

Senate Armed Services Committee
Advance Policy Questions for Lieutenant General Dagvin R. M. Anderson, USAF
Nominee to the Grade General and to be Commander, U. S. Africa Command

Duties

1. What is your understanding of the duties and functions of the Commander of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM)?

Under section 164 of title 10, United States Code, Combatant Commanders are responsible to the President and the Secretary of Defense for the performance of assigned missions within their respective areas of responsibility. If confirmed, I would command U.S. Armed Forces as directed by the Secretary of Defense and approved by the President and ensure USAFRICOM has ready and postured forces to execute directed national defense missions, respond to military contingencies, and deter conflict. I would provide authoritative directions to subordinate commands and forces to carry out the missions assigned to USAFRICOM, identify and request any additional required support, engage the interagency, allies, and partners.

I would execute these duties informed by the National Security Strategy (NSS), the Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance (INDSG), Defense Planning Guidance (DPG), National Military Strategy (NMS), and other plans.

2. What qualifications, qualities, and characteristics would you bring to the position of Commander, AFRICOM, if confirmed?

Throughout my assignments across the last 33 years of service to this Nation, I have been consistently humbled by, and inspired to lead and serve alongside, the talented men and women of our Armed Forces and our civilian teammates, who make it possible for us to achieve our mission.

Since commissioning in 1992, I have been fortunate to command at every level below Combatant Command which gives me a wide breadth of experience across conventional and Special Operations missions. From commanding the Joint Task Force during Operation Octave Quartz, leading Air Force Special Operations units from Squadron to Wing, serving as the Deputy Director of Operations at U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM), or as the Joint Staff Director of Force Development, my path has been non-traditional and gives me a unique perspective. Specific to Africa, my previous experience as the Commander of Special Operations Command – Africa (SOCAF), provides me with insight into the threats to our homeland, our interests, and our forces, but also the opportunities across the African continent to advance U.S. interests.

Additionally, my time as the Deputy for Operations in USINDOPACOM and my current role as the Director for Joint Force Development informs my understanding of the changing character of war and how the future Joint Force needs to change to counter the growing threat from China.

I possess the joint qualifications required by sections 661 and 664(d) of title 10, United States Code. Specifically, I have completed seven joint tours at various echelons, most notably as Director for Joint Force Development, the Pentagon; Vice Director, Joint Staff Operations, the Pentagon; Commander, SOCAF; and Deputy Director for Operations, USINDOPACOM.

3. Do you believe there are actions you need to take to enhance your ability to perform the duties of Commander, AFRICOM?

Key actions I would need to take include assessing the theater operating environment, securing partner and allied engagement to solve shared problems, and clearly communicating the risks and requirements relevant to our national security and defense strategies. If confirmed, I will learn from the USAFRICOM staff about the current intelligence assessments, ongoing efforts and campaigns, and the associated approaches of components, the interagency, and allies and partners.

Africa is truly the world's crossroads – throughout its history, its location between the Atlantic and Pacific, and now in terms of its rising populations and economies. It is also of vital and growing importance to the world – and to U.S. interests. The continent is one of the world's most dynamic. As it rapidly changes, I will need to constantly reevaluate the significant opportunities but also the substantial risks Africa offers. Ungoverned African spaces host global terrorist organizations with growing reach and ill intent. China and Russia seek their own advantages at the expense of African nations and the United States.

If confirmed, I will build upon the successes of the Commanders and teams who came before while taking steps to ensure USAFRICOM's plans are adjusted, as necessary, to any strategic guidance that encompasses coordinated equities across the U.S. government.

Chain of Command

Section 162(b) of title 10, United States Code, provides that the chain of command runs from the President to the Secretary of Defense and from the Secretary of Defense to the combatant commands. Section 163(a) of title 10 further provides that the President may direct communications to combatant commanders through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

4. Do you believe that these provisions facilitate a clear and effective chain of command?

Yes.

5. In your view, do these provisions enhance or degrade civilian control of the military?

These provisions enhance civilian control of the military. In essence, ensuring that all lawful orders are passed from the President to Combatant Commanders through the Secretary of Defense and/or the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff ensures that policy direction flows through individuals that have been nominated by the Administration and confirmed by the Senators on the Armed Services Committee elected to represent their constituents.

6. Are there circumstances in which you believe it is appropriate for U.S. military forces to be under the operational command or control of an authority other than the chain of command established under title 10, United States Code?

I understand that national command authority over U.S. forces is always retained by the President. This includes authority and responsibility for, as consistent with law, the organization, direction, coordination, control, and employment of U.S. forces. To the extent practicable, operational command and control should remain under the chain of command established through title 10 of the United States Code. That said, I also understand that there are historical cases in which U.S. forces have operated in multinational forces, and there may be such cases in the future. Generally, national command was often retained through political negotiations or U.S.-led NATO roles. These historical cases have formed the bedrock of our doctrine on Multinational Operations. In my role as the Joint Staff J-7, I led and supervised the review and development of this doctrine and am comfortable in its application.

Nations operating in an alliance or coalition should always seek to achieve and maintain unity of effort with all missions, tasks, responsibilities, and authorities clearly defined and understood by all involved – as that is a pre-requisite to achieving mission success in an allied, coalition, or partnered operation.

Relationships

The law and traditional practice establish important relationships between the Commander, AFRICOM, and other senior officials of the DOD and the U.S. Government. Please describe your understanding of the relationship of the Commander, AFRICOM, to each of the following officials:

7. The Secretary of Defense

My understanding is that the relationship with the Secretary of Defense is informed by title 10, U.S. Code §113, 162(b), and 164(b). Unless otherwise directed by the President, the chain of command runs from the President to the Secretary of Defense, and from the Secretary of Defense to the Commander of USAFRICOM. If confirmed, I would be directly responsible to the Secretary for the preparedness of the command to carry out missions assigned to the command. I would be responsible for interpreting and implementing defense strategic guidance within the bounds of USAFRICOM's area of responsibility (AOR), with careful consideration of application of the nation's resources.

The Under Secretaries of Defense

My understanding is that the relationship with the Under Secretaries of Defense is informed by title 10, U.S. Code §133-137. These appointees are principal staff assistants and advisors to the Secretary on all matters that pertain to their specific portfolios. They serve as valuable counsel to the Secretary, and to the Combatant Commanders, and are an integral part of the overall decision-making process within the Department.

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs

My understanding is that the relationship with the Assistant Secretaries of Defense, including for International Security Affairs, is based on their roles and responsibilities as specified by title 10, U.S. Code §138. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (ASD (ISA)) is the principal advisor to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)) and the Secretary of Defense on international security strategy and policy on issues of Departmental interest that relate to the nations and international organizations of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, their governments and defense establishments; and for oversight of security cooperation programs and foreign military sales programs within these regions. If confirmed, I would ensure that the staff of USAFRICOM continues to maintain positive and proactive relationships with the ASD (ISA), given the need to establish more effective ways to collaborate with our allies and partners for burden sharing in Africa.

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict

As the former Commander of Special Operations Command – Africa, I'm familiar with the work of the ASD for Special Operations (SO) and Low Intensity Conflict (LIC). Per title 10, U.S. Code §138(b)(2), the ASD (SO/LIC) is the principal civilian advisor to the Secretary of Defense on special operations and low-intensity conflict matters and (after the Secretary and

Deputy Secretary) is the principal special operations and low intensity conflict official within the senior management of the Department. The ASD (SO/LIC) oversees and advocates for Special Operations and Irregular Warfare throughout the Department to ensure these capabilities are properly employed in accordance with Administration priorities. If confirmed, I will ensure we maintain coordination with this office on policy issues related to special operations capabilities and resourcing, given the propensity for special operations forces to operate on the African continent.

The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

The Chairman's roles are delineated by title 10, U.S. Code §151-3 and §163. The Chairman is the principal military adviser to the President, the National Security Council (NSC), the Homeland Security Council (HSC), and the Secretary of Defense. In carrying out his functions, duties, and responsibilities the Chairman shall consult with and seek the advice of the Commanders of the Unified and Specified Combatant Commands and the Service Chiefs, as necessary. The Chairman transmits communications between the National Command Authority and the Commander of USAFRICOM and oversees the activities of the same, as directed by the Secretary of Defense. The Chairman is a key conduit between Combatant Commanders as well as the Service Chiefs.

The Vice Chairman's roles are specified by title 10, U.S. Code §151 and §154. As a full voting member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Vice Chairman is a military adviser to the President, NSC, HSC, and Secretary of Defense who may provide advice after first informing the Secretary and the Chairman. When there is a vacancy in the office of the Chairman or in the absence or disability of the Chairman, the Vice Chairman acts as Chairman and performs the duties of the Chairman until a successor is appointed or the absence or disability ceases. The Vice Chairman serves on several councils and boards whose decisions affect USAFRICOM, including the Joint Requirements Oversight Council, the Defense Acquisition Board, the Defense Advisory Working Group, and the Senior Readiness Oversight Council. Regular communication between Combatant Commanders and the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is key to ensure these boards and councils make informed choices on matters affecting the command. If confirmed, I will keep the Chairman informed on significant issues regarding the command's area of operations, provide advice regarding the USAFRICOM mission and theater as appropriate, and communicate directly with the Chairman and Vice Chairman on a regular basis.

The Secretaries of the Military Departments and Service Chiefs

The roles of the Service Secretaries are clearly delineated in title 10, U.S. Code §7013, 8013, and 9013. Generally, they are responsible for, and have the authority necessary to, the conduct of all affairs for their respective Departments. These affairs include the functions of organizing, supplying, equipping, training, administering, and maintaining their forces. They

exercise administrative control through the Service Component Commands assigned to USAFRICOM.

Duties of the Service Chiefs are covered in title 10, U.S. Code §7033 (Chief of Staff of the Army), § 8033 (Chief of Naval Operations), § 8043 (Commandant of the Marine Corps), § 9033 (Chief of Staff of the Air Force), § 9082 (Chief of Space Operations), and § 10502 (Chief of the National Guard Bureau). Additionally, as members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, their roles and responsibilities are further defined in title 10, U.S. Code §151. The Service Chiefs are responsible for ensuring the readiness of their Service branch. As members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff the Service Chiefs can also serve as advisers to the President, NSC, HSC and the Secretary of Defense. If confirmed, I would rely on the Service Chiefs to provide properly trained and equipped forces to accomplish the mission.

Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command

The responsibilities of the Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) are defined in title 10, U.S. Code §167. The Commander, USSOCOM is responsible for the administration and support of special operations forces assigned or attached to USAFRICOM. Unless directed by the President or Secretary of Defense, however, a special operations activity or mission shall be conducted under the command of the Combatant Commander in whose geographic area the activity or mission is to be conducted. If confirmed, I would maintain an exceptionally close relationship with the Commander, USSOCOM, on issues of mutual interest. SOCAF serves as a Theater Special Operations Command and is a sub-unified command of USSOCOM under the operational control of USAFRICOM. As a former SOCAF commander, I look forward to maintaining the close relationship between USAFRICOM and USSOCOM.

The other combatant commanders

Duties of the other Combatant Commanders are defined in title 10, U.S. Code §164, the Unified Command Plan, and other Departmental guidance and directives. While each Combatant Commander may be assigned a specific geographic area or functional responsibility, it is imperative that they all work together. Today's strategic operating environment is characterized by global threats that cannot be addressed solely in one theater. Additionally, each Combatant Commander is vying for the same resources from the Military Departments. Collaboration and consultation between commanders are critical to assisting the Chairman in ensuring all operations are integrated globally to execute the NMS.

USAFRICOM has close relationships with several other Combatant Commanders, namely the Commanders of U.S. European Command (USEUCOM), U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), and USSOCOM. Shared boundaries between USAFRICOM, USEUCOM, and USCENTCOM require close coordination as military operations in one AOR have systemic impacts on the other areas. The Commander, USAFRICOM has an especially close relationship

with the Commander of USEUCOM as they share four component commands (USAREUR/AF, NAVEUR/AF, MARFOREUR/AF, SPACEEUR/AF), as well as forces and assets. Additionally, as the Combatant Commander for special operations forces operating in Africa under the control of USAFRICOM, close collaboration is necessary with USSOCOM. If confirmed, I pledge to continue to maintain the great relationships that have been formed before me.

The U.S. Chiefs of Mission in the AFRICOM area of responsibility (AOR)

My understanding of the roles and responsibilities of U.S. Chiefs of Mission is informed by title 22, U.S. Code §3927. Upon presenting their credentials to the host government, Chiefs of Mission are recognized as the principal diplomatic representative of the U.S. Government. Serving as the official representative of the U.S. President, they have the task of carrying out overarching U.S. foreign policy goals and strategic objectives in their country of assignment. The Chiefs of Mission have full responsibility for the direction, coordination, and supervision of all government executive branch employees in a given country, except those employees under the command of a U.S. area military commander. If confirmed, recognizing their scope of authority, I will ensure USAFRICOM's partner engagement complements the Ambassadors' priorities as directed by the President and Secretary of State.

The U.S. Senior Defense Officials/Defense Attachés (SDO/DATT) in the AFRICOM AOR

The roles and responsibilities of the SDO/DATT are defined in Department of Defense Directive (DoDD) 5205.75, "DoD Operations at U.S. Embassies." Unified DoD representation in U.S. embassies is critical to the accomplishment of national security objectives. The SDO/DATT is the Chief of Mission's principal advisor on defense issues and the senior diplomatically accredited DoD military officer assigned to a U.S. diplomatic mission. All DoD elements under Chief of Mission authority are under the coordination authority of the SDO/DATT, except for the Marine Security Guard Detachment and naval support units. While they do not work directly for USAFRICOM, they represent the Command's perspective on a Country Team. There is a supervisory relationship between the Commander, USAFRICOM and the SDO/DATT. This relationship ensures they maintain close coordination on all matters as the Command's senior representative. If confirmed, I will ensure that the staff at USAFRICOM continues to maintain positive relationships with the SDOs/DATTs within the AOR.

Major Challenges and Opportunities

- 8. What do you consider to be the most significant challenges you will face if confirmed as Commander, AFRICOM?**

If confirmed, the most significant challenges I will face as USAFRICOM Commander include maintaining awareness and understanding of the growing threat, monitoring and countering terrorists that threaten the homeland, countering expanding Chinese malign activity. aggression. ISIS, centered in Somalia, has demonstrated the capability and intent for external operations to threaten the homeland, while al-Shabaab threatens our forces in East Africa. West Africa, meanwhile, is becoming a growing hotbed of terrorism as Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslmin (JNIM) and ISIS-WA expand their control over large swaths of the Sahel and destabilize the region.

Concurrently, China's military and economic influence over the continent continues to grow as Beijing continues to exploit Africa as a source of power. China is expanding beyond traditional economic activity with increasing military engagement and information activities. If confirmed, I will direct USAFRICOM resources to defend the homeland, counter China, and prepare for crises – to include enabling joint force freedom of maneuver during a conflict. I will also direct aggressive engagement with partners as the ability to rapidly respond to crisis requires effective relationships to gain and maintain the required access.

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

If confirmed, I will ensure that USAFRICOM's priorities remain centered on achieving the goals of the INDSG, and the forthcoming NDS and the NMS. Secretary Hegseth has given USAFRICOM two overarching priorities: prevent terrorist groups in Africa from exporting threats to the United States and to deter Chinese military advances across the continent. I will continue to place pressure on terrorists with the intent and capability to threaten the homeland and work to improve indications and warnings of emerging threats. Additionally, I will task assigned forces to take actions that undermine any Chinese malign intent throughout the continent. Key to this effort will be to work with willing and capable allies and partners, where feasible and mutually beneficial. Any security cooperation should be tailored and time-bound based on demonstrated partner will and capacity with the goal to build partner independence to operate against mutual security threats.

Africa is a theater where threats, opportunities, adversaries, partners, and allies converge. The challenges in Africa go beyond just terrorism and require a nuanced approach that spans multiple agencies. While working on these priorities, I will also seek ways to balance investment between U.S. forces, African and other partners, and allies on shared objectives throughout the theater. I know that USAFRICOM and its forces are not the right tool to solve all these problems alone. I will prioritize working with the whole-of-government, international institutions, and our global network of partners and allies to advance U.S. interests.

10. Recognizing that challenges, anticipated and unforeseen, will drive your priorities to a substantial degree, if confirmed, what other priorities, beyond those associated with the major challenges you identified above, would you set for your tenure as Commander, AFRICOM?

Beyond the identified major challenges, I would also seek to create opportunities for U.S. advantage. While Africa has many challenges including terrorism, political instability, and malign foreign actors, it also shows great promise. This promise will create extraordinary opportunities for our nation but realizing it will take time and investment to find. As China and Russia both focus their strategies on Africa, I want to ensure the U.S. realizes these opportunities first.

Additionally, many African nations are susceptible to instability to threats and other unforeseen challenges to governance – sometimes with little to no notice. The responsibility to safeguard American lives, property, and interests at U.S. military installations and diplomatic facilities across the continent factor into my crisis response priority. Force protection remains a key and critical concern of mine, and I understand my responsibility to protect the servicemembers assigned to African-based operating locations. I understand my role in identifying, communicating, and integrating capabilities across all domains to protect the force from potential threats. I will also coordinate with fellow Combatant Commanders to close seams that adversaries would exploit. I acknowledge my mandate to support the Department of State in safeguarding our embassies and the people assigned to them – especially the 14 high threat embassies in theater.

11. If confirmed, what actions would you take to focus your Command's efforts on each of these priorities?

If confirmed, I will prioritize my efforts to understand the situation on the continent as quickly as possible, specifically related to our counterterrorism efforts against ISIS and al-Shabaab. I will also work to better distinguish CCP military objectives in Africa, where I will seek ways to prevent further military encroachment that disrupts U.S. access and relationships. This will involve visiting the AOR and meeting with key U.S. Ambassadors, my counterparts from our allies and partners, and senior military and diplomatic officials from our multilateral security institutions who share our security objectives. I would also seek guidance from USD(P) and partner with USINDOPACOM to see where we can deepen mutual efforts to counter Chinese malign objectives in Africa.

I will obtain assessments from subordinate Service Component Commanders and discuss regional issues with African Ministers of Defense and Chiefs of Defense. These efforts will inform USAFRICOM's priorities as we receive a new NDS and update our own guiding documents. I will carefully review command priorities to maximize scarce resources

for greatest effect.

National Defense Strategy

12. What is your understanding of the 2025 Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance (INDSG) and its implications for the AFRICOM AOR?

My understanding of U.S. strategic objectives in Africa is informed by the INDSG through the Secretary of Defense. The U.S. strategic objectives in Africa are to defend America forward by preventing terrorists from coordinating attacks on the homeland from the continent and contribute to deterrence against CCP aggression. The implications for the USAFRICOM AOR are a ruthless prioritization of terror organizations that are looking to attack the homeland. Additionally, it calls for a more targeted focus on CCP military activity and the impact it has on our objectives. Finally, the INDSG calls for a deliberate effort to shift activities over time to our allies and partners.

13. What is your understanding of U.S. strategic objectives in Africa and what role do you believe AFRICOM should play in supporting these objectives?

My understanding of U.S. strategic objectives in Africa is informed by the INDSG through the Secretary of Defense. The U.S. strategic objectives in Africa are to defend America forward by preventing terrorists from coordinating attacks on the homeland from the continent and contribute to deterrence against CCP aggression. USAFRICOM accomplishes these objectives by building partner operational independence through tailored and high-impact security cooperation with African partners, exposing CCP and Russian malign influence that is counter to our interests, and retaining access for contingency operations.

14. In your view, what does “great power competition” look like in the AFRICOM AOR?

USAFRICOM’s priorities are to defend the U.S. Homeland from terrorist threats and to deter CCP global military ambitions on the African continent in alignment with the 2025 INDSG. As the Department of Defense balances resources to the Pacific, USAFRICOM’s greatest challenge will be to undermine China’s expanding military goals across Africa while preventing strategic surprise from an attack on the U.S. homeland by external threats. Additionally, USAFRICOM would need to consider the effect of Russia’s destabilizing activity on the continent and how it impacts U.S. interests and military requirements. If confirmed, I will work closely with the interagency to undermine China’s military activities in key areas and apply USAFRICOM’s modest resources for a high return on investment.

15. Are U.S. policies and programs, as applicable to Africa, appropriate to ensure the

United States can succeed in great power competition in the AFRICOM AOR? Are there additional measures we should be considering? What do you perceive as the areas of highest risk?

As China is the Department of Defense pacing threat, USAFRICOM would need to balance countering China with preventing attacks on the U.S. homeland by Africa-based terrorists' organizations. Terrorist attacks would create strategic surprise and serve as a strategic distraction from countering China's global malign ambitions. Specific to Africa, USAFRICOM would look to counter any additional CCP military basing in Africa – especially on the West coast. To accomplish both, USAFRICOM would need to detect the indications and warnings provided by sufficient Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) and partner and allied information, access, and placement.

16. Do you believe the Command's resources and authorities are aligned in a manner consistent with U.S. strategic objectives?

If confirmed, I intend to review the Command's current assigned tasks and missions, resources, and authorities considering their alignment to Defense guidance and U.S. strategic objectives. From this review, I will provide an assessment on any additional requirements or residual risk to the Secretary and Chairman.

17. If confirmed, what would you do to enhance or expedite the implementation of the U.S. strategic objectives in AFRICOM?

If confirmed, I will update the theater strategy, campaign plan, and campaign order as appropriate to align with the forthcoming NDS and support of overarching U.S. foreign policy goals. In alignment with the current guidance in the INDSG, I will engage with African, European, and interagency partners to maximize our combined efforts and achieve U.S. advantage.

18. If confirmed, how would you seek to balance the requirements for increased emphasis on great power competition with China and Russia with countering violent extremism in the AFRICOM AOR?

If confirmed, I will ensure USAFRICOM has a balanced approach between countering violent extremist organizations with the intent to attack the homeland and competing with China and Russia. Successfully executing both efforts requires increased partners and allies' capability and engagement to actively take the lead on regional terror threats. This shift will allow limited U.S. resources to be focused on threats to the U.S. Homeland and countering China.

China

19. What is your assessment of China's strategic objectives in the AFRICOM AOR?

China views Africa as critical to its future and central to its strategy. China seeks to build diplomatic influence and supremacy in the information, military, and economic spheres to achieve regional hegemony. The CCP seeks to secure access to markets and resources in Africa to decrease its reliance on supply chains and financial systems led by the United States and Western allies and promote China as leader of the so-called "Global South." Frequent senior leader engagement with African leaders, political parties, and militaries serves Beijing's strategic objective to build international support for its global leadership at the expense of the United States. The CCP has increased People's Liberation Army (PLA) engagements across the continent, offering professional military education, military equipment donations and sales, and training and exercises to African militaries to deepen strategic access and influence.

20. In what ways, if any, do their strategic objectives conflict with U.S. strategic objectives? In what ways, if any, do they align with those of the U.S.?

The strategic objectives of the CCP in Africa aim to ensure continued CCP rule, domestic economic growth, and regional hegemony despite Beijing's narrative of championing the Global South. Beijing uses all instruments of national power with little regard to the rule of law, stable and open international system, democratic governance, and multilateral institutions. CCP state and non-state entities lack fair and transparent practices, which has challenged African governments to achieve favorable terms and has undermined debt restructuring efforts.

In comparison, the strategic objectives of the United States and our Western allies include promoting a favorable distribution of power to ensure equal and fair access to the global commons. We are concerned that expanding PLA security presence in Africa could restrict freedom of navigation and global commerce through strategic sea lines of communication. While the CCP searches for clients and customers, the United States seeks partners and allies. This reality puts our two nations' long-term strategic objectives at direct odds.

21. In your opinion, what effect has China's engagement with African militaries had on those militaries and on U.S. security interests?

The CCP has likely marginally improved some African militaries through delivering military equipment sales on a quicker and cheaper basis than the U.S. The opportunity to seemingly more rapidly modernize their military forces entices African partners to purchase CCP equipment, but these purchases frequently do not address the underlying military need, are of low-quality, and lack robust training and maintenance support. The prevalence of Chinese

military equipment can complicate U.S. security assistance and interoperability. The CCP contributes up to 2,000 personnel to United Nations peacekeeping operations, but Beijing's deployments are tailored towards its security interests, including gaining overseas operational experience for its military personnel.

22. Are U.S. policies and the associated authorities—as applicable to Africa—sufficient to counter China's influence, where needed, or are additional measures required? What role should AFRICOM play in this regard?

The second most important task the Secretary of Defense has given USAFRICOM is to deny CCP encroachment on U.S. interests in Africa, after countering terrorist threats to the Homeland. If confirmed, I will thoroughly review USAFRICOM's policies and authorities to determine if the Command is sufficiently postured to counter China's malign activities in Africa. I will seek to work with partners and allies to expose and hold the CCP accountable for its activities in Africa and determine ways to strengthen African institutional capacity to withstand those efforts to undermine international norms.

23. Do you foresee China's growing energy and resource demands affecting security developments in Africa?

Yes. Beijing has agreements with at least 45 African countries to extract natural resources, including critical minerals. It continues to acquire new mines and expand production and investment in strategic minerals to reduce critical dependencies on the West. China's dominance in this sector, from extraction to processing, is resulting in strangleholds over global bauxite, cobalt, iron ore, lithium, and tantalum supply chains.

CCP private security companies are playing an increasingly pivotal role in securing economic investments in Africa. While Beijing typically avoids investing in countries deemed unsafe or incapable of protecting its citizens or interests, Africa is a continent with a rapidly shifting threat environment. Increased presence of these and other CCP-affiliated groups or state-owned enterprises could pose a challenge to U.S. access and influence in the region.

Russia

24. What is your assessment of Russia's strategic objectives in the AFRICOM AOR?

Across all theaters, Russia seeks to systematically counter Western interests and bolster its influence through military/intelligence cooperation, arms sales, and energy partnerships. Moscow sees Africa as a vehicle necessary for its own success centered on developing the partnerships necessary for its vision of a multipolar world, while also presenting an opportunity

for Russia to extract natural resources, weaken the West's dominance of global governance, and recognize economic opportunities for Russian companies, particularly those closed off to Western markets because of sanctions.

25. In what ways, if any, do their strategic objectives conflict with U.S. strategic objectives? In what ways, if any, do they align with those of the United States?

Russia intends to undermine Western influence and access wherever possible. USAFRICOM assists allies in combatting violent extremists to protect U.S. and Western interests. In contrast, Russia's assistance is focused on gaining influence to serve Moscow's needs and its business interests. Russia's strategic objectives do not align with those of the United States.

Russia seeks to pressure NATO's southern flank through its activities in North Africa, but its influence there remains unlikely to threaten the alliance in the near future, especially while Moscow is focused on the war in Ukraine.

Russia presents its limited efforts in humanitarian and economic aid, infrastructure development, and security assistance, including counterterrorism, as broadly consistent with objectives shared by the United States and Western partners; however, Moscow views these activities primarily as tools to compete with Western influence. In pursuit of these goals, Kremlin-linked groups such as the private military company Wagner Group have been implicated in practices – including human rights abuses and illicit mining – that are counter to U.S. and Western values.

26. In your opinion, what effect has Russia's engagement with African militaries had on those militaries and on U.S. security interests?

Russia provides extensive arms sales and limited training to African militaries, specifically to former Soviet partners. Moscow is the largest exporter of weapons systems to Africa, though this support has faced constraints due to the ongoing war in Ukraine. Russia is historically a leading supplier of military equipment—to include small arms and heavier weapons such as armor and artillery, as well as air defense systems, fighter aircraft, and naval vessels—to select African militaries. These systems increase host nation lethality, but several of these systems are difficult to sustain and decrease interoperability with Western military norms and systems. Russia's lack of robust end-user agreements and support for authoritarian regimes undermines U.S. objectives in Africa and fosters human rights abuses by host nations.

27. Do you view Russia's activities on the continent of Africa as a threat or challenge to U.S. national security interests? Please explain your answer.

Russia's current activities challenge U.S. national security interests in the USAFRICOM AOR. Russian military and security advisers currently do not pose a direct military threat to U.S. personnel, but Russian deployments and influence organizations severely limit USAFRICOM's placement and access throughout the region, inhibiting campaign effectiveness. Russia's pursuit of a permanent military presence and the deployment of Russian military and paramilitary personnel across Africa undermines democratic norms, destabilizes vulnerable security environments, disrupts UN missions, and threatens U.S. and Western progress. Additionally, Russia's pervasive propaganda, guised as information operations, seeks to actively undermine U.S. influence and highlight anti-western narratives throughout Africa. These propaganda efforts are as much an impediment to U.S. government access as its military operations. Ultimately, Russia's operations, activities, and investments complicate future U.S. military and economic access and heighten the risk to U.S. national security interests in Africa.

28. Are United States policies, associated authorities, and resources—as applicable to Africa—sufficient to counter Russia's influence, where needed, or are additional measures required? What role should AFRICOM play in this regard?

Based on my prior experience at SOCAF, the current authorities extended to USAFRICOM appear sufficient, though a comprehensive review upon confirmation would definitively assess their adequacy considering updated strategic guidance and priorities. USAFRICOM's role is to continue interagency collaboration, integrating with Defense plans, and to work with partners and allies to expose and hold Russia accountable for its activities in Africa. USAFRICOM's future role in countering Russian influence and propaganda will require nuanced adjustments focused on military-to-military relationships with African partners and information operations.

29. In your view, is the interagency effectively unified in implementing a strategy to compete with Russia in the AFRICOM AOR?

If confirmed, I will assess the effectiveness of interagency integration and the appropriate role for USAFRICOM. An interagency approach is critical to effectively counter Russian influence across the continent. Russia's hybrid warfare tactics, which include disinformation campaigns, economic coercion, political interference, and security partnerships, demand a coordinated response that transcends purely military solutions. Our success hinges on leveraging the diverse expertise of agencies focused on diplomacy, intelligence, cybersecurity, economic policy, law enforcement, development assistance, and public diplomacy to ensure a comprehensive and impactful strategy. USAFRICOM has played a vital supporting role in this effort, enabling diplomatic and development initiatives that support U.S. interests.

Availability of Forces

AFRICOM has minimal assigned forces and, as a result, is required to compete for forces in the global force management process.

30. What is your assessment of the availability and predictability of forces and associated capabilities to support the AFRICOM Theater Campaign Plan and other requirements in the AOR?

If confirmed, I will assess the current posture and force allocation to ensure the command has the necessary forces to accomplish the tasked mission.

31. What is your understanding of the challenges and risks to U.S. security interests, if any, resulting from the lack of assigned forces to AFRICOM?

Predictable, postured, and ready forces and resources are essential to the successful execution of any mission. Based on my previous experience as the SOCAF commander, rotational forces increase the complexity and lose some momentum with partners due to turnover. Effective partnering is based on relationships, which can be difficult to maintain in a rotational construct. If confirmed, I would assess how to optimize the force allocated to USAFRICOM against the assigned tasks and mission to maximize effectiveness.

What is your assessment of the utility of the assignment of the Army's Security Force Assistance Brigade to AFRICOM?

From my time as the SOCAF commander, the Security Force Assistance Brigade has conducted training throughout the African continent, advanced partner capacity, and developed relationships demonstrating the United States as the partner of choice. These deployments significantly contributed to USAFRICOM's Theater Campaign Plan, providing multiple teams capable of conducting military-to-military engagements.

Theater Special Operations Command

Special Operations Command-Africa (SOCAF) is under the operational control of AFRICOM and employs U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) to conduct operations, exercises, and theater security cooperation activities.

32. What is your understanding of the roles and responsibilities of SOCAF in supporting AFRICOM's Theater Campaign Plan and associated requirements?

Based on my experience as a previous SOCAF commander, SOCAF plays an important role

in executing USAFRICOM's Campaign plan as operationalized through the USAFRICOM Campaign Order. SOCAF provides SOF expertise dedicated to the security challenges and operational environment unique to the USAFRICOM AOR. SOCAF supports USAFRICOM across the competition continuum, leading the theater counter terrorism campaign, overseeing the integration of SOF capabilities, and advising the Combatant Commander, Service component commanders, and others on the proper employment of SOF.

33. Based on your professional military experience, how would you characterize the benefits of a dedicated special operations component for a geographic combatant command in supporting the combatant command's theater campaign plan and associated requirements?

A dedicated special operations component allows for singularity of focus with economy of force, development of long-term relationships, and theater-specific operational approaches. USAFRICOM requires dedicated SOF support to effectively counter malign competitors in addressing the complexities of strategic competition, disrupt terrorist threats, and maintain relationships with key allies and partners through its niche skills and capabilities that are not present in other elements of the joint force. This also facilitates greater integration of planning efforts amongst all components and the USAFRICOM staff.

SOF offers low cost for the high return on investment to shape conditions for to counter terrorist attacks on the homeland, counter adversary exploitation of the resources and people of Africa and create U.S. advantage. U.S. SOF are the premier training partner for our African partners and enable them to continue the fight against extremists. Their quality shows through exercises like FLINTLOCK and the example they set through Joint Combined Exchange Training events throughout the continent.

34. What special operations capabilities are in highest demand by AFRICOM?

From my previous experience as the SOCAF commander and in my current capacity, I believe the Special Operations capabilities that are in the highest demand in USAFRICOM are the expert training and advising of counter terrorist forces as well as the ISR capabilities to assist partner forces in counterterrorism operations. Personnel recovery, search and rescue, and casualty evacuation assets are also in extremely high demand.

35. Which countries in the AFRICOM AOR do you believe have the greatest need for engagement with SOF?

If confirmed, I will closely examine all USAFRICOM's requirements to include those for the unique capabilities of SOF. I will encourage engagement that is driven by analysis, yet flexible

enough to be adapted to the dynamic environment in the USAFRICOM AOR. I would consider the feasibility of future partnerships based on the partner nation's will and capacity to absorb and operationalize U.S. engagement.

Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) in Africa

36. What is your understanding of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy as it relates to the AFRICOM AOR?

Countering terrorist threats in Africa with the capability of affecting the U.S. homeland is the number one priority given to USAFRICOM by the Secretary of Defense. I understand that the National Strategy for Counterterrorism outlines a comprehensive approach to combating terrorism by leveraging all elements of national power and collaborating with international partners. In the USAFRICOM AOR, and in alignment with the INDSG, assigned and allocated forces focus their efforts on countering the most pressing threats to the U.S. Homeland. Separately, remaining limited resources are used to help African partners to independently address regionally focused terror threats.

37. How would you assess the effectiveness of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy and associated activities in addressing the threat posed by violent extremist organizations?

My view on this varies by region, and the situation has evolved since my time as the Commander of SOCAF. For example, in North Africa, groups like JNIM are expanding south to pose a significant threat to the Sahel and increasingly Coastal West Africa. In the East, counterterrorism operations against ISIS-Somalia have garnered some success at halting external operations plots targeting the West and U.S. homeland and paused the group's ability to freely move additional forces to Somalia, many of whom possess technical expertise. A reduction in pressure against ISIS-Somalia without increasing counterterrorism burden sharing with allies and partners, will likely undo hard-won gains made by partner ground operations and U.S. air strikes.

Also in Somalia, al-Shabaab has retaken nearly all the territory the group lost in the 2022 Somali National Army (SNA) offensive, while continuing to collaborate with the Huthis, directly threatening the security of U.S. forces in the region. While U.S. and partner CT efforts likely have slowed the pace of the group's offensive and immediate threat to Mogadishu, the Huthi-al-Shabaab relationship constitutes a serious threat to U.S. force protection in the USAFRICOM AOR.

38. What changes, if any, would you recommend to the strategy or associated measures of effectiveness? Should efforts to prevent the underlying causes of extremism be a component of our counterterrorism strategy?

If confirmed, I will work with my staff to assess our counterterrorism operations, activities, and investments to ensure they align to the priorities of the INDSG. I welcome the opportunity to work with the Department to further refine our strategy, in conjunction with USSOCOM, USCENTCOM, and the interagency, to ensure a global approach to deterring terrorist threats to the Homeland.

39. Within the AFRICOM AOR, what do you consider the highest counterterrorism priorities?

USAFRCIOM's number one counter terrorism priority is countering those organizations that pose the highest threat to the U.S. homeland and U.S. personnel. Terrorists continue to expand and adapt to locations that allow greater freedom to maneuver. They are seeking to shift recruiting, financial and weapons transactions, and planning for external operations to locations in Western Africa. We must continue to adapt to these threats to minimize risks to American citizens at home and abroad.

40. What is your assessment of the threat posed by Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, and other violent extremist organizations operating in Africa, to nations in the AFRICOM AOR, the U.S. homeland, and broader western interests?

The global center of terrorism has shifted from the USCENTCOM AOR to the USAFRICOM AOR. While al-Qaeda and ISIS have suffered setbacks outside Africa, their affiliates on the continent have expanded in tempo and lethality to pose an increased threat to African partners and other U.S. and Western interests on the continent. Africa-based al-Qaeda and ISIS affiliates aspire to attack the U.S. homeland.

In East Africa, Al-Shabaab - al-Qaeda's largest, wealthiest, and most lethal global affiliate - is the main organization that threatens U.S. and partner interests. Additionally, they have publicly advocated for attacks against U.S. targets, including lone-actor attacks against the United States. ISIS-Somalia is expanding and continues to aspire to attack the U.S. homeland and foreign deployed U.S. personnel and facilities abroad. In West Africa, JNIM has emerged as one of Al-Qaeda's most capable and deadly affiliates and has increased the frequency and lethality of its attacks in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. It also has positioned itself to effectively threaten West African littoral states including Benin and Togo.

41. Which VEOs do you find most concerning, and why?

As ISIS and al Qaeda shift from the Middle East to Africa, both have the intent to attack the United States and our homeland. Africa's ungoverned spaces provide them the

opportunity to plan where they are difficult to find. I am concerned about our ability to detect the indications and warnings of an attack on our homeland that would create strategic surprise and distraction from our focus on China. If confirmed, addressing this concern will be a priority.

Somalia

42. What is your understanding and assessment of U.S. national security interests in Somalia?

The critical U.S. interest in Somalia is preventing terrorists from using Somalia as a safe haven to threaten the U.S. homeland and U.S. persons and facilities in East Africa. U.S. national security interests in Somalia remain focused on our commitment to our allies and partners in coordinating and addressing the shared security threat presented by al-Shabaab and ISIS-Somalia.

43. What is your understanding and assessment of the U.S. strategy for Somalia?

In my current capacity, I have not conducted a detailed assessment of U.S. strategy in Somalia. I would consider how USAFRICOM can enable Somalia and other allies and partners to effectively contribute to countering shared threats.

44. What role should AFRICOM play in supporting that strategy?

Given al-Shabab's continued resilience within Somalia, USAFRICOM should continue to play two key roles in Somalia. First, it should continue to plan, enable, coordinate, and facilitate ongoing kinetic actions to disrupt Somali terror networks. Second it should identify opportunities to burden share while also supporting our network of allies and partners on the ground.

45. How would you evaluate the effectiveness of U.S. efforts to counter Al Shabab and ISIS to date?

Al-Shabaab's manpower has swelled in the past few years, increasing the resources needed to counter the group's capabilities and influence. Over the past six months, USAFRICOM's air support to Somali National Army (SNA) operations has mitigated the immediate threat to Mogadishu, but al-Shabaab still controls substantial territory, has increased their attacks in Mogadishu, and has been able to increase the group's overall capability. If confirmed, I will assess our persistent presence that the President has approved to ensure it provides an adequate force to work with our interagency partners and international allies and partners to degrade and disrupt al-Shabaab and ISIS-Somalia.

46. What is your assessment of the prospect for long-term stability in Somalia?

I believe that long-term stability in Somalia will require the establishment of inclusive, representative, and accountable governance at all levels. Having previously grappled with this challenging problem as the Commander of SOCAF, I know what a challenge long-term stability in Somalia is. Creating stability there is beyond the scope of the military alone to solve.

49. What is your assessment of the effectiveness of U.S. efforts to build the capacity of the Somali National Army to date and what should the objectives of such efforts be in the near-, mid-, and long-term?

As the SOCAF commander, we saw moderate success with the Danab as a component of the SNA. I would need to reassess our progress to date and determine what appropriate timeline objectives should be. I would also look to engage other regional allies and partners to determine their level of interest and investment to determine what limited role the U.S. would play in concert with other contributors.

Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel

50. What is your understanding and assessment of U.S. national security interests in the Lake Chad Basin? The Sahel?

JNIM is now one of the most active and lethal terrorist groups in the world and poses a direct threat to the governments in the Lake Chad Basin, Sahel, and coastal West Africa regions. The ungoverned spaces in Northern Mali and the Sahel pose a challenge to detect indications and warnings for an attack on the U.S. homeland. Additionally, China and Russia seek to exploit instability in the region to achieve their own strategic ends.

51. What is your understanding and assessment of the U.S. strategy to address threats in the Lake Chad Basin and across the Sahel?

I have not had the opportunity to do a thorough assessment of U.S. strategy for the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel. If confirmed, I will advocate for where possible U.S. and African partner engagement to advance an African-led regional counter-terrorism strategy.

52. What is your understanding of AFRICOM's role in supporting that strategy?

I believe that USAFRICOM supports partner efforts to counter threats emanating from Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa and does so through bilateral and multilateral U.S. security

force assistance to our partners in the region. If confirmed, I will ensure USAFRICOM coordinates closely with the interagency to meet our nation's objectives in the region.

53. Do you view the problem sets in the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel to be the same? If not, how do they differ and how should we account for that in our strategies?

No, I do not. However, a more detailed assessment will be necessary for my full understanding of the relationships between these problems. The Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel problem sets differ in the nuances of grievances between terrorist organizations and nation states and long histories of ethnic tension. They are separated geographically and ideologically.

54. What is your assessment of the efforts of governments in the region to combat VEOs, as well as other regional security and governance challenges?

My assessment on this topic is informed by my time as the Commander of SOCAF. Security and political challenges continue to undermine stability in the Sahel. Mali and Burkina Faso remain the epicenter of instability and a haven for many terrorist groups to stage and launch attacks across the region. Governments are willing to combat terrorists. Yet, these countries are among the world's poorest, face severe resource constraints, and have relatively limited military capability.

Similarly, in the Lake Chad Region, Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria are largely willing to confront terrorists operating out of Nigeria and do so through unilateral operations and the five-nation Multinational Joint Task Force. Multiple competing national security priorities in each of the Lake Chad Region nations have prevented them from focusing adequate resources to counterterrorism operations, which has allowed terrorists freedom to operate.

55. What do you view as the most pressing impediments to regional efforts to address security and governance challenges?

Regional efforts to improve security and governance are often interrupted by urgent internal crises, whether they be caused by terrorist organizations, military coups, natural and man-made disasters, or displaced populations. These events redirect the state's attention and limited resources and distract from capacity and institution-building endeavors. Weak and hollow state institutions struggle to reorganize and grow while confronting constant challenges and limited resources. One of the most pressing impediments to regional efforts, however, is corruption. Sudden crises also hinder progress on security and governance challenges by requiring time and resources at the expense of capacity building work.

56. In your view, what measures should the United States incorporate into current and future military-to-military engagements to help avoid violence by regional police and the militaries of other nations against civilians during operations?

I believe that the United States should continue to press for partner compliance with long established international norms and not hesitate to restrict security forces from receiving assistance when there is credible evidence of gross violation of human rights by security forces. Consistent application of these standards as a basis for access to the benefits accrued from military-to-military engagements with the United States will further legitimize these norms, reinforce the concept of the rule of law, and act as a deterrent to violators.

North Africa

57. What is your understanding and assessment of U.S. national security interests in North Africa?

U.S. interests are directly tied to maintaining stability in North Africa by preventing malign foreign and non-State actors from expanding their presence. The United States can do so by leveraging two of our most capable African partner nations, Morocco and Tunisia, who are able to serve as security exporters, most notably when it comes to training other African nations. The United States should also strive to reorient Algeria away from its historic dependence on Russia, and to prevent Libya from serving as an access point for Russian malign actions and expansion. Unchanged for 225 years, the U.S.'s desired objectives for North Africa are stable, western-oriented nations that ensure access to critical sea lines of communication through the Mediterranean.

58. What is your understanding and assessment of the U.S. strategy for North Africa?

In my current capacity, I have not conducted a detailed assessment. I do know that the United States continues to support Morocco and Tunisia, and continues to encourage them to take the lead in training other African partner nations. Both nations demonstrated this willingness during my time at SOCAF by serving as the first African training leads during exercise FLINTLOCK. NATO is another important ally in addressing the challenges of North Africa as terrorism and immigration challenge their southern flank.

59. What is your understanding and assessment of the U.S. strategy for Libya?

In my current capacity, I have not conducted a detailed assessment of the U.S. strategy for Libya. I do know the United States continues to pursue a diplomatic and political reunification process.

60. What is your understanding of AFRICOM's role in supporting the U.S. strategy for North Africa broadly and Libya specifically?

I believe that USAFRICOM primarily works to facilitate military engagement and training opportunities for North African partner nations, encouraging them to assume a primary role for African security challenges. A priority for USAFRICOM is to guarantee U.S. overflight through North Africa to the remainder of the continent, and to maintain access to critical sea lines of communication. USAFRICOM coordinates these efforts with partners such as Türkiye, Italy, the United Kingdom, France, and NATO to synchronize and layer our activities. For Libya specifically, USAFRICOM strives to facilitate military engagement and training opportunities between both Libyan sides to encourage the formation of an integrated military force capable of conducting independent counterterrorism operations with the oversight of a unified government.

61. What do you view as the most significant challenges and opportunities with regards to the AFRICOM interests and objectives in North Africa?

Libya remains a key challenge in North Africa. I would continue to seek opportunities to engage with Libya and despite the political instability and other challenges to focus on countering terrorism that could affect the U.S. homeland. Additionally, I would continue to engage with Morocco and Tunisia to leverage their partnerships and leadership in our various exercises and security cooperation with other African partners.

Central and Southern Africa

62. What is your understanding and assessment of U.S. national security interests in central and southern Africa?

Our national security interests in Central and Southern Africa extend beyond counterterrorism to include strategic competition with China and Russia, transnational threats such as trafficking and piracy, global health security, and commercial access to natural resources. Instability in the region can directly impact U.S. security, while the economic and political trajectory of these nations is increasingly important to U.S. investments.

63. What is your understanding and assessment of the U.S. strategy for central and southern Africa?

The U.S. strategy prioritizes partnership with African nations to promote security and economic opportunity and respond to crises. Key pillars include counterterrorism focused on root causes, investment in sustainable development where interests align, security sector reform to support operationally independent partners, and countering malign influence. African leadership

and ownership are central to this approach, emphasizing a collaborative rather than prescriptive model.

64. What is your understanding of AFRICOM's role in supporting the U.S. strategy?

USAFRICOM protects the U.S. homeland from external threats to prevent strategic surprise, counters malign actors such as China, and maintains a ready and responsive crisis response force. USAFRICOM provides extraordinary value for a very modest investment to advance U.S. interests, by maintaining access and placement to detect indications and warnings and find opportunities to gain advantage. USAFRICOM does this in close partnership with African nations, allies, and the interagency.

65. What do you view as the most significant challenges and opportunities with regards to the AFRICOM interests and objectives in central and southern Africa?

Key challenges in central and southern Africa include expanding terrorist groups, increased Chinese investment in military exercises and engagement, and integrating into whole of government approaches across the region. USAFRICOM is limited in its resources and infrastructure focused on this region – especially in the lack of a contingency location for crisis response. Southern Africa presents a variety of opportunities where nations have approached the United States for engagement.

Building Partner Capacity and Security Assistance

66. In your view, what should be our strategic objectives in building the capacities of partner nations in the AFRICOM AOR through defense security cooperation activities or other means?

I believe that USAFRICOM's building partner capacity (BPC) efforts should focus on partners that are directly supporting USAFRICOM's efforts to combat threats to the homeland and advance U.S. interests. BPC efforts should also support advancing partners to the point where they can train, conduct, and sustain their own operations against shared threats in a manner that supports U.S. strategic interests, and regional security. USAFRICOM can also use BPC programs to counter China as it works to expand its influence across the continent. If confirmed, my aim will be to make sure we are a valued security partner throughout the continent by supporting partners' efforts to field sustainable, accountable security forces that possess the capability and capacity to address their own security needs.

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

Any assessment of the appropriate balance begins with a nation's commitment to some shared U.S. interest. Engagement with nations should be based on our assessment of feasibility – including both a nation's will and their capacity to absorb and operationalize U.S. engagement. Then, we would balance building partnership capacity at both the national and operational levels as appropriate for that nation. Building only one would be ineffective without the other. Efforts to build partner capacity must be very select, judicious, and balanced to ensure a partner nation's ability to maintain a comprehensive defense approach conducive to U.S. strategic interests.

68. Do you believe the ability of a partner nation to sustain U.S.-provided equipment and capabilities should be a key factor in determining the level and type of assistance to be provided?

I do. Providing unsupportable aid ultimately undermines our relationships and creates vulnerabilities malign state actors are likely to exploit.

69. How would you characterize the importance of adherence to human rights as an objective of AFRICOM security cooperation programs and activities?

Adherence to human rights underpins USAFRICOM's relationships with our partners and allies, and, ultimately, increases our mission effectiveness to advance U.S. interests. Support for human rights is the cornerstone of an effective military. Security cooperation improves partner nations' ability to mitigate civilian casualties and enhances operational effectiveness by maintaining government legitimacy and differentiating from adversaries who violate human rights. If confirmed, I will ensure every engagement with a partner nation, regardless of topic or objective, is an opportunity to emphasize the core values of human rights and a professional military.

70. When credible allegations of violence against civilians by partner nation security forces arise, what should the U.S. response be?

Allegations of violations of human rights, the rule of law, or law of armed conflict undermine governance and should be fully and transparently investigated. If reports are deemed credible, we will call on our partners to hold perpetrators accountable via legitimate judicial processes in addition to internal disciplinary actions. Incidents of civilian harm by partner nation security forces should also inform the planning, design, and execution of security cooperation activities and programs. If confirmed, I will support full and transparent investigations into credible allegations of civilian casualties, and violations of the law of armed conflict.

Crisis Response Capabilities

73. What is your understanding of the crisis response capabilities available to AFRICOM?

My experience as Commander of SOCAF provides direct insight into the critical role of USAFRICOM's crisis response capabilities. Properly equipped, postured, and ready forces are essential for protecting U.S. personnel, property, and interests during crises. USAFRICOM possesses limited organic crisis response forces. Their missions include reinforcing embassy security and facilitating military-assisted departures of Department of State-designated personnel. Furthermore, subject to the Secretary of Defense's approval, additional crisis response assets from the United States, Europe, and the Middle East can supplement USAFRICOM's resources.

74. Do you believe that the availability of crisis response capabilities and the mechanism for obtaining and deploying those capabilities are both appropriate and adequate to meet crisis response requirements in the AFRICOM AOR?

Africa's vast size and overall lack of an integrated logistics infrastructure make the movement, employment, and sustainment of military forces exceedingly difficult. Many locations suffer from unstable and delicate security conditions. On any given day, a crisis could arise that requires USAFRICOM to commit military forces either to augment the security of a U.S. facility or to evacuate personnel. Allocation of assets to crisis response in Africa will be balanced against global requirements in line with security and defense strategies. If confirmed, I will conduct an assessment to determine if additional capabilities or contingency locations are necessary given the current and future risks and mission requirements. I will also examine how to best develop access with partners to enhance USAFRICOM's ability to respond to crises.

75. In your opinion, what additional steps, if any, should be taken to reduce the risk of attacks on U.S. embassies, consulates, and personnel by terrorist organizations and other threats throughout AFRICOM?

The Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service is the lead agency for embassy protection supported by Marine Security Guard Detachments, and Marine Security Augmentation Units as needed. If confirmed, I will review the current authorities and resources available to support the Department of State to reduce the risk of attacks on U.S. embassies, consulates, and personnel. Key factors of that assessment would consider available military response forces, ISR and associated collection for indications and warnings, the posturing of forward coordinating elements, and regular information sharing and coordination with agencies, allies and partners.

Civilian Casualties

76. If confirmed, how would you ensure civilian casualty allegations are adequately and promptly investigated by AFRICOM?

I understand that USAFRICOM has a long-standing process to assess or investigate allegations of civilian casualties. I also understand that staff sections review allegations of civilian casualties in a holistic fashion, considering all the information available. This includes classified information to assess the allegation and, as necessary, determine whether a further assessment or investigation is necessary. To the extent permissible by law and policy, and except as necessary to ensure operational security, USAFRICOM publishes the results of these assessments. If confirmed, I intend to continue to implement and refine that process consistent with Department policy and law.

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

I believe that to be useful and fair, any assessment must be impartial. I understand that USAFRICOM's current civilian harm assessment process ensures an appropriate level of separation or distance between the unit and/or chain of command involved in a potential allegation and the unit that is conducting the assessment.

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

I understand that USAFRICOM publishes press releases after any kinetic strike taken by units under its commander and, since 2020, has publicly reported information on its assessment of allegations of civilian casualties. If confirmed, I will continue to support transparency through the release of information in accordance with law and policy while protecting operational security.

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

I understand that, consistent with law, *ex gratia* payments may be an appropriate response for damage to civilian property or the personal injury or death of a civilian that is incident to the use of force by U.S. Armed Forces, a coalition that includes the United States, a military organization supporting the United States, or a military organization supporting the

United States or such coalition. I believe that the decision to offer such payments should be made consistent with law and implementing Department guidance, on an individual and case-by-case basis, considering factors such as whether the relevant facts can be verified and any potential risks to both U.S. personnel and the intended recipients, including any risk that such funding could be exploited by malign actors.

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) Capabilities

Demand for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities of every kind has grown exponentially in recent years, largely due to the enhanced situational awareness and targeting capabilities they bring to our commanders. Almost all of the geographic combatant commands have validated ISR requirements that are not being met.

80. What is your understanding of the support AFRICOM is currently receiving to respond to its ISR requirements?

ISR availability remains a challenge not only for USAFRICOM given its lack of organic assets, but also to all other Combatant Commands given the high global demand for ISR. The need for ISR in the USAFRICOM AOR remains high to maintain indications and warnings of attacks on the homeland and to characterize malign state actor activity on the continent.

81. Do you believe the threats emanating from the AFRICOM AOR warrant additional resources from within DOD? If so, how do you intend to advocate for additional ISR and other enabling assets, if confirmed?

Threats emanating from Africa are likely to distract from our strategic focus and give our adversaries the advantage if not checked – both from terrorists and state actors such as China. While additional resourcing is a question of policy, I will assess the current risk and advocate for the required resources as appropriate to achieve the national security and defense strategies. I will also engage allies and partners to continue developing the relationships that mitigate potential shortfalls and enhance our domain and threat awareness.

Maritime Security

82. What is your assessment of AFRICOM's ongoing maritime security initiatives?

My perspective from my current capacity is that USAFRICOM has been expanding the maritime capabilities of partners through a mix of security cooperation efforts and exercises. USAFRICOM appears to be prioritizing its maritime security efforts appropriately given current security challenges, which I intend to reassess, if confirmed, given the evolving circumstances of

our security interests in North, West, and East Africa.

83. Very few African countries have the capacity to project naval forces beyond their coastal waters. As a result, the economic exclusion zones of many coastal African countries are exploited by a variety of international actors.

I agree and see this topic as an opportunity to engage African partners and encourage them to hold malign actors, such as China, accountable.

84. What opportunities, if any, do you see for expanded U.S. engagement on maritime security in the AFRICOM AOR?

If confirmed, I will assess opportunities to expand U.S. military, interagency, partner, and allied engagement on maritime security across the USAFRICOM AOR. The AOR's expansive maritime domain holds both significant challenges and strategic opportunities that demand a robust and collaborative approach. I envision enhanced coordination with our European allies and other non-traditional partners to advance shared national security objectives, from strengthening security in NATO's southern flank to combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing in the Gulf of Guinea.

Through focused maritime exercises, security cooperation training, information sharing, and bilateral law enforcement engagements, USAFRICOM can empower partners to operate independently, detect and expose malign activity, and achieve these vital shared goals. Moreover, I will coordinate with adjacent Combatant Commands to maximize regional outcomes. A critical area for disruption involves U.S.-designated drug cartels whose involvement in West Africa's drug supply chain poses a threat to the U.S. homeland.

Quality-of-Life Challenges in AFRICOM

85. What unique quality-of-life challenges affect service members, civilians, and their families assigned to the AFRICOM AOR?

From my experience, the USAFRICOM AOR presents unique challenges to Service members, civilians and their families assigned on the African continent. These challenges include access to medical care, access to education, local environmental concerns impacting health, adequate religious/spiritual fitness resources, isolation from serving in remote locations, high operational tempo, local crime, language barriers, and potential armed conflict exposure. If confirmed, I will assess the extent to which those serving forward have the necessary resources and support to fulfill their mental, physical, and spiritual needs to execute the mission.

86. If confirmed, how would you address these theater-wide challenges to help improve the quality-of-life and retention of these personnel and their families?

If confirmed, I will complete a thorough assessment of the current initiatives USAFRICOM employs to address quality of life and retention. In addition, I will assess subordinate command climates through site visits, surveys, and feedback. Leveraging my experience as the Commander of SOCAF, I will refine and promote quality of life initiatives for personnel deployed within Africa based on eligibility, threat environment, and mission requirements. I would ensure that forward-deployed personnel are provided a clear mission, defined objectives, necessary resources, and appropriate capabilities required for mission success.

Congressional Oversight

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.