and day-to-day campaigning necessary to build advantage with our allies and partners. A sustained, adequate, and predictable budget will also enable continued investment in critical infrastructure and quality of life requirements focused on increasing the operational capability and capacity of our installations and taking care of our Marines and their families.

Section 222a of title 10, U.S. Code, provides that not later than 10 days after the President's submission of the annual defense budget to Congress, each Service Chief and Combatant Commander must submit to the congressional defense committees a report that lists, in order of priority, the unfunded priorities of the armed force or combatant command.

31. What are your views of this statutory requirement and the utility of unfunded priorities lists?

In compliance with 10 U.S.C. 222a, the Marine Corps is required to submit a list of unfunded priorities to accompany the President's Budget submission. Our budget submission represents the most effective mix of forces, equipment, manpower and support attainable within fiscal constraints by aligning resources to prioritized investments, balancing warfighting capabilities with risk, affordability, and effectiveness. Programs prioritized on the Unfunded Priority List represent executable items that would help accelerate key warfighting investments and other modernization efforts that benefit our future force. None of the items on our UPL are of a higher priority than those requested in the President's Budget but are provided to Congress for consideration should additional funds be made available.

32. If confirmed, do you agree to provide your unfunded priorities list to Congress in a timely manner?

Yes.

Alliances and Partnerships

33. The 2022 NDS stresses the importance of U.S. alliances and partnerships and considers these relationships a critical strategic advantage. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to strengthen existing U.S. alliances and partnerships, build new partnerships, and leverage opportunities for international cooperation to advance U.S. security interests?

If confirmed, I would work in concert with the Combatant Commanders to build senior relationships with key partners and would ensure that Marines were ready to deploy to meet emerging threats and opportunities.

34. What are the major challenges for strengthening existing alliances and partnerships or building new ones, including for improving interoperability and shared operational concepts? What steps would you recommend, if confirmed, for overcoming these challenges?

Presence is required to strengthen alliances and to build new ones. Marines must be forward deployed to meet these challenges. Addressing ally and partner nation security concerns focusing on the relationship between the U.S. and that partner, irrespective of a specific adversary, can make inroads. We have very positive military-to-military relationships with our Allies and partners, and we need to continue making the investments necessary to sustain those unmatched relationships. More broadly, we in the DoD must nest our efforts in the broader, whole-of-government approach to strengthen and as well as build new relationships. The Marine Corps maintains and is developing interoperability pathways with several critical allies to ensure capabilities and operating concepts evolve together and complement each other. Some of these interoperable pathways include orienting on a common purpose and supporting local governments. Our Marine Expeditionary Units play a vital role in improving out interoperability with our Allies and partners, while also providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief necessary to support local governments. To maximize our interoperability we must be forward deployed aboard L Class amphibious warfare ships.

Joint Operations

The Marine Corps is largely organizing around the concept of serving as a Stand-in Force (SIF) for the military. The Marine Corps defines the SIF as small but lethal, low signature, mobile, relatively simple to maintain and sustain forces designed to operate across the competition continuum within a contested area as the leading edge of a maritime defense-in-depth in order to intentionally disrupt the plans of a potential or actual adversary. As envisioned this concept is inherently joint.

36. How would you characterize the current state of Navy and Marine Corps joint operations? What gaps or shortfalls exist? What changes would you advocate to strengthen or expand Navy and Marine Corps joint operations best to meet the objectives of the 2022 NDS?

The Navy-Marine Corps team continue to enable joint operations that enhance the lethality of the Joint Force and provide flexibility to combatant commanders. The Navy-Marine Corps team have held the enduring TF 51/5 headquarters based in Central Command (CENTCOM) that continues to integrate expeditionary naval operations in support of combatant commander requirements. This past year, the Navy and Marine Corps established two Task Force (TF) headquarters in the European Command (EUCOM) and Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM). In EUCOM, TF 61/2 was designed to provide a joint task force crisis response capability through command and control (C2) of naval forces supporting contingencies in Europe and Africa — to include ongoing responses to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In INDOPACOM, TF 76/3 embarked upon an 18-month-long period of experimentation, conducting active campaigning inside a contested space. This integrated task force has

demonstrated the ability to create robust information webs to support maritime domain awareness (MDA) across the theater, especially in the western Pacific. Both formations have increased MDA for combatant commanders and increased interoperability across the joint force.

The Marine Corps' ability to enable the Joint Force is critical to active deterrence. Marine Corps' modernization efforts are providing combatant commanders with credible forces that can conduct reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance, conduct and enable Joint and Combined cross-domain strikes, and support Naval, Joint, and combined fires and maneuver. These capabilities have been designed to nest with the Combined and Joint Force to create a robust and redundant communications architecture between Marine Corps, Naval, Joint, and Combined Forces. Shortfalls in organic mobility for Marine units may incur joint support requirements if not sufficiently resourced.

37. Which other Service doctrines and capabilities offer the greatest opportunity for synergy with the Marine Corps in joint operations?

The Marine Corps and the other services share synergies with joint doctrine publications that outline the fundamental principles that guide the employment of US military forces. Some examples of this are Joint Pub (JP) 3-32 Joint Maritime Operations, JP 3-04 Information in Joint Operations, JP 3-06 Joint Urban Operations, and JP 3-07 Joint Stabilization Activities. Furthermore, the Marine Corps partners with the other Services in the development of 31 multi-service doctrinal publications, via the Air-Land-Sea-Space Application Center to effectively employ concepts and capabilities within the Joint Force.

Achieving integration of capabilities in the Joint Force requires dependencies and enablers. For example, the Army provides critical theater logistics support; the Air Force provides strategic airlift; and the Navy provides not only amphibious support, but also an entire range of requirements to enable amphibious and littoral operations. In terms of enablers, as part of the Stand-in force, Marines will be on the forward edge of a maritime defense-in depth. We are unique in that we possess organic capabilities to persist and remain lethal across multiple domains, maneuverable, and survivable inside an adversary's weapon engagement zone. Through our campaign of learning we have found that our true value proposition is to "sense and make sense." In a 21st century multi-domain environment, linear kill chains are insufficient. Through this concept and approach, Marines will be strategically placed to operate with partners and allies during competition and will be capable of responding during crises and holding adversaries at risk during conflict. Our Stand-in Forces will increase maritime domain awareness by maintaining custody of target data and will enable the Joint Force to project power back into an anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) environment.

38. What innovative ideas are you considering to increase Service interoperability to accomplish missions and tasks in support of Department of Defense objectives in joint operations?

To ensure our amphibious operations concepts remain current, together with the Navy, we are developing a new concept for 21st Century Amphibious Operations. It will describe how we will

execute amphibious operations against future adversaries in this evolving and complex operational environment. It will also articulate the future role of amphibious operations in support of maritime campaigns and will describe new operating methods that incorporate agile platforms to supplement traditional amphibious ships.

Additionally, Stand-in Forces conducting Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations have a unique ability to advance interoperability across the Combined and Joint Force to enable CJADC2 efforts. The forward postured forces operating and persisting inside adversaries' weapons engagement zones can sense and make sense of the operating environment. While maintaining quality track data and custody of targets, stand-in forces provide maritime domain awareness for fleet and joint commanders to project power into Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2AD) environments when crisis turns to conflict.

Interoperability extends beyond our U.S. Joint Force and into our relationship with partner and allied nations. The Marine Corps' Stand in Forces maintain these critical relationships while campaigning with their forward presence providing U.S. partners and allies assurances, increasing access, and actively deter shared adversaries.

Acquisition

39. In recent National Defense Authorization Acts (NDAAs), Congress expanded and refined the acquisition-related functions of the Commandant of the Marine Corps. If confirmed, how would you assist the Secretary of the Navy in the performance of certain acquisition-related functions, while ensuring compatibility with the duties and responsibilities of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, and Acquisition (as established in title 10, U.S. Code, sections 8014 and 8016)?

I would execute the Commandant of the Marine Corps responsibility to determine service requirements and establish their relative priority in support of the acquisition process. I would assist the Secretary of the Navy in making decisions regarding resources and priorities, and associated tradeoffs among cost, schedule, and performance on major defense acquisition programs. Further, I would manage key acquisition talent inside the Marine Corps to ensure we have the right number of program managers with the requisite skills and experience to effectively employ tailored acquisition approaches. Finally, recognizing the importance of the integral relationship between HQMC, OPNAV, and DON staff, I would ensure synchronization of effort and alignment of service requirements and resource prioritization to the National Defense Strategy as well as Naval, Joint, and COCOM requirements.

40. What actions would you take to improve all three aspects of the acquisition process—requirements, acquisition, and budgeting?

If confirmed, I would continue and build on the work Commandant Berger initiated, collaboratively with ASN (RD&A), to synchronize service chief and service acquisition executive roles and authorities to deliver capabilities in support of Naval, Joint, and COCOM requirements. Specifically, I would maximize the use of wargaming, prototyping, and

experimentation to accelerate requirement development, inform prioritization of resources, and enable timely cost, schedule, and performance tradeoffs. I would maintain close integration and alignment with the other elements of the Department of Navy's acquisition-related decision support system, including ASN(FM&C) and ASN(RD&A). As an integrated Naval force, unity of effort in the planning and execution of programs across the department is critical to delivering at the speed of relevance. I would maintain awareness of acquisition efforts across the Joint Force to leverage joint development, defense industrial base optimization, and contractual opportunities. I would additionally manage key acquisition talent inside the Marine Corps to ensure we have the right number of program managers with the requisite skills and experience to effectively employ tailored acquisition approaches. In order to ensure the greatest affordability, I would encourage the Congressional authorized multi-ship procurement of Amphibious Warfare Ships.

41. What actions would you propose, if any, to ensure that requirements are realistic, technically achievable, and prioritized?

If confirmed, I would maximize the use of wargaming, prototyping, and experimentation to accelerate requirement development, inform prioritization of resources, and enable timely cost, schedule, and performance tradeoffs.

If confirmed, I would ensure early engagement by the Marine Corps Operational Test and Evaluation Activity to provide an independent assessment of key performance parameters and key system attributes testability and alignment to overall system operational effectiveness/suitability.

42. What specific measures would you recommend to control "requirements creep" in the defense acquisition system?

We employ the Adaptive Acquisition Framework (AAF) to tailor our approach to capability development. The AAF allows us to increase focus on key requirements and move more effectively through the acquisition process. Further, the AAF enables us to take advantage of rapid prototyping and fielding of an initial capability that reinforces our focus on critical operational requirements.

43. How would you utilize your authority to arrest the exponential escalation in cost that, in recent history, has marked the acquisition life-cycle of Service platforms and weapons systems?

I would advocate for the judicious use of rapid prototyping and experimentation to inform capability development activities; emphasize development of realistic and independent program life cycle cost estimates; and leverage my support/advisory role during key Defense Acquisition System milestones to assist with cost, schedule, and performance trades necessary to achieve service objectives. Additionally, I would ensure affordable sustainment cost objectives are identified early in the capability development process and included in requirements document to guide and inform system performance tradeoff decisions.

44. In your view, in whom should accountability for large-scale acquisition failures and/or extraordinary cost overruns vest?

While current statutory and regulatory guidance confer acquisitions authorities and accountability to the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition & Sustainment), Secretary of the Navy (Component Head), and Service Acquisition Executive, the Commandant of the Marine Corps shares this responsibility. For Marine Corps Programs, the Secretary of the Navy has assigned acquisition authorities to both ASN (RD&A) and the Commandant of the Marine Corps. As such, accountability for acquisition failures and cost overruns is shared between ASN (RD&A) and the Commandant of the Marine Corps.

45. In your view, are the roles and responsibilities in the acquisition process now assigned to the Commandant of the Marine Corps and the other Service Chiefs appropriate? Are there other acquisition-related roles or responsibilities that should be assigned to the Service Chiefs?

Based on my experience assisting the Commandant of the Marine Corps with execution of his acquisition related roles and responsibilities during my tenure as both the Deputy Commandant, Combat Development and Integration and as the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, the currently assigned authorities are adequate. If confirmed, I would commit to work with the committee to identify any gaps and address them.

A natural tension exists between the objectives of major defense acquisition programs to reduce cost and accelerate schedule and the need to ensure performance meets requirements and specifications—the objective of the test and evaluation function.

47. Has the Secretary of the Navy assigned to the Commandant of the Marine Corps responsibility for those aspects of the function of research and development relating to test and evaluation for Marine Corps acquisition programs? If so, how would you exercise this responsibility, if confirmed?

The Secretary of the Navy assigned responsibility for Operational Test and Evaluation to the Commandant of the Marine Corps for all Marine Corps acquisitions except for aviation assets which fall under the Navy's Operational Test Authority. If confirmed, I would emphasize the need for early involvement of the Marine Corps and Navy Operational Test and Evaluation communities in the capabilities development process and seek opportunities to bolster department operational test and evaluation capacity and capability.

48. What is your assessment of the appropriate balance between the desire to reduce acquisition cycle times and the need to perform adequate test and evaluation?

Only under the most pressing situations, e.g., urgent requirements supporting Marines engaged in peacekeeping or combat operations, testing efforts may be reduced but we would more closely monitor the system in its fielded environment to re-assess our initial evaluation, tactics,

techniques, and procedures to minimize the operational risks. In all other instances, Program Executive Officers and Program Managers must ensure test and evaluation programs that provide sufficient test activities to clearly demonstrate the operational effectiveness and suitability of capabilities before fielding to the Fleet Marine Force.

- 49.** Under what circumstances, if any, do you believe it appropriate to procure weapon systems and equipment that have not been demonstrated through test and evaluation to be operationally effective, suitable, and survivable?

With the means available today to rapidly prototype and procure limited quantities for experimentation, rarely, if ever, would it be appropriate to procure systems and equipment in support of the warfighter without requisite testing and evaluation.

- 50.** What do you see as the role of the developmental and operational test and evaluation communities with respect to rapid acquisition, spiral acquisition, and other evolutionary acquisition processes?

The role of developmental and operational test and evaluation communities during rapid, spiral or evolutionary acquisitions is to develop an efficient and effective test program that stresses system performance sufficiently to assess with confidence, its safety, reliability and mission effectiveness within cost and schedule constraints.

- 51.** Are you satisfied with Marine Corps test and evaluation capabilities, including the test and evaluation workforce and infrastructure?

I'm not one to ever be fully satisfied with existing capabilities or supporting infrastructure. I consistently look for opportunities to drive capability/process efficiencies, implement talent management initiatives focused on strengthening workforce performance, and enhance supporting infrastructure. While I assess the current test and evaluation system as adequate, I will consistently seek opportunities to build additional capacity and improve test and evaluation capabilities.

- 52.** In which areas, if any, do you feel the Marine Corps should be developing new test and evaluation capabilities?

The Marine Corps needs to seek opportunities in T&E infrastructure solutions that can adequately represent the future multi domain and contested environments. We must also develop tools and processes to assess operational and responsible performance of Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning capabilities.

- 53.** If confirmed, how would you accelerate the development of these new capabilities?

If confirmed, I will clearly identify my intent to implement measures, tools, and processes to efficiently evaluate system performance around validated mission threads and demonstrate the operational performance in multi-domain operations. Our testing organizations are already

working across DoD and the Services in support of DoN T&E initiatives and the Director, Operational Test & Evaluation (DOT&E) Implementation Plan, endorsed by all Service Secretaries.

- 54.** What are your views on the appropriate roles of Office of the Secretary of Defense developmental and operational testing organizations with respect to testing of Marine Corps systems?

The role of DOT&E is to establish department level operational test policy and procedures; review and analyze the results of OT&E conducted for each major DoD acquisition program; provide independent assessments to SecDef, the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (USD(A&S)), and Congress; make budgetary and financial recommendations to the SecDef regarding OT&E; and oversee major DoD acquisition programs to ensure OT&E is adequate to assess the operational effectiveness and suitability of the defense system in combat use. The Secretary of the Navy, ASN (RD&A), and the Commandant of the Marine Corps share authority and accountability for developmental and operational testing and evaluation of Naval capabilities. Based on this understanding, the alignment of policy, procedure, and independent assessment at the OSD level and execution of developmental and operational test and evaluation at the component/service level is appropriate and effectively supports checks and balances required by Congress.

- 55.** Do you think the current operational test and evaluation system also provides for the flexibility to assess commercial technologies that might be acquired or fields by the Department of Defense through means or processes that are not traditional acquisition programs of record?

Yes - By focusing on the Marines' employment of new technologies within mission scenarios, the current operational test and evaluation system is agnostic to the source of the technologies or method of acquisition, and therefore retains the necessary flexibility to assess any technology that the Marines might acquire.

- 56.** If confirmed, how would you ensure the "process" of programs of record do not limit service investment in portfolios of capabilities or mission threads?

The Marine Corps has structured its investment budget line items by capability areas to the maximum extent practical. This provides flexibility to address adjustments that may be needed due to changes such as technology, supply chain, requirements, etc. from a capability versus program of record perspective, while operating within reprogramming threshold limitations. If confirmed, I would ensure that we continue to manage the Marine Corps budget structure alignment to Force Design 2030 capability and mission thread delivery.

- 57.** If confirmed, how would you resource enablers, such as authorities to operate or data or certification, that Program Managers and Program Executive Officers see as outside of their requirements?

The Marine Corps has prioritized critical Force Design programs in our budget process, while ensuring key enablers are also resourced. Program Managers and Program Executive Officers ensure that any associated program enablers are identified and considered within the Marine Corps Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution process. The Marine Corps has established Enterprise Programming Teams (EPTs) that include a network of subject matter experts from across the enterprise who are closely aligned with specific programs. These EPTs serve in direct support of DC P&R during the programming phase.

Joint Acquisition

- 58.** What are your views regarding the merit and feasibility of joint development and acquisition programs, such as the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle and Future Vertical Lift?

The JLTV program has been an exceptional model for use, but each service may still have unique usage requirements that must be accounted for.

- 59.** What additional programs would you consider to be candidates for joint development and acquisition?

While we currently do not have any candidates for joint development, we always look for opportunities for joint development with the other Services, our allies, and partners when it is in the best interest of the Marine Corps and the joint force. In general, munitions are ideal candidates.

- 60.** What are your views on joint, enabling or cross-cutting capabilities that may not be treated as acquisition programs, such as JADC2? Do you have sufficient authority to advocate or manage Marine Corps capabilities to ensure there are no seams in planning or execution of such efforts?

The Marine Corps is committed to executing the network and data integration of our programs and architectures with the Joint Force necessary to achieve JADC2 goals. Our campaign of learning to deliver Force Design led by experimentation by the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab is facilitating our ability to quickly develop prototype capabilities that inform requirements and needed JADC2 capabilities upgrades. Prototypes developed for experimentation are being provided to selected Fleet Marine Force (FMF) units for Limited User Evaluations (LUE) that results in rapid JADC2 capability incursions that enhance the force.

As the Service Chief, I would have sufficient authorities to influence the requirements, resourcing, and materiel development to ensure there are no seams in the planning and execution of such efforts.

- 61.** If confirmed, how would you facilitate processes for the Marine Corps that empower acquisition professionals and reduce institutional policy barriers to enable cross service requirements development and capabilities discussions?

If confirmed, I will foster a culture of innovation, balanced with disciplined risk-based execution, throughout the acquisition system. I would set conditions to enable capability solution delivery for Force Design by aligning HQMC for maximum unity of effort, and strict, prioritized focus of resources to capabilities of significant Joint, COCOM, and Naval Expeditionary contribution. Further I would seek opportunities to streamline acquisition and sustainment decision support processes by focusing on maximum decentralization of decision authority to the lowest practical level.

Modernization of Capabilities

- 62.** The Marine Corps' current concepts for modernization of its amphibious capabilities includes ships, ship to shore connectors and armored amphibious combat vehicles. Modernization across these systems is complex, technically challenging, and costly. What is your assessment of the current capability of amphibious maneuver and assault systems in the Navy and Marine Corps?

The current capability assessment of amphibious maneuver and assault systems to meet the objectives stated in the 2022 NDS as well as Combatant Commander requirements is at risk.

Over the past 14 years, the Navy and Marine Corps have done 11 studies that show with historical maintenance readiness no fewer than (31) Amphibious Warfare Ships (AWS) consisting of (10) LHAs/LHDs and (21) LPDs are required to keep two three AWS Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) / Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU) forward while maintaining a sufficient number to train and certify ARG/MEU teams. . If directed, the current contingency plans indicate that the Naval force will be required to deploy (5) ARG/MEUs in a condensed time frame.

The current 30-year shipbuilding plan, when combined with decommission plans, does not meet the FY23 NDAA statutory requirement of maintaining no less than 31 AWS.

The Marine Corps Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) program will provide a modern, fully amphibious armored personnel carrier to enable otherwise dismounted ground combat formations with a greater range of maneuver options in the littoral operating environment, along with significantly improved lethality, protection, and command and control. The ACV is in operation now in the Fleet Marine Force and will be fully fielded across the force by 2028.

- 63.** If confirmed, how would you propose to prioritize the development and acquisition of capabilities required for sea basing, connectors, and armored amphibious assault and tactical mobility ashore to achieve a full spectrum capability in the Marine Corps?

The Marine Corps, more than any other service, has a unique nature regarding essential requirements that are subject to the Naval Service budgetary process. The Amphibious Warfare Ship (AWS) statutory requirement and other critical capabilities including connectors, C4I afloat capabilities, preposition and afloat assets, and the Next Generation Logistics Ship which are essential to the Stand-in Forces and crisis response operations, all fall outside the Marine Corps Total Obligation Authority (TOA). Amongst these programs, our top priority is to ensure the operational and statutory requirement of (31) Amphibious Warfare Ships (AWS) is met.

Within our own TOA, the Marine Corps has prioritized the development and fielding of the Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV). The ACV program is in production, has achieved initial operational capability (IOC), and is aligned with Force Design. The second highest priority within the portfolio remains the replacement of the High Mobility Multi-Purpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV) fleet. The Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV) program is in production and has achieved IOC.

- 64.** In your view, what is necessary to ensure that modernization of the amphibious force—ships, connectors, and vehicles—is achievable and affordable in the near and long terms?

Affordability can be achieved through Congressional authorized multi-ship procurement of Amphibious Warfare Ships. Amphibious ship affordability is maximized with multi-ship buys that stabilize the industrial base, improve buying power, and provide efficiencies through steady, predictable workloads. This can best be achieved by balancing new construction of LPD Flight II at 2-year centers and LHA Flight I at 4-year centers.

The Marine Corps, more than any other service, has a unique nature regarding essential requirements that are subject to the Naval Service budgetary process. The amphibious warfare ship statutory requirement and other critical capabilities including connectors, C4I afloat capabilities, preposition afloat assets, and the Next Generation Logistics Ship are essential to the Stand-in Forces and crisis response operations, yet all fall outside the Marine Corps Total Obligation Authority. Our nation is a maritime nation that requires a modern, ready, and forward postured naval force that can deter war and prevail in conflict if deterrence fails. I recognize the Marine Corps' dependency on the Navy to champion maritime expeditionary warfare requirements, but I must also elevate those requirements when these critical capabilities are not resourced to levels that enable the Marine Corps to accomplish its missions.

Modernization of the amphibious force requires ensuring our amphibious operations concepts remain current. Together with the Navy, we are developing a new concept for 21st Century Amphibious Operations. It will describe how we will execute amphibious operations against future adversaries in this evolving and complex operational environment. It will also articulate the future role of amphibious operations in support of maritime campaigns and will describe new operating methods that incorporate agile platforms to supplement traditional amphibious ships. Examples include long-range, unmanned systems that infiltrate the adversary's weapon engagement zone; dispersed formations of manned and unmanned ships that challenge adversary targeting; and the adoption of disruptive technologies.

65. Given the future envisioned by the 2022 NDS are current Marine Corps modernization plans and budgets adequate?

Yes; the FY24 budget request delivers the resources necessary to continue our Force Design initiatives supporting equipment modernization, installations and logistics investments, talent management reform, and training and education modernization. However, any reduction in topline will challenge our ability to modernize commensurate with the pacing threat, while simultaneously maintaining current levels of combat ready forces.

66. How do you plan to position the Marine Corps to modernize its information capabilities for the future warfighting environment – not just its networking systems, but how it uses data and information, and how it employs information-related capabilities to shape the battlespace in peacetime, gray-zone conflict and active hostilities?

As the Marine Corps modernizes to stay ahead of the National Defense Strategy’s identified pacing challenge, it is imperative that the Marine Corps pursue artificial intelligence (AI) rapidly and strategically to maintain an information and capability advantage. To remain relevant as a fighting force, the Marine Corps must adopt new practices that enable continuous enhancement in our capabilities vice large-scale capability releases. Currently, the Marine Corps is in the early stages of investing in AI with an initial focus on AI tools that improve our ability to sense and make sense of operating environments and which increase remote, uncrewed, and autonomous capabilities. These tools will decrease direct risk to Marines in combat and increase our ability to understand adversary actions while disguising our own. Specifically, these tools will help create outsized effects for small, distributed forces in a contested maritime environment. The Marine Corps also has AI-based initiatives underway that will support business operations and improve decision making processes in the areas of talent management, equipment and supply chain management, and force protection.

Naval Surface Fire Support

67. The DDG-1000 program was initiated to fill the capability gap for naval surface fire support. The original requirement for 24 to 32 DDG-1000 ships, each with two 155mm Advanced Gun Systems, was reduced to 12 ships, then to 10 ships, then to 7, and finally to 3 ships. The Navy now plans to dedicate those 3 ships to support theater-level fire missions.

In your view, and given this significant reduction in the number of DDG-1000 destroyers and their dedication to other missions, does the Navy program meet Marine Corps requirements for naval surface fire support?

Marine Corps fire support requirements are met by a combination of organic and joint air and surface delivered fires including missile and gunfire support from Navy ships. The operational DDG-1000 ships will contribute to fires required by the Marine Corps and joint forces.

- 68.** What other capabilities would you rely on to help meet naval surface fire support requirements? Will the Army's programs in Long Range Fires meet the requirements?

The Marine Corps requires highly mobile long-range fires. The key is the balance between range and weight. As part of a joint force, all fires platforms are useful. While the Navy-Marine Corps team continues to pursue cost-effective and lethal solutions in support of the naval surface fires requirement, the Marine Corps is closely monitoring the Army's advancements in long-range precision fires. For example, the Precision Strike Missile (PrSM) is an Army program to replace the Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMs). Like ATACMs, PrSM can be launched from the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System. The current Army plan calls for PrSM being developed in several capability increments; Increment II is planned to incorporate a seeker warhead, enabling it to engage moving targets at ranges well beyond the rest of the Multiple Launch Rocket System Family of Munitions. Based on the Army's current program schedule, the Marine Corps plans to begin procurement of PrSM Increment II in FY27 under our High Mobility Artillery Rocket System program.

Amphibious Combat Vehicle

- 69.** The Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) supports expeditionary protected mobility capability and capacity requirements with the mission is to land and maneuver the surface assault elements of the landing force, utilizing ship-to-shore water mobility during amphibious operations to seize inland objectives, and to conduct armored vehicle operations in subsequent actions ashore. The Marine Corps is procuring the ACV as a modernized platform to replace the aging AAV-7 fleet, with intent to procure three supporting mission role variants, the ACV-C (Command and Control), the ACV-30 (30mm Gun Variant), and the ACV-R (Recovery/Maintenance Variant). What is your assessment of this modernization effort?

The ACV remains our highest Ground Combat and Tactical Vehicle modernization priority, and the capabilities the platform provides our Marines for protected mobility, maneuver ashore, and support to our embarked infantry are unprecedented. The program achieved Initial Operational Capability (IOC) in November FY21 and has been in full-rate production of the ACV-P (Personnel) variant since then with 201 vehicles delivered to-date. The program will begin delivering the next mission-role variant, the ACV-C (Command and Control), in mid-FY24, which will deliver the latest in on-the-move C2. The remaining two mission-role variants, the ACV-30 (30mm Gun Variant) and ACV-R (Recovery/Maintenance Variant) are on track and within program cost and schedule controls. Modernization of our assault amphibian capability continues to progress towards a more lethal, survivable, and agile platform. During our transition we have learned that fielding a new 21st century wheeled assault amphibian platform

demands more training and proficiency of our operators and maintainers to get it right. Based upon this learning, we have instituted several initiatives to ensure we are fielding a platform that is able to be operated safely. The ACV has had some readiness challenges early in its fielding. Our Program Management Office has been working hard, in concert with, the Fleet Marine Force units to turn this around. I am happy to report ACV readiness has been steadily improving over the past 12 months.

- 70.** Recent news reports indicate the Marine Corps is seeking additional contractors to produce variants of the ACV, but is unable to share the technical data packages because it does not have sufficient rights to do so. What lessons is this teaching the Marine Corps that it needs to consider for future negotiations when considering what technical data rights to pursue?

The Marine Corps' acquisition strategy for the original competitively awarded contract for the initial Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) personnel carrier included an option for the complete Technical Data Package. However, due to the limited industrial base for Assault Amphibian Vehicles, along with a small Approved Acquisition Objective, it did not make fiscal sense for the Marine Corps to ultimately procure the complete TDP as the initial investment for the data coupled with the cost to facilitate a second source could not be recouped over the number of quantities planned. I believe every program should evaluate the need to procure the TDP for the system in question, but this must be weighed against the cost of the TDP and the long-term value of the package.

F-35B Requirements

- 71.** The Marine Corps has stated that its F-35B requirement is 420 aircraft. The total number of F-35s planned for the Department of the Navy is currently set at 680. Do you believe that the current plan for 680 aircraft can fully accommodate the needs of both the Navy and the Marine Corps?

I believe that the current plan for 680 aircraft can fully accommodate the needs of both the Navy and the Marine Corps. For the Marine Corps, 420 aircraft consist of 353 F-35B and 67 F-35C. Though our analysis will continue as we focus on optimizing our fleet squadron structure, 420 total F-35s adequately support primary, backup, and attrition reserve requirements for the Marine Corps. This facilitates support to Combatant Commanders (COCOMs), Global Force Management (GFM) requirements, and the Marine Corps as a Joint Force enabler in support of the National Defense Strategy.

- 72.** The F-35B brings new capabilities and operational possibilities to the Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU). Such new capabilities and operating concepts require investment in shipboard infrastructure, including upgraded data links. What is your vision for L-class ship connectivity? What are your current plans to achieve that vision?

One of our desired end states for all amphibious ships is they have the capability to downlink and share F-35 data. The Navy has already installed the new Capstone Ship Self-Defense System (SSDS) on several amphibious ships, which brings the Cooperative Engagement Capability (CEC) and Link-16 to the platform. Five Landing Helicopter Docks (LHDs) are scheduled for similar upgrades over the next five years. This system provides a critical combat capability that will integrate with F-35s over Link-16.

We have also begun the installation of the Marine Corps Common Aviation Command and Control System (CAC2S) Afloat on amphibious ships. CAC2S is a mature capability that we have used in our Marine Air Command and Control System (MACCS) for several years and provides our MAGTFs with a multi-domain command and control capability able to support all six functions of Marine Aviation.

To date, we have CAC2S Afloat on two amphibians with a funded plan to put it on all LHA/LHD and Amphibious Transport Docks (LPDs) class ships. CAC2S Afloat is a vital enabler that enhances the Amphibious Task Force defenses, conduct long-range strikes and long-range precision fires, and integrates the MEU Aviation Combat Element (ACE) into Composite Warfare Commander (CWC) functions of Sea Control and Denial.

- 73.** Follow-on modernization for the F-35 is scheduled to bring key warfighting capabilities to the fleet, but the schedule and budget remain in flux. Are you concerned about the affordability and executability of the Department's plan for Block 4 Continuous Capability Development and Delivery (C2D2)?

I am always concerned about affordability and executability in any program. We continue to see cost growth and schedule challenges with delivery of Block 4, which is a priority focus area for the Marine Corps. We are exploring areas with the Joint Program Office (JPO)/Industry where we can adjust the scope and prioritize efforts.

It is vital to the Marine Corps for critical capabilities like Block 4 to deliver to the fleet when we need them, and at an affordable cost. Developmental Test Flight Science aircraft have been identified as a "pacing item" affecting executability. The Marine Corps is currently exploring options, with the other Services, to update the Flight Science fleet, which will be critical to F-35 development in the coming years.

- 74.** What portion of the current Marine Corps F-35B fleet will be upgraded to Block 4?

Currently, all Marine Corps F-35B and F-35C aircraft from Lot-11 on up will be upgraded to a Block 4 configuration. This translates to every aircraft delivered since 2021, and it equates to approximately 75% of our 420 F-35s being Block 4 or higher. The lower lot aircraft (Lot-10 and below) are planned to remain in our training squadrons.

- 75.** There has been much discussion about the importance of networking and connecting all Navy and Marine Corps capabilities across air, land, and sea platforms. What is

the Navy/Marine Corps team doing to make machine-to-machine command and control, across multiple domains, a reality?

The Navy/Marine Corps team recognizes the importance of integrated networking capabilities across platforms. As such, the naval team is coordinating efforts to modernize to expand networking capabilities. In addition to expanding existing capabilities like the Common Aviation Command and Control System (CAC2S) and the cooperative engagement capability, the naval team is also working on developmental efforts that will provide fusion sensor feeds from airborne and surface platforms and dissemination to naval units in a secure manner.

76. Have the Navy and Marine Corps developed and refined the joint operational concepts that will govern this integrated fight?

In addition to fielding common command and control systems across the Naval Force, such as Common Aviation Command and Control System (CAC2S), the Marine Corps is participating in the Navy's Project Overmatch. Project Overmatch represents the Navy's contribution to Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2). We are fully invested in developing capabilities that seamlessly connect with the fleet and allow the Marine Corps, as the Stand in Force (SIF), to enable kill webs and close kill chains for the Joint Force.

77. What is being done to ensure that the Navy and Marine Corps airborne data links are interoperable and resilient against peer competitors—not only with each other—but with the Air Force and Army platforms as well?

Multiple efforts across the services seek to identify datalinks and fusion platforms that will ensure interoperability and resiliency of the future Joint Force. When facing peer adversaries, we anticipate attacks on our network, which dictates that our systems be both protected and resilient.

Considering the above, we have created a new restricted officer Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) in the Marine Corps - Interface Control Officers. These Marines will be our tactical data link experts and will be critical for ensuring we build and support resilient and interoperable networks.

78. Current technologies allow “low probability of intercept/low probability of detection” datalinks to connect 4th and 5th generation aircraft. As well, other platforms, operating across multiple domains can be networked. Who is leading this effort for the Navy, the Marine Corps, and across the joint force, and what progress is being made?

All the Services are exploring pathways to ensure interoperability and information exchange requirements. These efforts are tied to unique Service funding lines and priorities. The F-35 Joint Program Office (JPO) is quickly becoming a touchpoint for the Services to collaborate on datalink efforts, identify interoperability requirements, and share information and resources.

Science, Technology, and Innovation

U.S. superiority in key areas of innovation is decreasing or has disappeared, while our competitors are engaging in aggressive military modernization and advanced weaponry development. DOD has identified 14 critical technology areas in which investment to develop next generation operational capabilities is imperative: hypersonics; future generation wireless technology; advanced materials; integrated network systems-of-systems; directed energy; integrated sensing and cyber; space technology; quantum science; trusted artificial intelligence (AI) and autonomy; microelectronics; renewable energy generation and storage; advanced computing and software; human-machine interfaces; and biotechnology. Much of the innovation in these technologies that could prove suitable for national defense purposes is occurring outside of the traditional defense industry.

- 79.** What do you see as the most significant challenges (e.g., technical, organizational, or cultural) to U.S. development of these key technologies, or gaining access to such technologies from the commercial marketplace?

U.S. technology development challenges arise when we discuss competition for resources, such as radio frequency spectrum and the continued availability of spectrum access. The ability to train with the full capability of future systems remains paramount to maintain a force in readiness capable of global response.

Within a DoD context, I view the challenges as primarily cultural/organizational. Although we have made progress with new authorities, such as the DoD Adaptive Acquisition Pathways (AAP), for increasing speed to capability, technology continues to outpace our rules, regulatory constructs, and policy.

- 80.** How well do you think those Department investments in these technologies are appropriately focused, integrated, and synchronized across all Military Departments and Agencies?

Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Research and Engineering (OUSD (R&E)) does a terrific job at identifying and coordinating R&D research areas across the Department. Laying the right foundation through Force Design 2030 and our data and AI infrastructure layer helps facilitate the integration of new technologies in a rapid manner. Although DoD has challenges with respect to rapid integration into the DoD enterprise architecture, Combined Joint All Domain Command and Control (CJADC2) is helping the department bring together people, processes, and capabilities in a more focused manner resulting in better alignment.

- 81.** How has the Marine Corps prioritized limited R&D funding across your technology focus areas? Specifically, where is the Corps either increasing or decreasing focus and funding?

Marine Corps R&D funding has primarily been focused on those capabilities related to Force Design. These are long range fires, recon and counter recon capabilities, and C2 transport infrastructure to support data exchange requirements. Maintaining and balancing investments in both near term and longer-term R&D is necessary to keep pace with our adversaries.

82. How is the Marine Corps balancing revolutionary capability advancements as compared to “quick win” incremental improvements that can be rapidly fielded?

The Marine Corps balances "quick win" incremental improvements against strategic force design transformations in order to be responsive to the strategic environment and threat-informed timelines. For instance, the Marine Corps is developing capabilities and prototypes such as the Family of Integrated Targeting Cells now which enable our forward FMF warfighters along with combined or joint targeting architectures in order to afford the service time to enact more diverse and advanced solutions that more fully integrate into the Combined Joint All Domain Command and Control (CJADC2) architecture. As another example, we are embracing and leveraging Advana/Jupiter for Enterprise data analytics in advance of building out our own data mesh environment all the way to the tactical environment.

83. What efforts is the Marine Corps making to identify new technologies developed commercially by the private sector and apply them to military and national security purposes? What are the challenges that you perceive to increasing collaboration between the private sector and Marine Corps?

The Marine Corps is constantly engaged with industry to evaluate prospective technologies for our needs. Our primary impediment to rapid experimentation within our environment is the cybersecurity accreditation processes that must be completed prior to executing.

84. How can the operational experience of the warfighter better be integrated into the research and development process? Are there appropriate places to interject warfighters in the interaction between the DOD research and engineering community and the private sector?

The relevance of our technical solutions is directly linked to the timeliness of our recent operational experiences when developing and acquiring cutting-edge technologies. Leveraging iterative development with smaller, more frequent capability deliveries, and receiving rapid feedback from end users is a demonstrated recipe for success. This should be the standard for all our programs. One example on how we’re doing this today is with the Marine Corps Software Factory (MCSWF). The MCSWF is upskilling warfighters with technical skills and actively involving Marine developers who have direct operational experience. This model ensures that the technologies being developed align closely with the real-world challenges faced by the warfighters. These Marine developers bring firsthand knowledge of operational environments, tactics, and the needs of the end-users.

- 85.** How are you leveraging experimentation and prototyping opportunities to look at new technologies and concepts that might be beneficial for the Marine Corps, or better support the Corps role in joint operations?

Our Marine Corps Software Factory (MCSWF) prototype is a project where Marines are trained to develop software solutions for other Marines quickly and effectively. It is a collaboration between the Marine Corps and the Army Software Factory in Austin, TX. The goal is to leverage the expertise and partnerships with industry, academia, and other services to maximize resources and create innovative solutions. The MCSWF incorporates cutting-edge commercial technology, data science, and AI to accelerate the development of technical solutions. Once fully implemented, it will give our Commanders the capability to rapidly build technical solutions at the speed of relevance in ambiguous operating environments.

- 86.** In your view, what steps must DOD take to protect and strengthen our National Security Innovation Base to ensure that critical information is protected?

In the past, we viewed cybersecurity from a point of view where we protect networks and systems. Today, we have no choice but to take a data-centric approach with zero trust principles to protect data wherever it may reside. The DoD needs to continue encouraging our partners to leverage resources provided by the Defense Cyber Crime Center's Defense Industrial Base (DIB) Cybersecurity program and the National Security Agency's Cybersecurity Collaboration Center. Additionally, as DoD implements our zero trust data security approach, we must publish standards and incorporate associated contract language.

Indo-Pacific Region

- 87.** What are the key areas in which the Marine Corps must improve to provide the necessary capabilities and capacity to the Joint Force to prevail in a potential conflict with China?

Mobility in the littorals is a challenge. With the Navy, we are the naval expeditionary force in readiness and the global crisis response force.

The Marine Corps fights as a Marine Air Ground Task Force and has developed a great deal of its own organic aviation mobility. We have 16 MV-22 squadrons; are standing up a 4th C-130 squadron; and we have reached Full Operational Capability with our CH-53K, the only heavy lift helicopter in the Joint Force. This is significant but we also require the maritime littoral mobility of 31 L Class amphibious ships, 35 Landing Ship Medium (LSM), and other littoral connectors.

- 88.** Do you support the Defense Posture Realignment Initiative (DPRI), including the realignment of some U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam and the build-up of facilities at other locations such as MCAS Iwakuni, Japan?

Yes.

- 89.** China's anti-access, area denial capabilities (A2/AD)—including long-range ballistic and cruise missiles, advanced integrated air defenses, electronic warfare, and cyber—pose a significant challenge for U.S. forces. How would you assess the threat to Marine Corps forces and facilities from Chinese missile forces? Is it fair to say that Marine Corps' forces and facilities in the Indo-Pacific—from Japan to Guam—could face sustained missile attack from the beginning of a contingency? How will the Marine Corps execute its concept of operations known as Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations in the presence of such sustained attacks? In your assessment, have Marine Corps investments, concepts of operations, and/or posture shifts to date sufficiently addressed this threat?

The Marine Corps, along with USINDOPACOM and the Joint Force are taking steps to increase missile defense and harden our posture in the theater. Additionally, as a Service, we are continually updating our organization, training, equipment, and operating concepts, to mitigate the threats posed by our adversaries' capabilities.

Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) is a foundational naval concept that creates opportunities for the Service by improving our own ability to maneuver and exploit control over key maritime terrain, fully integrating Fleet Marine Force and Navy capabilities to enable sea denial and sea control, and support sustainment of the fleet. EABO is tightly coupled with the Navy's concept for Distributed Maritime Operations (DMO) and is aligned to the ideas presented in the Joint Warfighting Concept. Together, EABO and DMO advocate for integrated yet distributable naval formations to support sea denial and sea control in the face of potential adversaries who pose increasing challenges to current naval forces

- 90.** Do you believe the planned joint force mix of tactical aircraft is sufficient to counter current and future threats in INDOPACOM, where the "tyranny of distance" is such a major factor?

The acceleration of the PLA's threat systems is not fully known, so if confirmed, I would not be satisfied with anything less than sufficient.

- 91.** Do you believe DOD has sufficient sealift and airlift capabilities to move Marines throughout INDOPACOM for both training and contingency purposes and to support Marine Corps force conducting Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations?

We can do better. The Marine Corps, partnered with the Navy, is the Joint Force's naval expeditionary force of readiness and our nation's global crisis response force. Expeditionary means light, mobile, flexible, responsive, and lethal. To do this, the Marine Corps can't stand by and wait in line for STRATLIFT, it will be too late. We need the ability to respond when the indications and warnings present themselves. To do this, we need organic mobility. The Marine Corps has organic aviation, but the DOD and Congress need to find a way to meet the amphibious warfare ship minimum requirement of 31. We also need connectors and that is a

minimum of 35 Medium Landing Ships. These vessels, and the partnership with the Navy and its Sailors, will be the force multiplier the Joint Force needs to gain the advantage for both training and contingency purposes in INDOPACOM.

- 92.** What alternative concepts of operation, platforms, and basing opportunities exist to address potential shortfalls in this area?

The Concept for Stand-in Forces and the updated Tentative Manual for Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations describe our recommended concept of operations in the Pacific. Additionally, we are developing and experimenting with numerous ground, sea, and aviation platforms that are manned and unmanned for tactical and theater mobility. As we strengthen our relations with our allies and partners in the region we will develop and learn new alternatives that can fill current gaps and shortfalls.

The Marine Corps is developing bridging solutions to support littoral mobility until sufficient Medium Landing Ships (LSM) are delivered. The initial bridging plan consists of a combination of Expeditionary Fast Transports (T-EPF), charters and landing craft.

Europe

- 93.** What are the key areas in which the Marine Corps must improve to provide the necessary capabilities and capacity to the Joint Force to meet NDS priorities in the European AOR?

The Marine Corps is a global force and a force provider to the EUCOM commander. The capabilities we are developing are not only applicable in a single theater. Our Stand-In Force concept applies in the littorals of Europe just as it does in the Indo-Pacific. We have recently done tremendous work in the European AOR with TF-61/2, and our 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing. Just like anywhere else, we provide organized, trained, and equipped forces to enable the CCDR to campaign. We can and are improving our ability to operate in the High North by strengthening our partnership with our NATO Allies and European partners to enable Joint Force capacity.

- 94.** What is the value of the Marine Rotational Force-Europe? Do you support continuing that presence into the future?

The Marine Rotational Force-Europe (MRF-E) enables us to build on relationships with our NATO partners while maintaining skills to operate in extreme cold weather and arctic conditions. MRF-E provides a combat credible force to the EUCOM commander, and gives him options when dealing with crises and when working with our Allies and partners. If confirmed, we will continue to provide combat credible forces as required to the EUCOM Commander.

Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command

- 95.** What is your assessment of the progress made in evolving MARSOC capabilities?

The role of MARSOC has changed significantly since its inception in 2006, and we continue to make necessary changes that are consistent with our Service Force Design initiatives and derived from our governing national strategy documents. MARSOC leverages its unique placement and access while working closely with key Allies and partners to create advantages for decision makers. MARSOC's modernization efforts are driving the development of multi-domain sensing capabilities that can serve to illuminate malign activity and present options in competition or accelerate targeting in crisis and conflict.

Over the last 16+ years, MARSOC has demonstrated a unique ability to effectively integrate with Allies and partners, while synchronizing collective capabilities that support our Nation's interests and promote the sovereignty and security of our partners around the globe. Their persistent presence in key areas enables them to serve as a connector for Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational (JIIM) capabilities, which makes them a critical enabler for the Marine Corps, United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), and the joint force as a whole.

96. What unique attributes and capabilities do you believe MARSOC brings to the joint force?

MARSOC provides the joint force a unique capability by ensuring the littorals can be leveraged to create advantages for the joint force. They have shown they can masterfully employ SOF Peculiar activities to conduct multi-domain operations that can be advantageous for the joint force. MARSOC is unique from the other SOCOM components in that they assess and select experienced Marines from a variety of occupational specialties from within the service to ultimately generate a SOF capability to answer GCC requirements. This diversity of background, experiences and skill sets fosters a talented, mature, and capable force offering for the demands of a complex operating environment.

MARSOC applies an integrated intelligence and operations approach to characterize the environment and enable other governmental agencies or partner nations to understand our adversary's malign activities more fully. Additionally, MARSOC's development of advanced uncrewed systems, their sensors, and their enablement via the use of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning technologies will expand and thicken joint force kill webs and enable joint force targeting capabilities in contested space.

97. If confirmed, what would be the principal issues you would have to address to improve MARSOC operations?

As the Marine Corps executes Force Design 2030, MARSOC is working in parallel on their own modernization efforts, which includes their concept of Strategic Shaping and Reconnaissance (SSR). This concept is not only meant to provide the Joint Force unique global options for deterrence, but also shapes the environment in the event of conflict. MARSOC capabilities already, and will continue to, contribute to USSOCOM efforts related to What Winning Looks Like, as well as to Service concepts as elements of the forward-deployed Stand in Force working alongside and in collaboration with FMF units.

We must continually assess if MARSOC possesses the correct mix of organic capabilities that allow it to operationalize the SSR concept.

Operational Energy

- 98.** DOD defines *operational energy* as the energy required for training, moving, and sustaining military forces and weapons platforms for military operations, including the energy used by tactical power systems, generators, and weapons platforms. Longer operating distances, remote and austere geography, and anti-access/area denial threats are challenging DOD's ability to assure the delivery of fuel. As the ability to deliver energy is placed at risk, so too is the Department's ability to deploy and sustain expeditionary Marine forces around the globe. What are your ideas for future capabilities that would enable an expeditionary Marine Corps through the assured delivery of energy to the warfighter?

Demand reduction and use of alternative and renewable energy sources may be useful to our ability to fight and win in the future. We will continually face rising costs in energy and depend on supply chains that will be contested. We are experimenting with electric and hybrid vehicles, as well as solar and hydrogen energy. These alternate energy sources must be sustainable in expeditionary environments. As an example, infrastructure challenges associated with charging electric vehicles, even at home station, are amplified in a deployed and austere operating environment. I am committed to continued experimentation of alternate power sources while ensuring warfighting capability remains the priority.

- 99.** What are your ideas for reducing the risks associated with the Corps's dependence on vulnerable supply lines?

It is absolutely true that one broken link in a linear supply chain can result in an untethered force. Our MAGTF is already designed to operate with a degree of self-sufficiency, although this is not sustainable indefinitely. We are adjusting our institutional mindset from reliance on a vulnerable supply chain toward sustaining the force with resilient supply webs that leverage all available logistics capabilities with our Navy, joint, coalition, and commercial industry partners. I support the investments already in progress to reduce demand at the point of need, push advanced manufacturing capability down to our tactical units to increase self-sufficiency, and building a Global Positioning Network that forward positions equipment, supplies, and theater sustainment.

Information Operations

- 100.** In January of this year, the Marine Corps established an Information Command under a Major General. This Information Command is intended to integrate all disciplines that the Marine Corps considers to be "information-related," including cyber, space, intelligence, and all aspects of information operations, such as Military

Deception, Psychological Operations, Military Information Support Operations, and Electronic Warfare.

What is your understanding of how this Command is establishing or will establish units or teams that are responsible for providing integrated capabilities to support the information warfare needs of the combatant commands?

The Marine Corps Information Command (MCIC) provides unity of effort and serves as the operational linkage across five commands including: Marine Forces Cyberspace (MARFORCYBER), Marine Forces Space (MARFORSPACE), Joint Forces Headquarters Cyber Marines (JFHQ-C(M)) / Joint Task Force Ares (JTF-ARES), and the Service Cryptologic Component (SCC). The MCIC supports Combatant Commands and Fleet Marine Forces (FMF) through traditional Global / Cyber Force Management processes.

101. What specific structures and processes are being put in place in this Command specifically to integrate across the elements of Information Warfare?

The MCIC staff is responsible for integrating, synchronizing, and enabling elements of Information Warfare (IW) leveraging all Information Related Capabilities (IRCs) in support of naval, joint, and combined campaigning. The MCIC employs subject matter expertise from disciplines to include cyberspace operations, space, communications, special access programs (SAP) / special technical operations (STO), and information operations (i.e., MISO, MILDEC, fires, COMMSTRAT, EMSO, SIGMAN, civil affairs, etc).

102. From what source, if any, does this Command receive common requirements for joint forces and joint training to support joint information operations?

The MCIC processes requirements through three established mechanisms to include the Global / Cyber Force Management and Military Requirements Alignment Processes (GFM, CFMAP, and MRAP). Service requirements and priorities are captured via GFM and Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) Deputy Commandant Plans, Policy, and Operations (DC, PP&O), force synchronization conference. SIGINT requirements are captured through established NSA/CSS processes. USCYBERCOM communicates additional requirements for assigned or allocated forces via the CFMAP process. The MCIC, and other associated commands, coordinate by with and through the MARFORs, sister services, assigned commands, interagency partners, and others to identify opportunities or requirements that support the Commander's responsibilities and functional area alignment.

Cyber

103. The readiness of the Cyber Mission Forces assigned to U.S. Cyber Command is substantially below acceptable levels. This shortfall is due primarily to the lack of

sufficient numbers of personnel in each of the services in three critical work roles that are especially demanding: tool developers, exploitation analysts, and interactive on-net operators.

What is your understanding of the causes for the Marine Corps' shortfalls in recruiting, training, and retaining personnel qualified for these work roles?

Retention issues have not impacted our force presentation for USCYBERCOM critical and pacing work roles to date.

104. What is your understanding of the Marine Corps' plans to correct this shortfall?

The Marine Corp is committed to 100% assignment in the Cyber Mission Force and continues close coordination with USCYBERCOM to deliver the operational capacity required by GEN Nakasone and USCYBERCOM. We have instituted a series of accession and retention bonus along with establishing an "Active Duty Service Obligation for IONs". Our data continues to indicate that Marines are staying in the Force and on target in cyberspace because they are committed to the mission.

105. The mission of U.S. Cyber Command (CYBERCOM) is offensive and defense warfighting in the cyber domain. However, so far, General and Flag Officers selected to serve as Commander of Cyber Command have been intelligence specialists rather than line officers. If confirmed, you will be a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and an adviser to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense. Do you think that CYBERCOM as a warfighting command could or should be led by an officer trained and experienced in commanding joint operations?

USCYBERCOM could be led by an officer trained and experienced in commanding joint operations, as long as the officer has significant intelligence experience and understands the US Intelligence Community (IC). Full-spectrum cyberspace operations are inextricably linked to intelligence. Cyberspace operations are executed by, with, and through the information environment and are fully informed by intelligence and often yield intelligence. Commander USCYBERCOM is a unique position in that it is also the Director of the National Security Agency (NSA) and therefore requires unique experiences and skillsets. Many previous operational achievements and successes in cyberspace and the information environment rest on the alignment of USCYBERCOM and NSA.

End Strength

106. The Marine Corps' active duty end strength authorization has fallen from 186,200 in FY 2020 to 177,000 in FY 2023. The President's Budget would cut an additional 4,700 Marines for FY 2024.

Do you believe Marine Corps' active duty end strength should continue to fall?

Current plans have end-strength remaining at 172,300 through FY28 and increasing to a floor of 174,600 by FY30 to achieve modernization initiatives. The Marine Corps intends to achieve this floor sooner if possible.

- 107.** Is the Marine Corps' current end strength sufficient to implement the 2022 NDS and execute the associated operational plans? If not, what end strength do you believe is necessary to meet the demands placed on the Marine Corps by the 2022 NDS and associated operational plans?

Yes, the current end-strength of the Marine Corps is sufficient to implement the 2022 NDS, the associated operational plans, and the Global Force Management requirements. The Marine Corps FY23 target end strength is 172,300, based on the impacts from COVID and our planned reduction to support modernization efforts. Current plans have end strength increasing to 174,600 by FY30.

- 108.** If recruiting continues to be a challenge, how will you ensure the Marine Corps has sufficient personnel to support the 2022 NDS?

The Marine Corps' current plans have end strength increasing to 174,600 by FY30. This will be accomplished in part by increased retention, which has been exceptional. The Marine Corps met its retention mission in FY22 and will do so in FY23 as well. We are grateful that, once an individual becomes a Marine, they want to remain a Marine. In keeping with the tenets of FD2030, the Marine Corps is retaining more of our highest performing Marines especially within leadership and highly technical billets. This will prepare our forces to succeed on dispersed, complex, distributed, and high-technology future battlefields.

- 109.** What additional force shaping authorities and tools does the Marine Corps need, in your view?

I would ask that Congress continue to ensure the Marine Corps has the predictable funding for us to execute the flexible incentive and special pay authorities and non-monetary incentives to their greatest effect, particularly in critical, hard-to-fill specialties. If confirmed, I will be sure to come to you with any new statutory authorities that we may need.

Marine Reserve

- 110.** In your view, what is the appropriate relationship between the Active Marine Corps and the Marine Corps Reserve?

Historically, our Reserve Component has supported the Active Component and fought alongside them. Our Reserve Component is an integral part of the Marine Corps Total Force. The ability of the Marine Corps to meet combatant commanders' requirements on a day-to-day basis, as well as respond to a major contingency, is absolutely linked to the readiness of our Marine Corps Reserve. Similarly, the Active and Reserve components must be viewed as having a dynamic,

mutually supporting relationship, rather than a unidirectional support relationship from the Reserve force to the Active Component.

- 111.** What is your vision for the roles and missions of the Marine Corps Reserve? If confirmed, what new objectives would you seek to achieve with respect to the Reserve's organization, force structure, and end strength?

Our reserve force will continue to serve in all domains, remaining ready to augment and reinforce our active force for both preplanned missions and national emergencies. We are continuously working to optimize the organization, structure, and end strength of our Reserves to meet mission requirements, including increasing the permeability of service from Active Component to Reserve Component, and back, as part of our Talent Management 2030 initiative. The right Marine for a specific job should not be constrained simply because the task is normally associated with an Active or Reserve component billet. We must become comfortable with processes that enable us to pair the right Marines, with the right talent, to the right billets.

- 112.** Are you concerned that continued reliance on the Reserve Components to execute operational missions—both at home and around the globe—is adversely affecting the Marine Corp Reserve’s ability to meet its recruiting and retention missions? Why or why not?

Our citizens join the Marine Corps for a reason. They want to serve. Our reserve force is no different. They seek meaningful opportunities to practice their profession. If anything, mission tasks to our reserve helps to boost recruiting as our reserve Marines

- 113.** In your view, does the Marine Corps Reserve serve as an operational reserve, a strategic reserve, or both? In light of your answer, should the Marine Corps Reserve be supported by improved equipment, increased training, and higher levels of overall resourcing for readiness going forward?

Both. As a Total Force, the Marine Corps strives to seamlessly integrate the Reserve Component with our Active Component forces. We consistently plan and budget for new equipment and training, seeking to maximize AC-RC interoperability and overall readiness at every opportunity. We must continue to provide our Reserve Component the high-quality training opportunities that are afforded our Active Component to ensure the Total Force is uniformly prepared to respond to crisis or conflict. At the same time, we remain mindful of the fact that the demands of our reserves must be balanced so as not to unreasonably disrupt civilian occupations.

- 114.** Do you expect to meet prior service accession goals for the Marine Corps Reserve this fiscal year? Why or why not?

Yes. The Marine Corps is on pace to meet this fiscal year’s reserve component prior service recruiting accession requirement in each category for both officer and enlisted accessions.

- 115.** What is your understanding and view of the Office of the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness proposal for comprehensive Reserve Component Duty Status Reform?

I fully support the legislation proposed to update and simplify Reserve Component duty statuses. It is essential to producing real efficiencies and reducing unnecessary complexity. The measure would reduce the number of duty statuses and ensure RC Marines activated under different authorities are entitled to the same benefits. This will increase lethality and readiness of our Total Force.

- 116.** Does the Marine Corps have the personnel and pay information technology systems required to implement effectively this Reserve Component Duty Status Reform proposal, if enacted in law?

Yes, the Marine Corps is well-equipped to implement the Reserve Component Duty Status Reform changes. The Marine Corps Total Force System (MCTFS) is a mature, fully integrated pay and personnel system that allows our Reserve members to seamlessly transition between components. It already handles both active and reserve component pay and entitlements, allowing reservists to transition between duties statuses and receive the pay and entitlements they deserve in a timely and accurate fashion.

Recruiting and Retention

- 117.** The National Defense Strategy Commission asserted unequivocally that the most critical resource required to produce a highly capable military is highly capable people, in the quantity required, willing to serve. Yet, DOD studies indicate that only about 23% of today's youth population is eligible for military service, a decrease of six percentage points in the last five years. Further, only a fraction of those who meet military accession standards are interested in serving. As rates of physical inactivity among American youth continue to rise, what in your view, if anything, could the Marine Corps do to prepare potential recruits for military service, and specifically service in the Marine Corps?

The Marine Corps has always prepared American youth for success after they are contracted and enter the Delayed Entry Program. Beyond that, the best way to prepare the youth of America for service is a national effort by all government and educational leaders. The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports is a great example of a way to combat the growing youth obesity epidemic.

- 118.** What do you consider to be the key to your future success, if confirmed, in recruiting the highest caliber American youth for service in the Marine Corps?

The key has and will always be the Marines and the standards we uphold. The Marine Corps' recruiting force must also be manned and resourced to meet the future needs of the Corps. As

population and technologies shift, we must be agile in bringing the story of the Marine Corps – and the opportunities we offer – to the young men and women of America.

- 119.** What do you consider to be key to your future success, if confirmed, in retaining the best qualified personnel for continued service in positions of greater responsibility and leadership in the Marine Corps?

If confirmed, I will continue to expand retention of our highest-performing, most committed, and talented Marines. We have been working hard to provide improved predictability, transparency, and certainty to our Marines and their families while preserving career development and our ethos and culture of the most responsive and expeditionary fighting force in the world. Another key to retention success is focus on and funding for our Marine & Family Programs.

- 120.** In your view, do current accessions standards—particularly DOD-wide criteria for tier-one recruits—accurately predict recruit attrition and/or future success in the Marine Corps?

Current accessions standards for tier-one recruits have been reliable predictors of recruit attrition and future success in the Corps. In concert with DoD and the other services, we continue to explore evaluation methods to expand a more holistic view of talent as indicators of potential.

- 121.** Given the historically low numbers for eligibility to serve, do you believe a reassessment of accessions standards is in order? If so, what accessions standards in your view are outdated or worthy of review?

Earning the title Marine will always be challenging, but I agree that accession standards must continuously be reviewed. Given the state of the physical and mental health of the youth of America, I look forward to working with you and recruiting stakeholders to ensure we have it right.

- 122.** In your view, does the Marine Corps have the necessary authorities to recruit and retain personnel with critical skills, including cyber?

Yes. The Marine Corps appreciates all the authorities we have received to support improved recruiting and overall talent management. We are open to additional initiatives to further improve school access. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you to ensure we continue to retain our top Marines, especially those requiring critical skills.

- 123.** What monetary and non-monetary incentives are the Marine Corps employing in an effort to retain Marine aviators? Which incentives or combinations thereof have proven most effective?

Aviation retention is a challenge that must be viewed holistically and cannot be solved by bonuses alone. Availability of flight hours, opportunities to train and execute missions, stability in assignments, and other non-monetary factors are important. It is a challenge to compete with

the monetary compensation packages and family stability offered by commercial airlines who seem to be increasingly aggressive in recruitment of qualified aviators. If confirmed, I will work with the other services, DoD, and Congress to study ways to ensure we have a sufficient volume of skilled Marine Corps aviators.

- 124.** Because the “all-Volunteer” military depends on a constant flow of volunteers each year, as the number of eligible and service-propensed American youth declines, it will become increasingly difficult to meet military needs. Do you agree with the premise that the shortage in the number of American youth eligible and interested in serving in the Armed Forces poses a threat to national security?

Absolutely. The significant decline in propensity and eligibility has concerned the Marine Corps for years. Our country is replete with talent and, if confirmed, I commit myself to engaging national leadership to revitalize the value of service to our American youth. Access to high schools, community colleges, and universities is also imperative to reach the highest caliber men and women of our country. Addressing these issues is of the utmost importance, and I would look forward to being part of that effort.

- 125.** What is the role of “influencers”—parents, grandparents, teachers, coaches, and clergy to whom a young person turns for advice—in a young person’s decision to join, or not to join the Marine Corps?

The role of influencers is immeasurable. Today, the youth of America exist in an environment where influence is inexpensive and readily available. Through social media and persistent connectivity, the youth of today are constantly bombarded with narratives of service, many of which are negative and erroneous. The traditional influencers – family, teachers, coaches, and government leaders - are more important today than ever.

- 126.** Has the integrated DOD recruiting campaign, *Their Success Tomorrow Begins With Your Support Today*, been successful in increasing the willingness of youth or their influencers to consider service in the Marine Corps?

While we do not have data on the specific impact to the Marine Corps, any support from the government and DoD to reinforce value of service to influencers is vital and appreciated. We know that parents and other influencers play an important role in guiding youth views on military service. I believe the DoD campaign raises overall awareness of the military as an option while allowing each service the opportunity to differentiate unique missions and cultures.

Military Compensation

- 127.** The Department of Defense has traditionally assessed the competitiveness of military pay by comparing Regular Military Compensation against salaries earned by a comparable civilian demographic.

Do you agree that the primary purpose of a competitive military pay and benefits package is to recruit and retain a military of sufficient size and quality to meet the objectives of the 2022 NDS?

Yes. Fair compensation is a readiness issue and improves quality of life and retention. We are actively participating in the DoD's 13th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, to make sure our Marines are being adequately compensated for their service. If confirmed, I will look forward to the results and take all appropriate actions on the recommendations.

128. What is your assessment of the adequacy of the current military pay package in achieving this goal—particularly given the ever-tightening recruiting market?

The dominant motivation to earn and keep the title Marine is the sense of purpose and pride that Marines have in service to the Nation. With that said, we know that compensation is a dinner table issue for many families and competitive pay and compensation are essential to our ability to recruit, retain, and provide for the overall quality of life for our Marines and their families. We are actively participating in the DoD's 13th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, to make sure our Marines are being adequately compensated for their service. It is important we carefully consider the total compensation package pay, allowances, bonuses, housing, healthcare, tax advantages, Thrift Savings Plans, etc. If confirmed, I will look forward to the results and take all appropriate actions on the recommendations.

129. Do you believe the largely “one-size-fits-all” model for military pay adequately rewards individuals for their specialized skills and provides an appropriate incentive to scientists, engineers, and members of other high-value professions to access into the military?

Congress has given us many flexible incentive and special pay authorities and non-monetary incentives to assist with filling the critical, hard to fill specialties that we need. Authorities such as special pays and incentives are undeniably factors in retention decisions. They are the most direct way we can influence the decision that help shape our force. Studies and our own anecdotal experience support the belief that special and incentive pays are highly effective when combined with a strong sense of purpose, individual agency, challenging opportunities for growth, quality of life for Marine families, and competitive pay. We are thankful that Congress has given us broad and flexible authorities – and funded these authorities – so that we can fine tune our incentives to the skills and occupations that we need to retain.

130. What changes, if any, would you recommend to the current military pay and benefits package?

I believe the overall compensation and benefit package is competitive. However, we are actively participating in the DoD's 13th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, to make sure our Marines are being adequately compensated for their service. If confirmed, I will look forward to the results and take all appropriate actions on the recommendations.

131. What specific recommendations do you have for controlling the rising cost of military personnel?

Controlling the rising costs of personnel is a challenge. However, we must always keep faith with our Marines. As a nation, we are asking our service members to perform more complex tasks on more dynamic and fast-paced battlefields with more complicated technologies than at any time in human history. In an American society where dual-income, dual-career households have become the norm, and perhaps a necessity, Marines spouses are frequently disrupted in their career progression and earning potential by the instability of the military career. We are actively participating in the DoD's 13th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, to make sure our Marines are being adequately compensated for their service. If confirmed, I will look forward to the results and take all appropriate actions on the recommendations.

Service of Transgender Persons

132. Each of the Service Chiefs has testified before this Committee that in their experience, the service of transgender individuals in their preferred gender has had no negative impact on unit or overall military readiness. In your experience, has the service of transgender individuals in their preferred gender had any negative impact on unit or overall military readiness?

No. I am not aware of any negative impact on readiness.

133. In your view, what would be the impact on readiness of requiring the separation of all transgender soldiers currently serving in the military? Please support any assertions with non-anecdotal data.

We do not want to lose any high performing Marines. We do not know the total number of transgender Marines in the Marine Corps, but we believe the number is small.

134. How many Marines have sought and been approved for an "in-service transition" since 2021?

In accordance with DoD policy, we do not track medical requests for "in-service transition".

135. How many transgender persons have enlisted or commissioned into the Marine Corps since 2021?

In accordance with DoD policy, we do not track gender marker changes.

136. How many Marines have changed their gender marker in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) since 2021?

In accordance with DoD policy, we do not track gender marker changes.

- 137.** How many Marines have been referred to the disability evaluation system due to complications related to an in-service gender transition since 2021?

The Department of Navy (BUMED) manages the criteria for referral to the disability evaluation system. If confirmed, I would be happy to discuss this with BUMED and follow up.

Military Quality of Life

- 138.** The Committee remains concerned about the sustainment of key quality of life programs for military families, such as family advocacy and parenting skills programs; child care; spouse education and employment support; health care; and morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) services, including Commissary and Military Exchange stores.

If confirmed, what quality of life and MWR programs would you consider a priority?

The Commandant has testified that the highest quality of life priorities are health care, housing, and childcare. The Marine Corps is committed to caring for our Marines and their families and always striving to improve their quality of life. If confirmed, I will remain committed to ensuring that these and other quality of life programs continue to be a priority.

- 139.** How would you work across the Marine Corp and with Military Service Organizations and Congress, to sustain and enrich high-value quality of life and MWR programs for Marines and their families?

If confirmed, I would continue our goal of creating a seamless system of care with multiple stakeholders - both internal and external to the Marine Corps, to include service organizations, Congress, DoD, other services, and the public/private sector. Through these partnerships, we can expand our reach and enhance the programs and services our Marines and families most need.

Family Readiness and Support

- 140.** What do you consider to be the most important family readiness issues for Marines and their families?

As we mature our force and seek to retain more Marines every year, supporting Marines and families is critical to recruit and retain the right Marines. We view family readiness through the perspective of each individual Marine and that Marine's family; the life events that they will experience together, the challenges they will face together, and the elements critical to the quality of life for any family. Similarly, I understand that no two families are the same, that they will not have the same needs or experiences and that their needs may change as their family's circumstances change. The Marine Corps must possess a system capable of accommodating the broadest range of needs that may exist. However, certain commonalities will no doubt exist in the needs of families writ large. Safe and sufficient housing, access to childcare, continuity of childcare arrangements, access to high quality medical services and specialty care, spousal

employment opportunities, and co-location of dual-military families are all key issues impacting family readiness.

Three of the Marine Corps' primary family readiness priorities are childcare, spouse employment, and PCS flexibility. Our warfighting readiness is dependent on a Marine's support structure at home and in their communities. I recognize the importance of Marine and family stability and support it as a major line-of-effort for successfully achieving our talent management goals. If confirmed, I will seek to expand high-quality childcare, improve spouse employment opportunities, and increase PCS flexibility.

141. If confirmed, how would you ensure that the family readiness issues you identified are properly addressed and adequately resourced?

If confirmed, I will aim to ensure Marine commands have the tools required to fully inform their Marines of the opportunities that exist. Further, I will work with the Department of the Navy to ensure that childcare and medical facilities are adequately resourced, both through military construction and hiring and retaining a sufficient workforce to operate these facilities. If confirmed, I will examine personnel assignment processes to better facilitate both the continuity of childcare arrangements, housing, and spousal employment that are currently affected by the current 36 month Permanent Change of Station (PCS) cycle. Outside the contiguous United States (OCONUS) moves are challenging for many families in all the above categories, and the process to clear a family who volunteers for a OCONUS move is currently lengthy and burdensome. If confirmed, I will examine the incentives for OCONUS moves, the process for moving a family to an OCONUS location, and the support that is available overseas to ensure our Marine families have what they need from the initial receipt of orders through their return to the United States.

Ensuring that our Marines and their families understand the full spectrum of our family readiness capabilities and resources and recognize them as part of the Force Preservation construct is critical. If confirmed, I will work to increase utilization of these capabilities to maintain a Marine's readiness, resiliency, and quality of life, balanced with the other needs of the Marine Corps.

142. If confirmed, how would you ensure that support related to mobilization, deployment, and family readiness is provided to Marine Corps Reserve families, as well as to Active duty Marine families who do not reside near a military installation?

If confirmed, I will remain committed to ensuring quality of life support programs are designed to effectively assist all Marines and their families, whether they are deployed, geographically isolated, or on the home front. Face-to-face and virtual learning and support opportunities will continue to be offered along with toll-free telephone and internet resources. Our family readiness programs will continue to be flexible and constantly adjusting to meet the needs of our geographically dispersed Marines and their families.

143. The Committee often hears that Active duty families have difficulty obtaining child care on base and that there are thousands of military families on waitlists to receive infant care.

If confirmed, what specifically would you do to provide Marine Corps families with accessible, high-quality childcare, at an appropriate cost?

Our primary childcare challenges are staffing related. To mitigate these challenges, we have utilized non-competitive childcare employee transfers, increased employee salaries, and provided CDC employees with childcare discounts. If confirmed, I will continue to look for additional solutions, as well as consider recommendations from the DoD Child Development Program Recruitment, Retention and Compensation Task Force.

Support for Military Families with Special Needs

144. If confirmed, how would you ensure that a Marine with a special needs family member is relocated only to a new duty station at which the medical and educational services required by that family member are available?

Every Marine enrolled in EFMP receives a careful review of their proposed PCS orders to ensure the location meets the medical and educational needs of family members. EFMP continues to excel in its mission to ensure Marines are assigned to duty stations where the required medical services and educational support are available for their family members' needs.

145. If confirmed, how would you ensure effective administration of the exceptional family member program (EFMP), balancing the needs of the Marine Corps, the needs of exceptional family members, and the desires of both Marines and their dependents to have a rewarding experience in the Marine Corps?

The Marine Corps EFMP ensures continued effectiveness by remaining a 'high touch' person-to-person program with quarterly engagement with every enrolled family. This allows the staff to build meaningful relationships with families to focus our efforts on proactive preventive support activities. Our specialized attorneys provide free legal counsel and representation to EFMP families, as they seek state and federal disability-related benefits to which they are entitled. Our 'Warm Hand Off' process that assists EFMP families before, during and after a PCS. If confirmed, I will prioritize the EFMP.

146. If confirmed, what new initiatives might you suggest for improving the ability of Marines with a special needs family member to obtain the medical services and support their family member requires?

The Marine Corps EFMP has a strong record of service to our Marines and families. To continue this success, we must prioritize funding, training, and support for our EFMP staff and installation commands. If confirmed, I would recommend continued development of Defense Health Agency medical case management for highly impacted EFMP families prior to a PCS.

This will ensure these families have a dedicated medical case manager to help them transition their medical care within and across TRICARE Regions.

Suicide Prevention

147. On May 17, 2022, Secretary Austin established the Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee (SPRIRC) to conduct a comprehensive review of clinical and non-clinical suicide prevention and response programs across the force.

If confirmed, what specific role and tasks would you establish for the Marine Corps in implementing the SPRIRC's recommendations?

If confirmed, I will remain focused on trying to reduce the number of suicides. The Marine Corps is working with the Office of the Secretary of Defense to develop SPRIRC implementation plans and will take swift action once guidance is issued.

148. If confirmed, specifically what would you do to ensure that sufficient suicide prevention and mental health resources are available to deployed Marines, as well as to Marines and their families at home station?

The Marine Corps will continue to provide mental and behavioral health resources to Marines deployed or forward based, and to family members in need at home station locations through our vast network of prevention stakeholders and workforce. The current provider shortage is a challenge. If confirmed, I will advocate for additional providers to meet the needs of Marines and families. I will also continue to ensure that our Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) Marines are trained to identify those within their ranks who may be demonstrating signs of distress. For Marines not near an installation, the Marine Corps has partnerships with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Guard Bureau to expand Marines' access to counseling and other resources.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

149. Despite significant efforts by the Military Services over the past decade to enhance their prevention of, and response to sexual assaults, including measures to care for victims and hold assailants accountable, the current data continues to show increasing prevalence of sexual assault and unwanted sexual conduct, primarily for female service members aged 17 to 24. These findings echo reports this year of increases in the prevalence of sexual harassment and assault at the Military Service Academies.

Do you believe the policies, programs, and resources that the Department of the Navy and the Marine Corps have put in place to prevent and respond to sexual assault, and to protect sailors and marines who report sexual assault from retaliation, are working? If not, what else must be done?

I appreciate the recent IRC recommendations and increased resourcing for sexual assault prevention and response. The Marine Corps supports these efforts and is fully engaged in implementing the IRC recommendations. I believe they will improve prevention and response, so we ask for time to implement these new requirements. The Marine Corps will remain steadfast in holding perpetrators accountable for their crimes and actions; assisting victims with the care they need; and ensuring commanders and senior enlisted are responsible for the climate of their unit. If confirmed, I will remain committed to preventing incidents of sexual assault.

- 150.** The most recent report on the prevalence of sexual assault and harassment at the Military Service Academies revealed disturbing levels of sexual harassment in particular, placing the Service Academies among the poorest performing military units in incidents of harassment, suggesting an environment conducive to sexual assault and other misconduct. What is your reaction to this report, and what actions would you propose to reduce the prevalence of sexual harassment at the Service Academies?

I defer to the Department of Navy on sexual assault prevention and response at the Academy. However, I am sure many of the actions needed to combat sexual assault are similar. I appreciate the recent IRC recommendations and increased resourcing for sexual assault prevention and response. The Marine Corps supports these efforts and is fully engaged in implementing the IRC recommendations. Further, the Marine Corps will continue to send only the highest caliber officers to the United States Naval Academy to ensure they are part of a positive command climate.

- 151.** If confirmed, what specific role would you establish for yourself in preventing sexual harassment in the Marine Corps, including within the civilian workforce?

Just as unit commanders set priorities and serve as personal examples within their units, so does the Commandant of the Marine Corps for all Marines and civilian Marines. If confirmed, I will continue to foster a culture of accountability and trust, and to ensure the Marine Corps provides the support and care for those in need. I remain committed to taking every report seriously while promoting trust in the chain of command. This must remain a priority with constant vigilance and continuing education for Marines of all ranks across our Corps.

- 152.** Do you perceive that you need additional authorities from Congress to improve the Marine Corps programs to prevent sexual harassment and sexual assault?

The Marine Corps is not seeking additional authorities at this time. If confirmed, I will notify Congress if I believe we need new statutory authorities.

Mental and Behavioral Health Care

- 153.** If confirmed, what actions would you take to ensure that sufficient mental and behavioral health resources are available to deployed and forward-based Marines, as well as to Marines and families at home station locations?

In keeping with the response from question 148, the Marine Corps will continue to provide mental and behavioral health resources to Marines deployed or forward based, and to Marines and families at home station locations through our vast network of prevention stakeholders and workforce. The current provider shortage is a challenge. If confirmed, I will advocate for additional providers to meet the needs of Marines and families. I will also continue to ensure that our Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) Marines are trained to identify those within their ranks who may be demonstrating signs of distress. For Marines not near an installation, the Marine Corps has partnerships with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Guard Bureau to expand Marines' access to counseling and other resources.

- 154.** If confirmed, what specifically would you do to ensure that sufficient mental and behavioral health resources are available to Reserve Component Marines and their families who do not reside near a military base?

The Marine Corps ensures that mental and behavioral health resources are available to Reserve Marines and their families who do not reside near a military base. Our Psychological Health Outreach, Military OneSource, Vet Center, and Yellow Ribbon Programs are all available to Reservists and provide support throughout activation cycles and deployments. The Marine Corps also has partnerships with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Guard Bureau to expand Marines' access to counseling and other resources. If confirmed, I will ensure these services remain.

- 155.** The Marine Corps has made progress in reducing the stigma associated with help-seeking behaviors, but some Marines, remain concerned that their military careers will be adversely affected should their chains of command become aware that they are seeking mental or behavioral health care. At the same time, the Marine Corps chain of command has a legitimate need to be aware of physical and mental health conditions that may affect the readiness of the Marines under their command. In your view, does the Marine Corps effectively bridge the gap between a servicemember's desire for confidentiality and the chain of command's legitimate need to know about matters that may affect individual service member and the unit readiness?

Protecting a servicemember's confidentiality is of utmost importance to the Marine Corps and the Marine Corps will ensure that only those with a need to know about a Marine's private matters will be informed. This helps ensure Marines seek the help they need. We want Marines to seek help for their mental and behavioral health – just as if they would for a physical injury. Get help, get treated, and get back in the fight.

- 156.** In your view, do non-medical counseling services provided by DOD Military Family Life Counselors have a role in promoting the readiness of Marines and their families?

Yes. DOD Military Family Life Counselors and other non-medical counseling services are an important part of the continuum of care and services that increase readiness and resiliency in the Force. Additionally, we continue to support Military OneSource which provides confidential, non-medical counseling, resources and support to our Marines and their families anywhere in the world.

Legal Services

157. How are responsibilities for legal services allocated between the Staff Judge Advocate to the Commandant and the Counsel for the Commandant?

The Staff Judge Advocate to the Commandant (SJA to CMC) and the Counsel for the Commandant (CL) have two distinctive roles. Title 10, United States Code, section 8046 dictates the Staff Judge Advocate to the Commandant's (SJA to CMC) responsibilities, while Department and Service regulations set forth the Counsel for the Commandant's (CL) duties.

By law, like the Service Judge Advocates General, the SJA to CMC is the Commandant's legal advisor on all matters arising within the Marine Corps and from the Commandant's Joint Chiefs of Staff membership. The SJA to CMC advises the Commandant and Headquarters, Marine Corps on any matter directed, or on any matter the SJA to CMC determines should be brought to the Commandant's attention. The SJA to CMC assists the Commandant in executing Title 10 responsibilities to organize, train, and equip legal support essential to an expeditionary force.

CL is part of the Office of the General Counsel of the Navy. CL advises on acquisition law; arms control and international arms regulation; business and commercial law; real and personal property law; civilian personnel and labor law; fiscal law; environmental law; occupational safety and health law; intellectual property law; Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act law; some legislation; and such other areas as may be assigned to support the Navy and Marine Corps.

SJA to CMC and CL share intelligence law and oversight of intelligence activities, intelligence-related activities, special access programs, sensitive activities, ethics and standards of conduct, and cyber law.

158. How would you modify the allocation of these responsibilities, if confirmed?

No modification of responsibilities is necessary.

159. Who has responsibility for providing legal advice on military justice matters in the Marine Corps?

The SJA to CMC, exclusively. This is by statute: 10 U.S.C. 8046. Further, like the Service Judge Advocates General, 10 U.S.C. 806 requires the SJA to CMC to make frequent inspections in the field in supervision of the administration of military justice. Marine judge advocates advising Commanders at all levels regarding military justice do so under the supervision of the

SJA to CMC. The SJA to CMC is also exclusively responsible for qualifying Special Trial Counsel for certain types of offenses (10 USC 824a) and serving on the Joint Service Committee on Military Justice (DoDI 5500.17).

160. What is the role, if any, of the Counsel for the Commandant in making duty assignments for Marine Corps judge advocates?

None. Statutory responsibility over the assignment of Marine Corps judge advocates rests with the Commandant, who exercises that authority through Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, with the advice of SJA to CMC.

161. What is your view of the need for the Staff Judge Advocate to the Commandant to provide independent legal advice to the Commandant of the Marine Corps?

Indispensable. A Commandant's access to independent legal advice from the SJA to CMC is essential to the Marine Corps. It is so important that 10 U.S.C. 8046 prohibits any interference with that advice by any officer or employee within of DoD.

162. What is your view of the responsibility of Marine Corps judge advocates to provide independent legal advice to Marine Corps commanders?

Independent legal advice by Marine Corps judge advocates is as important to commanders as it is to the Commandant – it is indispensable and protected by statute (10 USC 8046). Marine Corps doctrine provides “The role of a judge advocate within a staff is to help generate and maintain tempo for a Commander through the application of timely, correct, and complete legal advice.” Independent legal advice helps our Commanders make the best decisions possible in the fastest time possible.

Officer Personnel Management System Reforms

163. The John S. McCain NDAA for FY 2019 contained several provisions to modernize the officer personnel management system. These reforms were designed to align officer career management with the priorities outlined in the 2018 NDS. How is the Marine Corps implementing these authorities today and to what effect?

I believe the provisions within the 2019 NDAA have benefited the Marine Corps significantly, and the Marine Corps has implemented many of these authorities in Talent Management 2030. Options such as promotion opt-out and career intermission have positively contributed to mid-career retention. The Marine Corps plans to enact pilot programs this year for lateral entry and increased active-to-reserve and reserve-to-active permeability.

164. If confirmed, how would you lead the Marine Corps in further leveraging these new authorities?

We appreciate the authorities given to us by Congress in FY19 and have implemented many of them, most recently as part of Talent Management 2030. We believe that promotion opt out and career intermission have positively contributed to mid-career retention. We have laid the foundations and are enacting pilot programs this year for lateral entry and increased active-to-reserve and reserve-to-active permeability. If confirmed, I will continue to expand and accelerate these efforts and will not hesitate to ask for assistance from this committee when required.

165. Are there other authorities that the Marine Corps needs in order to modernize the management of its officer personnel?

Not at this time.

Joint Officer Management

166. The NDAA for FY 2017 modified the Joint Qualified Officer (JQO) system established by the Goldwater-Nichols Act in two significant ways. First, it broadened the statutory definition of “joint matters” to expand the types of positions for which an officer can receive joint duty credit. Further, it reduced from three years to two the minimum tour length required for joint duty credit. What is your assessment of the effectiveness of the FY 2017 modifications to the JQO system?

The FY 2017 modifications to the JQO system and current updates have been effective and allow for greater flexibility in the assignments process. Greater assignment flexibility facilitates optimal career progression like key billets in grade, broadening PME, and command assignments. Additionally, the flexibility enables the fulfillment of service requirements while fully supporting the joint force.

167. In your view, are the requirements associated with becoming a JQO, and the link between attaining joint qualification and eligibility for promotion to Flag officer rank, consistent with the operational and professional demands of Marine Corps officers?

Yes. We believe that current JQO requirements are well-aligned with what it takes to be an effective officer in the Marine Corps. Lifelong career development of our officers is essential to ensuring that officers serving as general and flag officers have the requisite experience and education in joint matters. Joint warfighting experience and expertise is a key factor increasing lethality and readiness.

168. In your view, what additional modifications, if any, to JQO prerequisites are necessary to ensure that Marine Corps officers are able to attain both meaningful joint and Corps-specific leadership experience and adequate professional development?

I believe that access to JPME-II officer education opportunities is vital to support joint education requirements and ensuring the Marine Corps maximizes the number of officers designated as

joint qualified. I do not have any additional modifications of the JQO prerequisites to recommend at this time.

Professional Military Education

- 169.** The 2022 NDS asserts that Professional Military Education (PME) curricula should be refocused to foster critical thinking and analytical skills, fluency in critical languages, and integration of insights from the social and behavioral sciences. If confirmed, what actions would you take to update the Marine Corps' PME system to ensure that it fosters the skills highlighted in the NDS to develop a cadre of strategic thinkers and planners with both the intellectual and military leadership acumen to merit promotion to General Officer?

We have already shifted both officer and enlisted PME to an outcomes-based education model to ensure that graduates possess the critical and creative thinking skills, decisiveness, and warfighting acumen needed to win in today's complex global environment. Programs such as the School of Advanced Warfighting and the Commandant's Doctor of Philosophy program, which select officers who have demonstrated the ability for strategic thinking and planning, directly contribute to the cadre of warrior scholars able to serve the nation now and in the future as General Officers. Additionally, the Marine Corps recently established the Strategist Management program, which focuses on aligning officers with specialized PME to utilization tours that are well suited to their advanced education in strategy application. If confirmed, I would expand on the initiatives in Training and Education 2030 to enhance critical thinking and analytical skills through more fully integrating wargaming into both resident and distance education opportunities to advance a better understanding of the next generation capabilities. The Marine Corps must ensure that the distance and blended programs are as rigorous and challenging as our resident programs, which means the development and execution of virtual wargames for distance and blended programs. Nearly 80% of Marine officers complete PME via our distance and blended programs, so including wargaming there as well greatly increases the exposure of our officer corps to threat-based problems and solutions.

- 170.** In your view, are there opportunities in Marine Corps PME to improve STEM cognizance and cyber fluency across the joint force to ensure that leaders understand and can effectively employ technologies to fight and win our nation's wars?

If confirmed, I will continue to advance the integration of emerging technology within the Marine Corps' training and educational institutions as an enduring priority. We are in the process of hiring talent to support expanded curriculum in the areas of emerging technology and cyber and have already begun to integrate these topics, along with space, into both officer and enlisted PME curricula. While raising overall cognizance in these areas, the Marine Corps will continue to partner with the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), recognized as a premier STEM school, to produce officers and enlisted Marines who are trained for, then fill specific technical billets. NPS is the main provider for technical graduate programs for the Marine Corps, including the

Service's technical PhD program, which produces PhDs annually in areas like Operations Research, Cyber, and beginning in 2025 – Space. Once the Marine Corps Wargaming and Analysis Center is built, I will promote greater collaboration between the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab and Marine Corps University to wargame cyber and other emergent technologies more comprehensively and at higher levels of classification.

- 171.** In your view, is there a role for Marine Corps PME in developing basic product management skills across the joint force to ensure that military leaders are proficient in the employment of software and automation in warfighting?

With the exponential advances in artificial intelligence and unmanned systems, there is a requirement to develop proficiency in the employment of software and automation in warfighting. While we train for speed and accuracy, we educate for creativity and judgment. We have only begun to scratch the surface of employing AI, whether it be in autonomous weapons systems, developing plans, or adapting cross-domain kill-webs. To that end, we are in the process of hiring an Emerging Technology Chair to infuse relevant trends into PME as they affect our application of technology in a complex and evolving global space.

The DOD Civilian Personnel Workforce

- 172.** DOD is the Federal government's largest employer of civilian personnel. The vast majority of DOD civilian personnel policies comport with requirements set forth in title 5 of the U.S. Code, and corresponding regulations under the purview of the Office of Personnel Management. Over many years, the annual defense bill has included numerous extraordinary hiring and management authorities applicable to specific segments of the DOD civilian workforces.

In your judgment, what is the biggest challenge facing the Department of the Navy in effectively and efficiently managing its civilian workforce?

One of our greatest challenges is the time to hire new employees. Delays in hiring can cause us to lose talent to the private sector, who can hire faster than we can. We thank Congress for the direct hiring authorities you have provided us; they are making a positive difference in recruiting talent.

- 173.** In your view, do Marine Corps supervisors have adequate authorities to divest of a civilian employee whose performance of duty fails to meet standards or who engages in misconduct? If so, are Marine Corps civilian and military supervisors adequately trained to exercise of such authorities? If not, what additional authorities or training do Marine Corps supervisors require?

Yes. I believe there are adequate authorities to address civilian employees whose performance is not acceptable or who engage in misconduct. I also believe that Marine Corps civilian and military supervisors are provided training to take appropriate action in these situations. However, because these situations can often be complex, it is important to look for ways to

improve training to help us adequately manage these situations. If confirmed, I would like to work with you on possible ways to improve this.

Congressional Oversight

174. In order to exercise legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress receive timely testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information from the executive branch. 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 yes or no.

Yes.

175. 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 yes or no.

Yes.

176. 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 yes or no.

Yes.

177. 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 yes or no.

Yes.

178. 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 yes or no.

Yes.

179. 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 yes or no.

Yes.

180. 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 yes or no.

Yes.