

**Senate Armed Services Committee**  
**Advance Policy Questions for Vice Admiral Frank M. Bradley, USN**  
**Nominee to be Commander, United States Special Operations Command**

**Duties and Qualifications**

**1. What is your understanding of the duties and functions of the Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM)?**

As a Unified Combatant Command with service-like responsibilities, USSOCOM is a strategic headquarters with responsibilities to organize, train, and equip four service components (Army Special Operations Command, Naval Special Warfare Command, Air Force Special Operations Command, Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command), the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), and seven Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs). In that role, in accordance with Title 10 U.S.C. Section 167, the Commander of USSOCOM is responsible as a force provider to the other supported Combatant Commands to provide ready forces to meet operational requirements and contingency war plans. As directed by the President or Secretary of Defense, and in accordance with Title 10 U.S.C. Section 164, the Commander USSOCOM conducts operations globally.

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

It has been an honor to serve within the special operations community since 1992, when I completed Basic Underwater Demolition School and became a U.S. Navy SEAL. Since then, I have been privileged to both serve and command at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels, including multiple Naval special warfare units, joint task forces, Special Operations Command Central, and for the last three years as the commander of the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC). I have worked counternarcotics missions across South and Central America, served in our undersea forces, and deployed to Afghanistan soon after the September 11th attack. Later, I shaped counterterrorism strategy in the Joint Staff's Strategy, Plans and Policy directorate (J5), and worked as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford's executive officer (XO). I also served as a liaison officer to the Italian equivalent of the U.S. Navy SEALs. These experiences taught me the value our special operators bring in deterring adversaries, strengthening relationships with allies and partners, and disrupting terrorist threats to the homeland.

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

Yes - absolutely. Under the leadership of General Fenton and Command Sergeant Major Shorter, USSOCOM is maximizing its comparative advantages, preserving crisis response capability, and modernizing toward modern warfare and the threat of China. If I am confirmed, I will seek to provide continuity and acceleration rather than course

correction. To that end, I would humbly and actively seek the advice and counsel of the USSOCOM and Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD(SO/LIC)) teams, the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)) and other DoD leaders, interagency partners, and our combat-experienced special operators.

## **Relationships**

### **4. Please describe your understanding of the relationship of the Commander of USSOCOM to the following offices:**

#### **The Secretary of Defense**

The Secretary of Defense is the USSOCOM Commander's next superior in the operational chain of command. If confirmed, I will look to the Secretary for guidance and resources to train, equip, and employ Special Operations Forces (SOF) to advance enduring U.S. national interests. The USSOCOM Commander owes the Secretary his best military advice on all aspects of special operations matters linked to national security objectives.

#### **The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS)**

The Chairman is the senior military advisor to the President, Secretary of Defense, and the National Security Council. He may also consult with Congress, as required. His role is essential to communicating SOF capabilities and requirements to the President and the Secretary of Defense. Coordinating USSOCOM activities with the Chairman enables the Chairman to fulfill his responsibilities to the President, the Secretary of Defense, and to senior policymakers.

#### **The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy**

The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)) is the Principal Staff Assistant and advisor to the Secretary of Defense and the Deputy Secretary of Defense for all matters on the formulation of national security and defense policy. The USD(P) develops, coordinates, and oversees the implementation of a wide variety of Department policy, including matters related to special operations activities. If confirmed, I will work closely with the USD(P) to ensure USSOCOM activities support Department policies.

#### **The Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence & Security**

The Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence (USD(I&S)) is the principal intelligence advisor to the Secretary of Defense. USD(I&S) exercises authority, direction, and control on behalf of the Secretary of Defense over all intelligence and security organizations within the Department of Defense (DoD), including the National Security Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency, the National Reconnaissance Office, the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency, and the

intelligence components of the Combatant Commands and military Services. USD(I&S) is also dual hatted as the Director of Defense Intelligence in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), and reports to the DNI in this capacity. USD(I&S) is the Department's principal interface with the Central Intelligence Agency and other elements of the Intelligence Community and represents the Department on intelligence and sensitive activities at the National Security Council. If confirmed, I will work closely with USD(I&S) to coordinate USSOCOM matters related to intelligence, intelligence-related activities, and security.

### **The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition & Sustainment**

The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (USD(A&S)) serves as the DoD Senior Procurement Executive (SPE) and the Defense Acquisition Executive (DAE) responsible for all matters relating to the DoD Acquisition System, including system design, development, procurement of goods and services, sustainment of systems, and providing Department-wide policy. Per Title 10 U.S.C. Section 167, the USSOCOM Special Operations Acquisition Executive (SOAE) derives authority to conduct acquisition from the DAE. If confirmed, I will ensure USSOCOM acquisition activities, in coordination with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD(SO/LIC)), are executed by the SOAE under the authorities delegated to the Command by the DAE. In addition, I will ensure that the Command is effectively implementing policies and procedures for logistics, maintenance, material readiness, and sustainment support to the warfighter.

### **The Under Secretary of Defense for Research & Engineering**

The Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering (USD(R&E)) is responsible for overseeing the research, engineering, and technology development activities across the DoD enterprise, and is mandated with driving the key technologies (cyber, space, unmanned systems, machine learning/artificial intelligence, directed energy, hypersonics) to ensure technological superiority for the DoD. If confirmed, in coordination with ASD(SO/LIC), I will ensure USSOCOM science and technology research activities and funding are complementary to and aligned with Department research policy, processes, and priorities. In addition, we will assist in the initiation and implementation of acquisition pathways that embrace agile practices that innovate, develop, exploit, and reduce barriers of entry for commercial technologies and non-traditional defense partners.

### **The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD (SOLIC))**

ASD(SO/LIC) is the Principal Staff Assistant and civilian advisor to the USD(P) and the Secretary of Defense on special operations and low intensity conflict matters. The principal duty of the ASD(SO/LIC) is the overall oversight of DoD special operations activities. The FY17 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) Section 922 codified the administrative position of the ASD(SO/LIC) formally in the chain of command between the Secretary of Defense and the Commander, USSOCOM to exercise of

authority, direction, and control with respect to the special operations-peculiar administration and support of USSOCOM, including the readiness and organization of SOF, resources and equipment, and civilian personnel. If confirmed, I will work closely with ASD(SO/LIC) to ensure our forces are organized effectively, highly trained, and well-equipped to conduct global special operations.

### **The Service Secretaries**

The Goldwater-Nichols Act granted the USSOCOM Commander authority over the Service components assigned to him, but this relationship requires close coordination with the Service Secretaries, to respect and preserve each Service Secretary's legal responsibilities. Close coordination between the USSOCOM Commander and each of the Service Secretaries is also essential to gaining and maintaining the Services' support of SOF as an integral part of the Joint force.

### **The Service Chiefs**

In cooperation with the Service Chiefs, the USSOCOM Commander will ensure the preparedness of his forces to execute his assigned missions. The Service Chiefs play a critical role in the development, promotion, and assignment of SOF senior officers and enlisted personnel. The Service Chiefs are also a source of experience and judgment that every Combatant Commander may call upon. If confirmed, I will continue an open dialogue and cooperative partnership with the Service Chiefs.

### **The other combatant commanders**

Successive USSOCOM Commanders have fostered an atmosphere of teamwork and trust in their relationships with fellow Combatant Commanders. These relationships have only strengthened over the years as trans-regional threats have taken hold and certainly since USSOCOM has been responsible for synchronizing planning for global operations against terrorist networks. If confirmed, I will continue to work closely and collaborate with the other Combatant Commanders to achieve our common objectives. I will be committed to providing the Combatant Commanders trained and ready SOF to support national and theater security objectives.

## **Major Challenges and Priorities**

### **5. In your view, what are the major challenges confronting the next Commander of USSOCOM?**

The next USSOCOM Commander must continually evaluate and balance SOF readiness and employment with SOF modernization to preserve and advance our vital interests and those of our allies and partners – in a resource constrained environment. SOF must continue to enable the Joint Force and provide strategic leaders with options that span the continuum from competition to crisis and conflict, and across the spectrum of attribution.

USSOCOM must preserve and protect the Department's crisis response capability and continue to serve as the Department's Coordinating Authority for Countering Violent Extremist Organizations (C-VEO). All of this allows the Services and other Combatant Commands to maintain focus on the pacing threat while building warfighting advantage. At the same time, USSOCOM must invest in modernizing for the future of campaigning in contested and denied areas, with China as the pacing threat.

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

If confirmed, I will ensure that we are always ready for our no-fail missions – crisis response and keeping the homeland safe from another major terrorist attack. I would also continue to invest in SOF's irregular warfare capabilities, by maintaining close ties with U.S. Cyber Command and U.S. Space Command; enhancing the ongoing work of the Joint Task Force-Strategic Reconnaissance and Enabling Command; and enabling joint campaigning as a partner with the Combatant Commands and other USG agencies. If confirmed, I would also fully leverage USSOCOM's flexible acquisition authorities – in close coordination with ASD(SO/LIC) – to continue accelerating USSOCOM's modernization campaign, against the Chinese pacing threat. These acquisition and modernization efforts enable SOF to capitalize on our nation's innovation advantage, and to extend the reach and lethality of the Joint Force. I would also build upon SOF's proud history of strengthening the resilience and resistance ability of partners and allies, in conjunction with the other Combatant Commands and the interagency. Additionally, I would maximize usage of the Preservation of the Force and Family (POTFF) program to ensure the readiness and resilience of our special operators and their families.

**7. What are the most important lessons you have learned during your tenure in senior leadership positions in the Department of Defense?**

Our purpose is our mission. Ultimately, we must answer our Nation's call to provide for a common defense. Our most important warfighting system is our people – we must man, train, equip, and sustain our world-class special operators for success in both the physical and virtual domains. SOF win by maintaining readiness and modernization – readiness to fight and win in combat; assure allies; illuminate peer adversary predation; and provide placement and access options for the Joint Force.

The pace of technological advancement is accelerating and changing the character of warfare in a way that demands we transform to remain as decisive in the future as the past 25 years. SOF transform by modernizing and leveraging our Nation's technological advantage. This includes expanding SOF's capabilities in contested environments by leveraging rapid acquisition to integrate state-of-the-market and state-of-the-art capabilities into operational plans and coupling cutting-edge capabilities with our world-class people using man-machine teaming.

**8. If confirmed, what priorities would you establish in terms of issues that must be addressed by the Commander of USSOCOM?**

I believe that USSOCOM should align its strategic priorities directly to those in the Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance (INDSG) and new strategic guidance as it is published. The first defense priority is defending the homeland. Here, SOF provide unique value in its Crisis Response and Countering Violent Extremist Organizations with the intent and capability of attacking the homeland and defending the territorial integrity of the United States from state and non-state threats. I also recognize we have the mission to insure against strategic distractions such as the rapid expansion of ISIS that destabilized an entire region and that might divert resources from the pacing threat.

The next priority is deterring China. The INDSG offers a laser focus on deterring China – while simultaneously defending the U.S. Our longstanding ability to build relationships and increase the capacity of allies and partners is critical to strengthening our alliances maintaining U.S. global influence and ensuring deterrence. SOF have a unique role in building resistance and resilience in allies and partners. These relationships provide access and placement for enhanced understanding of adversary threats. They also provide warfighter advantage for the delivery of asymmetric and irregular kinetic and non-kinetic effects; holding adversary systems at risk around the world; and extending the reach, lethality, and maneuver space of the Joint Force.

### **Civilian Oversight of USSOCOM**

**Section 922 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017, as amended, included modifications to the roles and responsibilities of the ASD (SOLIC) as well as the relationship between the ASD (SOLIC) and the Commander of USSOCOM in order for the ASD (SOLIC) to more effectively fulfill its “service secretary-like” responsibilities to provide civilian oversight of and advocacy within DOD for USSOCOM’s service-like requirements.**

#### **9. What is your view of the role of the ASD (SOLIC) in promoting civilian control over the military?**

Civilian control over the military is a foundational element of our constitutional democracy. To that end, ASD(SO/LIC) assists in interpreting DoD policy guidance for SOF equities and provides administrative oversight to USSOCOM. Per Section 922 of the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act codifying ASD(SO/LIC)’s roles and responsibilities in 10 U.S.C., ASD(SO/LIC) exercises authority, direction, and control over administrative matters relating to organizing, training, and equipping of SOF. ASD(SO/LIC) assists the Department in the development and supervision of policy, program planning and execution, and provides oversight for USSOCOM. His role also gives the SOF enterprise a stronger position to connect operational needs with Title 10 solutions.

#### **10. What is your understanding of the organizational and administrative relationship between the ASD (SOLIC) and the Commander of USSOCOM?**

Section 922 of the FY17 NDAA codified ASD(SO/LIC) in the chain of command for special operations-peculiar administration and support of USSOCOM, including the readiness and organization of SOF, resources and equipment, and civilian personnel. Section 922 specifically did not impact the Combatant Command's operational relationship between the Combatant Commander and the Secretary of Defense. ASD(SO/LIC) fulfills an important Secretary-like role in the coordination and relationship with the legislative branch and complements USSOCOM's long-standing Service-like role. ASD(SO/LIC) plays a critical role in senior level forums like the Special Operations Policy Oversight Counsel (SPOC), providing Service Secretary-like advocacy for issues affecting SOF. If confirmed, I will work closely with the ASD(SO/LIC) as he provides civilian oversight and advocacy for SOF within DoD.

**11. What is your understanding of the role of the ASD (SOLIC) in:**

**(1) The formulation and submission of USSOCOM's annual budget request;**

As codified in DoD Directive 5111.10, ASD(SO/LIC) performs a budgetary role and responsibility like those of the Secretaries of the Military Departments. In close partnership with Headquarters, USSOCOM, ASD(SO/LIC), provides overall supervision of the preparation and justification of special operations programs and budget for Major Force Program-11 to include review and approval of the USSOCOM annual budget request prior to submission to Congress. Further, ASD(SO/LIC) partners closely with USSOCOM during budget rollout activities and coordinates on all answers to Congressional requests for information.

**(2) Approving programs of record and the acquisition of special operations-peculiar capabilities by USSOCOM;**

ASD(SOLIC) is a full partner in the development and approval of two key processes for USSOCOM that define our programs of record: the Special Operations Command Requirements Evaluation Board (SOCREB) and the Program Objective Memorandum (POM). The SOCREB is USSOCOM's requirements validation board that approves all special operations-peculiar requirements and lays the foundation for the Special Operations Acquisition Executive to establish Programs of Record. The POM determines the resources we will apply to these programs of record.

**(3) Overseeing the organization of USSOCOM headquarters and service components;**

Section 922 of the FY 2017 NDAA directs ASD(SO/LIC) to exercise authority, direction, and control of all special operations-peculiar administrative matters relating to the organization, training, and equipping of SOF. This includes the organization of all USSOCOM elements.

**(4) Ensuring the readiness of special operations forces (SOF); and**

Since the Section 922 amendment, USSOCOM has maintained a quarterly readiness brief with the ASD and the ASD(SO/LIC) staff to facilitate oversight of special operations readiness issues and discuss areas that warrant advocacy from the ASD(SO/LIC) office. The USSOCOM staff maintains regular contact with the ASD(SO/LIC) staff for actions that require attention between quarterly briefs.

**(5) Actions relating to the culture, ethics, and accountability of SOF.**

The SOF enterprise is a meritocracy built on a foundation of ethical leadership, professionalism, and accountability. The SOF meritocracy is strong – the battlefield successes and competitive advantages our professionals have attained continue to grow. However, we must acknowledge we are human, and we make mistakes. A culture of meritocracy must also ensure accountability for those mistakes. We must learn from them and demonstrate that unacceptable behavior will not be tolerated. Leadership is the key to preventing and deterring poor behavior. Treating every teammate with dignity and respect is foundational to any culture, especially a meritocracy. Every individual must be given the opportunity to achieve success based on their own talents and contributions. Sustaining and cultivating a culture that reinforces dignity, respect, and accountability is vital to this. If confirmed, I will work closely with ASD(SO/LIC) to continue to ensure SOF maintain a meritocratic culture, built on a foundation of professionalism and accountability, empowering the innovative spirit to ensure readiness and mission accomplishment.

**Strategic Environment and the Role of Special Operations Forces**

**12. What is your assessment of the current strategic environment, including your assessment of the critical and enduring threats to the national security of the United States and its allies and partners?**

I believe the current strategic environment is characterized by danger, opportunity, and accelerating change. In light of this, the INDSG directs a strategy of *peace through strength*, and prioritizes homeland defense and deterring Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific, while empowering U.S. allies and partners to address other enduring threats. At the same time, the character of warfare is changing rapidly, with an increasing role for unmanned systems, artificial intelligence, man-machine teaming, and virtual domain sensing – with battlefield success rewarding those who can integrate these elements and shorten the cycle of innovation, experimentation, testing, and fielding. I judge that U.S. allies and partners are critical to mitigating the enduring threats to our national security identified in the INDSG, and that relationships – including those forged and strengthened by SOF – are essential to the cooperative threat reduction and burden sharing envisioned by our strategic guidance.

**13. In your view, what should be the role of SOF in addressing these threats and challenges?**



In my view, the evolving operational environment and the emphasis on strategic competition across the Joint Force requires continual reassessment of SOF's operations and activities across the spectrum of competition, crisis, and conflict. SOF must maintain its core, no-fail missions of crisis response and counterterrorism, while integrating with conventional forces, interagency partners, and partners and allies to deter state adversaries to prevent large scale conflict. USSOCOM has been a proactive participant in the Joint Force's development of warfighting and competition concepts, and the lessons we are learning have driven assessment and modernization efforts within the SOF enterprise. If confirmed, I intend to continue USSOCOM's modernization to ensure SOF can continue to deliver asymmetric strategic effects for the Joint Force in competition and conflict while globally responding to crisis in any operational environment.

**14. How do you intend to balance the competing requirements of countering violent extremist organizations, crisis response, and efforts to counter China and Russia?**

In my view, USSOCOM must balance sustainable counterterrorism, focusing on threats to the homeland and our no-fail Crisis Response mission, with precision access and global networks to support campaigning. There is shared interest among our partners and allies in countering terrorism, and I judge there are opportunities for effective collaboration and increased burden sharing. If confirmed, I will use the INDSG and additional strategic documents as a guide and prioritize the limited available resources for counterterrorism toward the most dangerous threats – specifically those with the demonstrated intent and capability to conduct external operations (EXOPs) attacks against the homeland – while also focusing USSOCOM's modernization and acquisition programs toward contested environments and China.

**15. Do you believe SOF are appropriately organized and sized to meet global requirements?**

If confirmed, I will review the organization and size of SOF in light of the global requirements laid out in the INDSG and other strategic guidance, the rapidly evolving strategic environment, and the changing character of war and will make any recommendations for change through the Department and in close coordination with ASD(SO/LIC).

**Special Operations Missions**

**16. Do you believe the special operations activities identified in section 167 of title 10, U.S. Code, remain relevant and appropriate?**

The ten special operations activities specified in USC Title 10, Section 167 are sufficient

to meet the requirements of the evolving global security environment and the implementation of the NDS. The tenth specified authority in particular--to perform "Such other activities as may be specified by the President or the Secretary of Defense"--provides adequate flexibility to meet INDSG requirements.

**17. What changes, if any, would you recommend?**

At this time, I am not prepared to advocate for changes in current USSOCOM missions. If confirmed, and using the INDSG as the foundation, I will review the range of SOF missions and recommend any necessary changes in close coordination with ASD(SO/LIC) and the Department.

**Evolving Operating Environment**

**The operating environment facing SOF has evolved significantly over the last two decades, as adversary capabilities in areas such as area access/area denial, ubiquitous technical surveillance, and rapid advances in unmanned systems.**

**18. What do you view as the most pressing challenges that special operation forces will face on the battlefield currently and over the next ten years?**

This is the most complex and dynamic security environment I've seen in 34 years of service. The character of war is changing faster than ever. SOF face pressing battlefield challenges requiring adaptability and innovation. Technological advancements provide state and non-state actors with commercially available tools to confront us across the virtual and physical domains. Our adversaries' innovation cycles are days to weeks, not months to years. Our adversaries are leveraging asymmetric capabilities, such as using inexpensive, one-way drones to threaten U.S. forces, bases, and our allies and partners. We are also seeing the threats from China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, state proxies, and violent extremist organizations converge globally. In addition, our competitors seek to undermine U.S. global influence, competing with us, and our allies and partners, to expand their own partnerships and influence in critical regions such as Africa, South America, the Middle East, and Asia.

**19. What will be your priorities in addressing these challenges?**

As proven by the increased demand for SOF by Combatant Commanders over the last several years, addressing these challenges will continue to require more from SOF. The operating environment will only become more and more complex, requiring unrelenting modernization for the most dangerous crises or conflicts we may face. We must balance the need to maintain SOF operational readiness to meet increasing global demand, with the imperative to modernize SOF to ensure we are as decisive in the future as we have been in the last 25 years. Additionally, SOF's decades-long relationships with allies and partners, and corresponding global placement and access, will continue to be critical to

maintaining U.S. global influence, enhancing understanding, increasing burden-sharing, and enabling rapid response to crises. If confirmed, I will conduct a robust analysis against current and future challenges, and develop plans to ensure SOF remain a capable, ready, and resilient force.

## **Combating Terrorism**

**20. What is your assessment of the threat posed by Al Qaeda, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and other violent extremist organizations, to the U.S. homeland, and western interests, more broadly? Which group or groups, in your view, currently present the greatest threat to the United States?**

I believe ISIS, its senior leadership, and its affiliates including ISIS-Khorasan and ISIS-Somalia pose the greatest terrorist threat to the U.S. Al-Qa'ida senior leadership, Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula, and Al Shabaab also present a terrorist threat to the U.S. homeland and U.S. interests abroad. Although our CT operations, combined with allied and local partner efforts, reduced the threat of sophisticated, large-scale attacks on the homeland, the underlying causes that produce extremist ideologies persist. Although degraded, ISIS and al-Qa'ida retain operational networks across the Middle East, Africa and Southeast Asia, and continue to pose a threat to our regional interests.

**21. If confirmed, how would you seek to fulfill USSOCOM's assigned responsibilities for synchronizing global operations against terrorist networks?**

If confirmed, I would fulfill the USSOCOM responsibilities by coordinating with Combatant Commands and across the DoD and interagency, to plan, assess, and make recommendations to the Chairman and Secretary regarding C-VEO campaigning. Under current strategic guidance, SOF resources are focused on disrupting and degrading only the most dangerous VEOs (those demonstrating intent and capability to attack the U.S. homeland), while allocating fewer resources towards disrupting and monitoring VEOs which present a regional and/or local threat to U.S. interests. If confirmed, I will continue to leverage and seek burden sharing opportunities with like-minded partners and allies. In my experience, a wide-ranging partnership among U.S. and coalition military, interagency and law enforcement capabilities and authorities is key to addressing global, trans-regional VEO threats.

**22. What is your view of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy and the role of USSOCOM in supporting that strategy?**

In my experience, USSOCOM plays a pivotal role in supporting U.S. counterterrorism strategy. In my view, current strategic guidance is appropriate, and periodic reviews and risk assessments help refine priorities for addressing global VEO threats. Informed by this guidance and the evolving environment, USSOCOM helps focus SOF resources on monitoring and disrupting only the most dangerous VEOs, while allocating fewer resources to VEOs which present a regional or local threat to U.S. interests. In recent

years, USSOCOM has recommended, approved, and implemented modest but highly impactful adjustments that have reduced risk of external operations attacks at a sustainable level of investment, consistent with U.S. counterterrorism strategy. If confirmed, I will work to sustain and improve this valuable process, which begins with tactical-level feedback from the special operators and intelligence professionals working our most challenging counterterrorism problems. USSOCOM also supports U.S. counterterrorism strategy by working with and leveraging like-minded partners to address the threat and mitigate the risk against less capable regional VEOs – this allows U.S. SOF to focus on the more capable, transregional VEO threats.

### **Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD)**

#### **23. Under the Unified Campaign Plan, USSOCOM is tasked with coordinating DOD's efforts on CWMDs.**

Correct, the 2023 Unified Command Plan, with change #2 (dtd 23 MAY 2025) states, "Commander, USSOCOM is responsible for planning of DoD CWMD efforts in support of other Combatant Commands, DoD priorities, and, as directed, other U.S. Government agencies.

#### **24. What is your understanding of USSOCOM's responsibilities under the Unified Campaign Plan for synchronizing the Department's efforts to counter weapons of mass destruction?**

As the Department of Defense CWMD Coordinating Authority, USSOCOM is currently responsible for coordinating and planning DoD CWMD efforts in support of other Combatant Commands, DoD priorities, and as directed, other USG agencies; integrating DoD plans, in coordination with other Combatant Commands, against adversaries and networks that possess, seek or facilitate WMD; in support of Combatant Commands, executing global operations against adversaries and networks that possess or seek WMD.

#### **25. In your assessment are there any resources, authorities, or organizational changes needed to better execute USSOCOM's CWMD mission?**

If confirmed, I will conduct a holistic review of USSOCOM's CWMD capabilities, and its role as CWMD Coordinating Authority. If changes are needed, I will make appropriate recommendations via the Chairman to the Secretary of Defense on resources, authorities, and organization as required to address current and emerging CWMD threats.

### **10 U.S.C. 127e Operations**

#### **26. Section 127e of title 10, United States Code, authorizes the provision of support (including training, funding, and equipment) to regular forces, irregular forces,**

**and individuals supporting or facilitating military operations by U.S. SOF to combat terrorism.**

**What is your assessment of this authority?**

I believe that 127e remains one of the most relevant tools for our forces countering terrorism overseas. It continues to provide outsized effects in return for a relatively small investment of U.S. training and resourcing of select foreign forces. 127e is the essence of burden-sharing; our ability to enable and leverage the access and local-area knowledge of select indigenous regular and irregular forces is critical to mission success, especially in remote or politically sensitive areas where a large U.S. military footprint is neither desirable nor feasible.

**27. If confirmed, what criteria would you use to evaluate 127e proposals to ensure they comply with policy guidance, are complementary to other DOD and U.S. Government counterterrorism efforts, and achieve their intended purpose?**

If confirmed, I will ensure that proposals for the use of 127e authority are aligned with INDSG priorities and focused on combatant command strategic objectives accomplished by U.S. SOF operations within the scope of Secretary of Defense-granted operational authority. 127e will not be used to build capacity; rather, it has and will continue to serve as a mechanism to facilitate burden-sharing with foreign allies, partners, and surrogates, as a component of our broader counterterrorism strategy. Proposals must be fully coordinated with the interagency with a well-defined end-state and off-ramp plan that considers the Combatant Command, U.S. Country Team, and Department of State long-term relationships with partner nations. 127e-resourced tactical maneuver forces must be fully vetted to ensure integrity of the force and mitigate the risk of human rights violations.

**Irregular Warfare**

**Nation states are becoming more aggressive in challenging U.S. interests through the use of asymmetric means that often fall below the threshold of conventional conflict, commonly referred to as irregular warfare and “gray zone operations.”**

**28. What is your understanding of the threat to U.S. interests posed by adversaries in this domain of warfare?**

The threat to U.S. interests posed by adversaries employing irregular techniques and hybrid warfare strategies includes peer and near-peer competitor nations, whose actions could drain U.S. resources and those of our allies and partners. In my judgment, adversary nations and their proxies are increasing the frequency and severity of their gray zone operations. By their nature, these operations fall below the level of war and provide attractive and inexpensive options for our adversaries, in part because it

increases the difficulty of identifying perpetrators, understanding red lines, and identifying the thresholds at which adversaries would intensify or escalate violence. They also provide the means for a militarily inferior force to coerce advantage through a more limited and insidious approach that falls between traditional diplomacy and our conventional military deterrence approaches.

**29. What should be the guiding principles of the Department of Defense's strategy to counter these threats?**

The INDSG provides clear guidance to focus Department of Defense strategy on U.S. homeland defense and deterring Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific, while empowering allies and partners against other threats with more limited support from the U.S.

**30. What is your understanding of the role of irregular warfare in supporting Department of Defense strategy and operations? What role should SOF have in executing such a strategy?**

Irregular Warfare (IW) activities support the DoD's strategic and operational priorities, including competing against and deterring China and Russia; combating non-state actors such as al-Qaida, ISIS, and state-backed proxies like the Houthis; assisting allies and partners against state and non-state actors; and preparing for large-scale combat.

SOF have been executing IW operations and activities for more than 80 years. SOF's operations in support of broader USG deterrence efforts help undermine adversaries' confidence; alter their decision-making calculus; and provide Combatant Commanders opportunities and advantages – to prevent conflict. With decades of combat experience and credibility, SOF's long-term relationships with allies and partners improve interoperability, while also ensuring broad access, placement, and influence across the globe. This provides the Joint Force with expanded situational awareness and increases options in competition, crisis, and conflict. Small, persistent, globally deployed SOF teams, working alongside regular and irregular forces, strengthen partner capacity, counter adversary malign activity, and promote regional stability.

**31. Do you believe that SOF have the appropriate authorities and capabilities to operate effectively in this domain of warfare? Please explain your answer.**

I appreciate Congress's efforts to provide the DoD and USSOCOM with the tools needed to fight and win. In my experience, one of our most important tools is the array of fiscal authorities that we can apply to enable foreign forces that support our operations. To build our military advantage in a changing operational environment, we must adapt and innovate our authorities and capabilities to provide flexibility and operational agility. If confirmed, I intend to assess current authorities in close coordination with the USSOCOM staff and components, as well as ASD(SO/LIC) and the Department.

**Section 127d of title 10, United States Code, authorizes the provision of support (including training, funding, and equipment) to regular forces, irregular forces, and individuals supporting or facilitating irregular warfare operations by U.S. SOF.**

**32. What is your assessment of this authority?**

I am grateful to Congress for codifying the former 1202 authority into Title 10. The ability to enable and leverage the access and local area knowledge of select foreign forces allows U.S. SOF to achieve specific effects in direct support of ongoing priority Combatant Command irregular warfare operations. This enables outsized returns from a relatively small investment in our efforts to impose costs upon malign actors and enhance resiliency of frontline allies. As a resourcing tool, 127d is the mechanism that sets conditions for current and future burden-sharing with partners and surrogate forces. If confirmed, I would work closely with ASD(SO/LIC) to provide Congress with the transparency necessary to build the necessary trust and confidence that this authority is being appropriately implemented to maintain our military advantage.

**33. If confirmed, what criteria would you use to evaluate section 127d proposals to ensure they comply with policy guidance, are complementary to other DOD and U.S. Government irregular warfare efforts, and achieve their intended purpose?**

If confirmed, I will ensure that proposals for the use of 127d are aligned with INDSG priorities, consistent with Congressional intent, within the scope of Secretary of Defense-granted operational authority and fully coordinated and synchronized with interagency partners. Proposals must include detailed counterintelligence plans to mitigate risk and ensure integrity of the enabled force, with defined control measures to mitigate risk of inadvertent escalation. Proposals must also include well-defined milestones and end state, with consideration for eventual off-ramp, executed in concert with the Combatant Command and the Department of State.

**Information Operations**

**34. In your view, are the Department and the broader interagency appropriately organized to compete with state and non-state adversaries in the information environment? If not, what recommendations would you make?**

If confirmed, I would like to examine this issue in greater detail and assess how USSOCOM and our other capabilities can contribute to a broader USG effort by integrating and coordinating efforts both within DoD and the Interagency. The DoD has conducted analysis of force structure, authorities, and standing capabilities to meet our Nation's requirements to compete in the information environment. This has resulted in several initiatives across the Joint Staff, the Services, and at USSOCOM. I believe SOF are well-positioned both to support Combatant Commanders and to help synchronize the Department's messaging across the Department and interagency.

**35. What is the appropriate role of the Department and, specifically, SOF in the broader information operations and strategic communications efforts of the U.S. Government?**

I understand that the Department's role in the broader USG information operations effort is typically to support the designated lead agencies for strategic communications. In most cases, communication efforts take place outside declared areas of hostility with the Department of State as the designated lead. In a broader sense, DoD is emphasizing throughout the force that every operation, action, and investment planned has an accompanying informational component which together contribute to strategic campaigning. Every action we take conveys the principle of *Peace through Strength*.

As directed in the Unified Command Plan and Title 10 USC Section 167, USSOCOM is the Department's SOF Joint Force Provider with the responsibility to provide combat ready SOF, including Psychological Operations (PSYOP) forces. The UCP also specifies that the USSOCOM Commander's "responsibilities include integrating and coordinating DoD Military Information Support Operations (MISO) capabilities, and when directed, executing MISO in support of Combatant Commands." Working primarily through the Theater Special Operations Commands, USSOCOM provides military information support operations capabilities and exercises its coordinating authority role to support achievement of supported Combatant Commanders' objectives. Outside of areas of hostilities, PSYOP forces conduct military information support operations in close coordination with Department of State and other interagency personnel to support the achievement of U.S. Government information objectives, consistent with Department of State mission strategic plans.

**36. Do you believe that USSOCOM's military information support capabilities can be more effectively utilized? If so, are there doctrinal, organizational, training, or authority modifications that you believe could make military information support capabilities more effective?**

If confirmed, I will work with USSOCOM, supported Combatant Commands, and interagency partners to review the agility and effectiveness of USSOCOM's military information support capabilities. In my current position, I have witnessed the increasing importance of these capabilities – and other related capabilities in the virtual domain, such as cyber and horizontal ISR – and judge these capabilities to be critical enablers in our current and future operations. I firmly believe that USSOCOM's innovation in this arena – and its fruitful partnership with USSPACECOM and USCYBERCOM in particular – should be reinforced and accelerated. If confirmed, I will remain a strong partner to other Combatant Commands – such as USINDOPACOM – that are integrating information environment operations into their theater campaign plans.

**37. Are there additional military capabilities that should be developed by the Department to more effectively compete in the information environment?**



At this time, I am not prepared to advocate for the development of additional military capabilities in this area. If confirmed, I will coordinate employment of these capabilities closely with Department, Combatant Command, and interagency stakeholders. As with many other military capabilities, it is essential that these effects are employed with speed, agility, appropriate discipline, and consistent with the relevant law.

### **Intelligence Operations**

**38. In your view, how are intelligence operations carried out by SOF different from those carried out by others in the intelligence community?**

In my experience, SOF principally conduct intelligence-related activities, in support of the warfighter and the Department – to achieve national security objectives. However, SOF do not do this alone; they integrate, coordinate, and deconflict these activities with partners in the Intelligence Community and interagency, often setting conditions for potential DoD operations in support of deterrence, crisis response, and conflict. SOF's unique capabilities, access, and placement enables enhanced understanding, and extends the operational reach and collection capabilities of the Joint Force and intelligence community.

**39. If confirmed, how would you ensure that intelligence activities carried out by SOF are properly coordinated with activities carried out by the intelligence community?**

If confirmed, and in coordination with OUSD(I&S), I will direct USSOCOM to adhere to Intelligence Community and DoD directives for coordination of intelligence collection and intelligence-related activities. I will also ensure that USSOCOM works closely with our intelligence community partners to share best practices, particularly those tied to counterintelligence and force protection, as required by the increasing adversary use of technical surveillance. USSOCOM will also continue to leverage its SOF liaison network and Intelligence Community senior representatives and liaison officers to collaborate, coordinate, and leverage intelligence expertise to support operations. Theater Special Operations Commands and SOF Joint Task Forces will continue to conduct coordination with Country Teams and the Intelligence Community to deconflict activities, share information, leverage available capabilities, and enable operations.

### **Crisis Response Capabilities**

**40. What is your understanding of the demand for and associated costs of USSOCOM's crisis response capabilities over the last decade?**

Employed at the direction of the President and Secretary of Defense, USSOCOM's crisis response forces eliminate threats to the homeland, rescue American citizens, and protect

our diplomats, all at a moment's notice. These urgent missions lack predictability in terms of timing, duration, and total cost. In the past three-and-a-half years, the frequency of these Presidentially directed missions has increased by over 200 percent. During this same time, composite strategic airlift costs increased over 76%. Adequate funding for crisis response and National Command Authority-directed missions is critical to ensure critical readiness exercises and modernization efforts are not sacrificed to resource the increased frequency, duration and cost of crisis response.

**41. What implications, in your view, does a significant increase in the demand for USSOCOM's crisis response capabilities over the last decade have for the readiness and resourcing of the force?**

Crisis response operations are inherently unpredictable and vary year-to-year in number, timing, duration, and total cost. In particular, the last two years have seen some of the most complex and longest crisis response operations in U.S. history. The increased demand for SOF to respond to crises, and the duration and cost of those operations, have impacted SOF's ability to modernize for the future. Crisis response is no-fail mission for SOF. We must balance SOF readiness for immediate crisis response requirements, with the need to modernize the force to be able successfully execute the crisis response in contested environments.

**42. What changes, if any, would you recommend to USSOCOM's crisis response posture, capabilities, and employment?**

USSOCOM provides the most capable crisis response force in the world. To sustain this, we must continue to modernize our crisis response capabilities, focused on the potential requirement to execute crisis response operations in environments either directly or indirectly contested by China or other state and/or state-supported proxies. Advanced autonomous and remotely controlled unmanned systems, man-machine teaming, counter-unmanned systems capabilities, and virtual domain sensing and effects will be critical to future crisis response operations. If confirmed, I will continue to accelerate USSOCOM's modernization program – including those capabilities required for crisis response, and in close coordination with ASD(SO/LIC) – with China as the pacing threat.

**USSOCOM Acquisition Authorities**

**Section 167(e)(4) of title 10, U.S. Code, assigns to the Commander, USSOCOM the authority to develop and acquire special operations-peculiar equipment, and to acquire special operations-peculiar material, supplies, and services. The Commander, USSOCOM is advised and assisted in these matters by a command acquisition executive.**

**43. What technology areas and capabilities do you believe should be prioritized to enable SOF to most effectively support the objectives of the NDS?**

The increasing pace of technological advancement demands SOF modernize rapidly to

outpace our adversaries through the unrelenting development and integration of cutting-edge technologies. This includes harnessing the power of man-machine teaming and fusing all-domain capabilities to achieve decisive advantages. The pervasive technical surveillance environment presents both unique challenges and unprecedented opportunities. Recognizing this, I am committed to strengthening the Space-SOF-Cyber triad, leveraging the combined strengths of USSPACECOM and USCYBERCOM to ensure SOF's operational effectiveness in support of national security objectives. My vision encompasses integrating technological advancements across all domains – physical and virtual – including surface and subsurface maritime platforms; autonomous uncrewed systems; counter-unmanned systems; next-generation intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; stand-off precision effects; and modernized mission command systems. If confirmed, I will leverage the INDSG and other strategic documents to guide a comprehensive review of USSOCOM's priorities and capabilities and make recommendations to ASD(SO/LIC) aimed at ensuring SOF remain at the forefront of military innovation and preparedness.

**44. If confirmed, what criteria would you apply in validating a determination that a particular requirement for equipment, materiel, supplies, or services is “special operations-peculiar”?**

The SOF enterprise relies on Service-common investments in foundational capabilities such as personnel, infrastructure, mobility platforms, and weapons systems. However, SOF provide the Nation unique capabilities, and therefore, require specialized capabilities. This may involve modifications of Service-common systems or developing entirely unique SOF capabilities. SOF should continue to look for opportunities to enhance or build from Joint Force solutions wherever possible. I also believe SOF should be viewed as the vanguard for innovation and will work with the Services to develop capabilities with transition to the joint force at the forefront of our development. If confirmed, I will partner with ASD(SO/LIC) to validate SOF capabilities through our established process SOF Capability Integration and Development System (SOFCIDS). Any capability deemed non-special operations-peculiar will be transitioned to the appropriate Service sponsor – in collaboration with the Joint Staff and leveraging the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS) framework.

**45. If confirmed, what actions would you take to improve each of the three aspects of the special operations-peculiar acquisition process—requirements, acquisition, and budgeting?**

If confirmed, I commit to ensuring SOF remain a vanguard for agility across the Department and I will assess current USSOCOM requirements, acquisition, and budgeting processes to identify what improvements may be required. I recognize the critical need to respond to adversary innovation cycles with speed and precision. It will be important to reduce capability fielding and employment timelines by empowering leaders to make risk-informed capability development decisions and enabling rapidly fielded capabilities against emerging threats. Openness with industry will foster strategic

partnerships, competition, and innovation. Allowing companies insight into SOF requirements will unlock the ingenuity of the American industrial base and drive development of critical cutting-edge technologies.

If confirmed, I will also assess USSOCOM's business systems and processes, and look to modernize them, as required. I will continue to make strides towards achieving a clean audit to earn your full trust and confidence in the management and expenditure of the resources entrusted to USSOCOM. I will continually seek to enhance transparency throughout the requirements, acquisition, and budgeting processes.

**46. If confirmed, what actions would you propose, if any, to ensure that special operations-peculiar requirements are realistic, technically achievable, and prioritized?**

If confirmed, I will lead a Commander-driven prioritization process, ensuring that precious MFP-11 resources are allocated to programs that are demonstrably relevant, realistic, and aligned with addressing the current and most dangerous future threats. I will look to divest of obsolete programs, freeing up resources for modernization. In my experience, special operator-identified capability gaps combined with agile authorities, and iterative experimentation and modernization exercises are invaluable to the successful development and fielding of special operations-peculiar capabilities. To sustain this advantage, we must cultivate a battlefield test lab environment with realistic and technically achievable requirements. If confirmed, I commit to equip our operators with the best tools possible while remaining good stewards of the resources entrusted to USSOCOM.

**47. If confirmed, how will you ensure that special operations capabilities and requirements are integrated into overall DOD research, development, and acquisition programs?**

I believe a strong partnership with the Department is critical for success in this area. If confirmed, I will prioritize maintaining a close partnership with USD(A&S), USD(R&E), the Strategic Capabilities Office (SCO), and the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU). I will also continue the practice of co-chairing the Acquisition Summit, fostering collaboration between SOF acquisition efforts and those of the Services and key DoD leaders. This synergy will enable SOF to leverage its unique ability to be both a first mover on emerging technologies and an early adopter of innovations developed across the Department. The USSOCOM enterprise's ongoing partnerships with the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and SCO exemplifies this approach, increasing collaboration on defining SOF requirements and serving as a transition partner for their groundbreaking technologies. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring transparency and interoperability by integrating USSOCOM developmental efforts and capabilities into the broader DoD and Joint Force to maximize our collective impact.

**Ethics and Accountability**

**48. What are your views on the current culture of ethics and accountability in SOF?**

In my view, the SOF enterprise is a meritocracy built on a foundation of ethical leadership, professionalism, and accountability. A meritocratic culture must also ensure accountability for mistakes. We must learn from them and demonstrate that unacceptable behavior will not be tolerated. Strong, ethical leadership is the key to preventing and deterring poor behavior. Sustaining and cultivating a culture that reinforces dignity, respect, and accountability is vital to this. If confirmed, I will work closely with ASD(SO/LIC) to continue to ensure SOF maintain a meritocratic culture, built on a foundation of professionalism and accountability, empowering the innovative spirit to ensure readiness and mission accomplishment.

**49. What steps will you take, if confirmed, to foster a culture of ethics and accountability in SOF?**

If confirmed, I am fully committed to fostering an enduring, meritocratic culture underpinned by ethical leadership and accountability across the USSOCOM enterprise. I will work closely with ASD(SO/LIC) and subordinate commanders to promote this culture within SOF, and to make professionalism and accountability pillars of SOF leadership, training, and assessment programs at all echelons.

**50. What role, if any, should past mission accomplishment play in decisions relating to misconduct by SOF?**

As a general matter, mission accomplishment does not excuse criminal or corrosive behaviors. Accountability is fundamental to ensuring good order and discipline in any formation, and SOF commanders at all levels have a responsibility to uphold standards. In making decisions relating to misconduct, leaders must evaluate each case on its own merits.

**Health of Special Operations Forces**

**51. What is your assessment of the health and readiness of SOF?**

U.S. SOF are the most capable special operations forces in the world. This is an achievement that would not be possible without a strong foundation of health and readiness. To maintain this, if confirmed, I will ensure the USSOCOM force continues to have access to the range of services provided by the command's Preservation of the Force and Families (POTFF) program.

**52. If confirmed, what will be your priorities in addressing the stress on SOF?**

If confirmed, first and foremost, I will continue the efforts of my predecessors with respect to POTFF. We ask people to do difficult things, and this produces stress – we owe

our teammates resources to help with stress. The SOF enterprise knows from hard learned lessons the importance of managing operational tempo and giving our warriors the resources and opportunities to reset and strengthen their minds, bodies, and spirits. If confirmed, my priorities will include closely monitoring the health and wellbeing of the force through screening and data, initiatives that cultivate an empathetic culture of self and buddy care, sustaining POTFF resources, and investing in innovations to improve the physical, psychological, and cognitive performance of SOF.

**53. If confirmed, what steps will you undertake to address suicides in SOF?**

Even one suicide in our formation is one too many. With the cessation of large-scale combat operations, suicide is now the leading cause of deaths among our service members. Suicide is preventable. Prevention requires involved leaders, peers, and subordinates; constant vigilance; the willingness to ask incisive questions; and access to mental healthcare and spiritual guidance. If confirmed, I will assess, and enhance as required, routine screening and resources for mental health, cognitive impairment, and interpersonal relationship problems – and to increase continuity of care between caregivers. The cultural measures we take – to increase empathy and decrease the stigma of asking for help – also have a tremendous positive impact. In my current command, I am proud to report nearly 50% of personnel have visited and used mental health services, a high rate unprecedented in my career, and not always for acute care but to increase resilience and performance.

**54. What is your understanding of the USSOCOM's Preservation of the Force and Families program?**

The POTFF program is a powerful capability for the USSOCOM enterprise, augmenting Service-provided efforts. We must continue to care for our people – particularly those who have been injured on the battlefield – and their families. Having benefited from the POTFF program as a Commander, I understand and appreciate the value of having embedded, multidisciplinary teams within our formations. The POTFF construct provides top-quality physical and psychological care to our members, and the spiritual and family services enhance the belongingness and interpersonal relationships of our members and their families. I understand that in FY24 some 89% of SOF members were served by the POTFF program, and that USSOCOM's data showed positive results in physical performance and reduced severity of injuries, better mental health access, improved cognitive functioning and deeper family and community connections.

**Recruiting and Retention**

**55. What are the biggest challenges to retention you see in the USSOCOM community?**

In my current role, I have limited visibility on USSOCOM's recruiting and retention challenges, but if confirmed, I will examine this issue closely, in partnership with the

Services. I anticipate one of the biggest challenges to retention in the SOF community is competition from the civilian workforce. To mitigate this, SOF rely on Service compensation policies as a significant contributor to retain the best and most qualified members. Continued support of compensation policies can only serve to sustain our already positive retention rates. However, service members assessed into SOF have already demonstrated their propensity to serve and are some of the most innovative and adaptive problem solvers in the world. We improve retention and our collective capability by providing SOF service members with a purposeful mission and venues that empower their innovative nature – from training ranges at home to our most sophisticated adversaries at the forward edge of the battlefield.

**56. What steps need to be taken, in your view, to meet the recruiting and retention goals of each of the services' SOF?**

If confirmed, I will conduct a holistic assessment with the USSOCOM team and Services to better understand recruiting and retention issues. Recruiting new service members falls under the purview of each of the Services, and it is evident that they are taking the recruiting challenge seriously. I fully support and applaud the actions that all the Services are taking to ensure that we appeal to today's youth, from compensation and benefit reviews that bolster both recruiting and retention, to studying the factors that disqualify young Americans from serving – such as physical, medical, and educational requirements. I am confident the Services are making positive progress on these challenges, with beneficial downstream effects on SOF's overall readiness and manning.

**Capabilities of Special Operations Forces and General Purpose Forces**

**57. What is your assessment of the mix of responsibilities assigned to general purpose and SOF, particularly with respect to security force assistance and building partner military capabilities?**

Both SOF and GPF have important and complementary roles in Building Partner Capacity (BPC) and Security Force Assistance (SFA) missions; and both have demonstrated their ability to conduct these missions across the globe. It is likely that both SOF and GPF will continue to prove vital to the Department's approach to campaigning. In general, SOF is designed for, and best utilized, as small teams in contested or politically sensitive areas to achieve low-cost, high-return results with partner nations. Because SOF is a high demand, low density force, it is often necessary to use GPF for SFA and BPC missions at larger scale. In my experience, GPF are most effective when specially-trained to deliver conventional capabilities to foreign military forces – and in environments where U.S. presence is acceptable to the host-country government. Both GPF and SOF are utilized in the conduct of security cooperation for BPC under 10 U.S.C. §333 and other Chapter 16 security cooperation authorities.

**Special Operations Enabling Capabilities**

**58. In your view, how should the responsibility for providing enabling capabilities for special operations missions be divided between USSOCOM and the services?**

In my 34-years of experience within the SOF community, the 5th SOF Truth, “most special operations require non-SOF support,” has proven accurate. USSOCOM and SOF units depend on the Services in a wide variety of ways, from administrative needs including recruiting, personnel, and logistics, to operational needs such as Service-common equipment and training. In return, SOF serve as a vanguard for the Services, integrating unique capabilities into operational plans and creating military options that conventional forces cannot readily provide. The symbiotic relationship between SOF and the Services is a critical variable in the success or failure of both special and conventional operations. This dynamic also highlights the importance of ASD(SO/LIC) providing oversight and advocacy in a role comparable to that of a service secretary. If confirmed, I pledge to partner with the Services – in close collaboration with ASD(SO/LIC) – to bring outsized return-on-investment and value to the Services and the Joint Force.

**59. How would you ensure that the enabler requirements of SOF are appropriately communicated to, and receive support, from the services?**

The Joint Staff Global Force Management Process provides the appropriate means to communicate special operations requirements for Service support and allows DoD leadership to consider the strategic risk associated with the allocation of forces. If confirmed, I would also leverage the Special Operations Policy and Oversight Council – in cooperation with ASD(SO/LIC) – to address any support concerns with the Services.

**60. Do you believe USSOCOM and the services are maintaining adequate enabling capabilities to support special operations missions?**

If confirmed, I will assess this topic in greater detail and provide transparency and recommendations to ASD(SO/LIC) and the Department. USSOCOM and the Services are adjusting their structure and focus to align with strategic guidance, with downstream effects on SOF enabling capabilities.

**Interagency Collaboration**

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

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



**your view, are applicable to efforts against China and Russia?**

In my view, the most important lesson learned from recent decades of combat in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere is the importance of relationships – within DoD, with other U.S. departments and agencies, and with foreign allies and partners. Whether fighting insurgents, conducting counterterrorism operations, competing against and deterring China and Russia, combating non-state actors, assisting allies and partners, or preparing for large scale combat, special operations is most often a team sport. With decades of combat experience and credibility, SOF's long-term relationships are directly applicable to efforts against China and Russia. These relationships are foundational to SOF's ability to provide the Joint Force with placement and access, enhanced understanding, and increased options in competition, crisis, and conflict.

**Supported Combatant Command**

**62. Under certain circumstances and subject to direction by the President or Secretary of Defense, USSOCOM may operate as a supported combatant command.**

**In your view, under what circumstances should USSOCOM conduct operations as a supported combatant command?**

In my view, USSOCOM's primary role is to provide trained and ready SOF to Combatant Commanders with physical areas of responsibility to execute operations in support of their respective theater objectives. By exception, and if directed by the Secretary and President, USSOCOM could be designated as the supported combatant command, particularly when crisis response operations are trans-regional and dynamic, or when exquisite sensitive capabilities may be employed. However, this has not been the historical norm.

**63. In your view, what resource, organization, and force structure changes, if any, are required in order for USSOCOM to more effectively conduct both supporting and supported combatant command responsibilities?**

If confirmed, and using the INDSG and other strategic guidance as a guide, I will conduct a holistic review of the SOF enterprise resource, organization, and force structure, and make appropriate adjustments and recommendations to the Department in close coordination with ASD(SO/LIC) and the Services.

**Theater Special Operations Commands**

**64. Based on your professional military experience, how would you characterize the benefits of a dedicated special operations component to a geographic combatant command in providing responsive special operations planning and capabilities in**

**support of the combatant command's theater campaign plan and associated requirements?**

As a former commander of Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT), I know firsthand the crucial role our TSOC's play in support of Combatant Commands' campaign plans. TSOCs are the primary theater SOF organization responsible for planning, executing, and controlling theater special operations in support of their respective Combatant Commands. Similarly, TSOC Commanders also serve as the senior SOF representative on Combatant Command staffs responsible for advising Combatant Commanders on the best use of SOF in support of theater campaign plans and any other emergent theater operational or training requirements.

**Civilian Casualties**

**65. In your view, what are the primary challenges for the combatant commands in mitigating, investigating, and responding to allegations of civilian casualties resulting from U.S. military operations?**

Minimizing civilian harm is one of the core purposes of the Law of Armed Conflict, and crucial for maintaining local support, strengthening partnership, and denying adversaries exploitable propaganda. Civilian casualties are never routine – every civilian death is a tragedy, and we will always take feasible precautions to mitigate CIVCAS – and every time we fail, we will examine where and how we failed and adjust our processes to mitigate civilian casualties to the best of our ability. In my experience, the mitigation, investigation, and reporting of civilian casualties have been improved through measures such as the use of training, technology (weaponizing and modeling), refined processes, and dedicated personnel and funding. If confirmed, I will prioritize the minimization of civilian harm, and I will provide feedback and recommendations on the associated challenges to the Department, in close coordination with ASD(SO/LIC) and supported Combatant Commands.

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

USSOCOM actively works with supported Combatant Commands to ensure all CIVCAS incidents and allegations are promptly investigated and reported. USSOCOM has subject matter experts who are involved in responding to all allegations of civilian harm in accordance with Department of Defense policy, and in identifying potential trends of issues specific to SOF. If confirmed, and when USSOCOM forces are operating under another Combatant Command's operational authority, I will emphasize full cooperation with that command's processes to ensure we are taking all appropriate action to investigate and resolve civilian harm allegations.

**67. 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.**

**68.**

The Civilian Harm Assessment Cells (CHAC) at Combatant Commands are organized to ensure that they are not part of the targeting process, to maintain a degree of separation that enables an impartial review of civilian harm allegations. At the same time, these CHAC personnel, by working as part of the staff, maintain real-time awareness of operations, policies, battle rhythm, battle damage assessments, civilian damage estimates, and have access to all relevant information regarding military operations, including classified material that requires special access. In my judgment, this ensures the CHACs are well-positioned to evaluate all civilian harm allegations thoroughly and in a timely manner, while maintaining their impartiality. This model provides commanders with maximum flexibility and discretion to assign and oversee incidents of civilian harm and results in more relevant investigations as the personnel understand the organization, policy, and processes involved, and have the expertise to make relevant recommendations to create institutional change. Additionally, partnerships with civilian non-governmental organizations can provide important access to information on civil context in and around battlefields.

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

USSOCOM forces conduct combat operations under the operational authority of a combatant commander with a physical area of responsibility. USSOCOM provides required inputs to Congress via Combatant Commanders with physical areas of responsibility and the Joint Staff. This report is submitted annually by USD(P). These reports include specific operational details, such as the date, location, and the number of civilian deaths and/or injuries that occurred, among other relevant details.

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

Ex gratia is an expression of condolence or sympathy with the aim to maintain good relationships with the local community. There are many factors to consider when making the decision to use ex gratia funds including the extent of harm, local culture, local economic situation, the ability to confirm the identity of the affected individuals, and the command's ability to communicate with them. There are also the considerations that an ex-gratia payment could put those individuals in danger, or that the payments could be diverted to support terrorist activities. There are cases when ex gratia payments are appropriate due to damage or destruction of property, or injury or death due to U.S. military operations. In my view, while ex gratia is a means to maintain positive relationships with affected communities, it must be weighed against potential risks to the recipients and/or future operations.

## **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 with a simple yes or**

**no.**

Yes.

**Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress? Please answer with a simple yes or no.**

Yes.