

Senate Armed Services Committee
Advance Policy Questions for Vice Admiral Charles B. Cooper II, USN
Nominee for Appointment to the Grade of Admiral and to be Commander, United States
Central Command

Duties and Qualifications

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

The commander of U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) is responsible for directing and overseeing U.S. military operations, activities, and investments across the USCENTCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR), spanning the Middle East, parts of Central and South Asia, and key maritime chokepoints. The USCENTCOM commander exercises command authority to direct subordinate units and assigned forces to carry out its assigned missions. The commander gives authoritative direction over all aspects of military operations and administrative and support functions. This includes control of resources and equipment, internal organization training, and ensuring the discipline required for the commands readiness to carry out those missions. These duties are performed under the authority, direction and control of the Secretary of Defense and subject to the direction of the President.

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

I have been honored to serve our nation, our service members and their families for 36 years around the globe. I have served on guided-missile cruisers, guided-missile destroyers, aircraft carriers, amphibious assault ships, and commanded at every echelon in our Navy. I have also had the honor of commanding operational forces from Japan and Korea to Bahrain and serving on the ground in Afghanistan. Over the past four years, I have lived in and led operations across the CENTCOM region, commanding maritime forces and now serving as USCENTCOM's deputy commander. I have also previously served ashore with our nation's strategic decision makers in the White House, Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Navy's Chief of Legislative Affairs. The confluence of all these experiences has provided me with a deep understanding of regional dynamics, the complexities of joint and combined operations, and the importance of partner engagement and strategic communication. I have worked closely with interagency teams, led multinational coalitions, and built enduring relationships with regional partners. If confirmed, I will bring all these experiences to bear in executing the duties of this role to build on our successes, capitalize on the opportunities before us and secure our vital national interests.

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

If confirmed, I will deepen my engagement with regional partners, interagency leaders, and Members of Congress. I will continue to consult with my USCENTCOM teammates, Joint Staff, Office of the Secretary of Defense, and other key stakeholders to ensure I am best informed and positioned to perform the duties of USCENTCOM commander. I will ensure that I remain attuned to evolving strategic dynamics, technological innovation, and the legislative landscape. I will build upon the strong relationships with our allies and regional partners to gain their valuable insights and ensure a comprehensive understanding of ongoing initiatives and challenges across the AOR. I've been laser focused on the Central region for the last four years, and I lived in it for three quarters of that time, but I'm also a lifelong learner. The unique knowledge and skillsets of our DoD, interagency and foreign teammates will be key to continually enhancing my expertise.

Major Challenges Problems, and Priorities

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

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

If confirmed, I will command our Joint Force in a region that has seen its most volatile security situation in the past half century, where state and nonstate actors continue to threaten U.S. interests and regional stability. The challenge lies in balancing the imperative to establish enduring deterrence and protect the U.S. homeland from threats emanating from the Middle East, while maintaining focus on strategic competition with China. Confronting these challenges while understanding that we are operating in a resource constrained environment will require difficult decisions by the Department. I am prepared to be an engaged part of the conversation.

The region faces profound and persistent challenges. Examples include the threat posed by Iran and its proxy networks, violent extremist organizations like ISIS and al-Qaeda, instability in fragile states, and strategic competition from China across infrastructure, arms, and digital spheres.

At the same time, real opportunities exist. Many of our partners are more capable, willing and interoperable than ever before. Our enduring partnerships, combined with innovative integration of emerging technologies, present a path to sustain deterrence and advance U.S. strategic objectives with a more agile footprint.

5. If confirmed, what plans do you have for addressing these challenges and

problems?

If confirmed, first and foremost I will stay laser-focused on homeland defense, ensuring that threats from groups like ISIS, AQAP, and Iranian proxies are disrupted before they can reach our shores. I will focus on building momentum in areas where we already see progress, such as deepening regional partnerships, integrating innovative technologies into our operations, and positioning USCENTCOM as both a warfighting command and a convener of regional stability.

I will leverage multilateral relationships and USCENTCOM's convening power with our partners to deter adversaries and respond decisively to threats together. I will launch new initiatives that advance our overmatch through the employment of cutting-edge technologies, including AI-enabled, unmanned platforms and digital integration. Ultimately, we must protect our homeland, counter malign influence, ensure freedom of navigation, compete strategically, and ensure USCENTCOM remains a combat-credible force for security in the region.

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

If confirmed, my priorities would include defending the homeland forward, deterring conflict and competing strategically. These priorities are tied to meaningful outcomes. Defending the homeland forward means that no threat emanating from this region reaches the United States; deterring conflict means supporting stability in the region and our partners are increasingly capable of defending their own territories and interests with us standing beside them rather than in front of them; and competing strategically means we remain the partner of choice. These priorities would be enabled by strengthening our partnerships to increase interoperability and driving innovation to field the latest warfighting tools into warfighter hands at the speed of relevance. Failure would be characterized by strategic surprise, partner disengagement, or unchecked adversary influence.

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

If confirmed, I would prioritize a whole of government approach, ensuring that USCENTCOM operations are closely aligned with the strategic objectives of interagency partners. Success in the Central region demands not only military precision, but also diplomatic and developmental coherence. I would seek alignment with interagency partners to ensure security activities reinforce diplomatic and development goals. I would hold regular dialogue with civilian counterparts. I would work to institutionalize regular coordination mechanisms at every level of the command, foster shared situational awareness, and promote integrated planning across military and civilian lines of effort. USCENTCOM's efforts will be designed to complement and empower whole-of-government objectives.

U.S. Strategic Objectives

8. What is your understanding of the 2025 Interim Nation Defense Strategic Guidance (INDSG) and its implications for the CENTCOM AOR?

The INDSG prioritizes defense of the American homeland and scopes the Department's sole pacing threat as China. To accomplish its desired ends, the INDSG lays out a force planning construct and three lines of effort: defend the homeland, deter China, and increase burden sharing. The INDSG also emphasizes de-risking America's defense industry. The INDSG establishes China as the sole pacing threat, while acknowledging that Iran is closer than ever to obtaining a nuclear weapon and its proxies remain active, as do terrorist groups, such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda. These are threats which the United States cannot afford to ignore.

For USCENTCOM, this translates to deterring threats forward before they ever reach our shores, deterring conflict, and limiting aggressive adversary influence. USCENTCOM efforts currently align within INDSG guidance to defend the homeland, particularly through our coalition and bilateral counter-terrorism efforts and regional security constructs. While the Indo-Pacific is prioritized globally, 19 of the 21 global violent extremist organizations that threaten the homeland are in the CENTCOM AOR, and our efforts in the region must remain the forward line of homeland defense. USCENTCOM contingency and campaign planning also align with INDSG guidance. In line with the INDSG, CENTCOM must maintain regional security through a more sufficient, sustainable posture, smarter use of technology, and greater reliance on regional partners.

9. What is your understanding of U.S. strategic objectives in the CENTCOM AOR and what role do you believe CENTCOM should play in supporting these objectives?

The U.S. strategic objectives in the CENTCOM AOR, are (1) defend the homeland, (2) deter China, (3) increase burden-sharing, and burden-shifting (4) prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, and (5) support Israel's ability to defend itself.

USCENTCOM has a major role in homeland defense, deterring and defeating threats that emanate from the Central region before they ever reach our shores. This is achieved through multiple counter-terrorism missions throughout the region, like the Defeat ISIS (D-ISIS) mission in Iraq and Syria, among others.

USCENTCOM's strategic vision of an integrated Middle East directly supports the desire for increased burden sharing. It is facilitated by our mil-to-mil relationships, and frequent bilateral and multilateral engagements. Key to this is integrating and harnessing partner capabilities and cooperation that shares the burden of regional defense. There has never been a greater opportunity to drive home these relationships and secure access and ways that China cannot match.

Our mil-to-mil relationship and regional security constructs also give the United States a

unique opportunity to discuss sensitive strategic requirements, with productive results and exercises; Access, Basing and Overflight (ABO); support to the Integrated Air Missile Defense of Israel; and intelligence sharing. During contingency operations, USCENTCOM and key allies could hold the flow of Middle East energy supplies to China at risk.

Israel currently carries the torch to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, but if directed, USCENTCOM can rapidly employ a range of conventional and regular warfare options to prevent this from happening. Finally, USCENTCOM can capitalize on its relationships with other regional partners and provide support to the defense of Israel as demonstrated by the successful defense of Israel during Iran's multiple state-on-state attacks.

Overall, USCENTCOM plays a vital role in supporting U.S. strategic objectives in the region. Its partnerships, geographic advantages, and military capabilities make it an essential component of U.S. national security strategy.

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

Great-power competition in the USCENTCOM AOR encompasses all efforts aimed at preserving and enhancing our strategic position to protect U.S. national interests. It includes efforts to (1) cultivate and maintain our strategic partnerships to deny competitor's influence; (2) ensure the necessary access, basing, and overflight is available for the Joint Force; (3) gain and maintain influence and positional advantage, relative to our strategic opponents; and (4) participating in the Joint Capabilities Integration and Decision System (JCIDS) to ensure warfighting capabilities meet great power competition requirements in the USCENTCOM AOR. These efforts enhance U.S. regional influence and contribute to national integrated deterrence objectives through effective signaling, synchronized operations, and focused posture.

11. Are U.S. policies and programs, as applicable to the CENTCOM AOR, appropriate to ensure the United States can succeed in great power competition in the CENTCOM AOR? Are there additional measures we should be considering? What do you perceive as the areas of highest risk?

Policies and programs are in place to ensure CENTCOM can cultivate necessary relationships to ensure the Joint Force can execute assigned missions and protect U.S. national interests. But there is risk to our status as partner of choice, which is a key enabler to success in great power competition. The Foreign Military Sales (FMS) process, in particular, is one of the most effective mechanisms to strengthen relationships

and improve interoperability to effectively deter our adversaries. However, it is a constant source of frustration, which provides opportunity for our competitors to offer attractive alternatives. China, for example, continues to exercise greater diplomatic and economic influence in the region, which is then leveraged to challenge U.S. security interests. I support the administration's initiative to reform the FMS system, and I have energetically engaged with industry to complement these efforts. Continued efforts to ensure our partners can quickly and adequately support their real security needs, combined with effective mil-to-mil relationships and security cooperation activities, will ensure we maintain our status as partner of choice and are best positioned to compete – and win – strategically.

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

In my time as Deputy Commander, USCENTCOM has been heavily reliant upon the Services to meet funding and resource requirements to remain lethal and adaptable in an ever-changing strategic environment. It is challenging to balance requirements with limited resources and high demands in a resource and fiscally constrained environment across the Joint Force. In the USCENTCOM AOR, many successes in countering VEOs are directly attributable to the authorities and funds appropriated by Congress, such as the Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF). The removal of leaders in ISIS is directly attributable to the training and equipping we provide to our Iraqi and Syrian partners. Continuing these authorities, along with properly funding them at necessary levels, will be key to maintaining the defeat of ISIS.

USCENTCOM has strived to have an open dialogue with the Joint Staff and Congress on areas where shortfalls are assessed and if confirmed, I commit to maintaining a strong dialogue. While the Fiscal Year 2026 funding levels have yet to be determined and the Fiscal Year 2027 National Defense Authorization Act is being developed, USCENTCOM appreciates any additional means and support to maintain predictability, field innovative capabilities, and increase lethality across our forces in the region.

13. If confirmed, what would you do to enhance efforts to support U.S. strategic objectives in CENTCOM?

If confirmed, I will complete a holistic assessment of CENTCOM's challenges and operations across all domains and throughout the region in consultation with allies, partners, and embassy country teams.

I will provide my assessment and recommendations to the Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on major challenges and opportunities facing the USCENTCOM AOR, as I see them. I will further share those observations with our defense oversight committees and other congressional members and staff, as applicable.

Furthermore, I will review resource requirements and continue to assess the opportunity to relook and right-size our posture to accomplish the mission assigned to USCENTCOM and protect our national security interests.

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

The two areas are not mutually exclusive. We need to seek areas where the two intersect and can complement each other, such as expanded counter-terrorism (CT) missions or broaden joint exercise opportunities, to deepen our relationships with our partners and expand their capacity. Increasing FMS and system interoperability is another area that can deter VEOs through improved partner capability and strengthen our relationships across the region. Expanded partner relationships will make them more reticent to accept or tolerate Russian and Chinese influences.

Afghanistan

15. What do you view as U.S. strategic interests in Afghanistan?

In my view, the primary U.S. strategic interest in Afghanistan is defense of the homeland, specifically to prevent terrorist safe havens that threatens the U.S. homeland and our regional partners. ISIS-K continues to operate in Afghanistan, and demonstrate the ability to direct, inspire, and enable terrorists worldwide. Supporting the State Department's continued diplomatic engagements with Afghanistan remain vital to U.S. national interests in Afghanistan.

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

It is right to capture lessons learned from Afghanistan, to include challenges that all aspects of our military mission faced throughout that period. It is also my view that advise, train, and assist missions remain a viable – and often vital – component of strategy. One example is the D-ISIS mission. The advise, train, and assist mission undertaken with our Syrian and Iraqi partners was key to the liberation of vast swaths of territory and millions of people from the tyranny of the ISIS caliphate, denying the violent extremist group the safe haven to plan and launch attacks against the U.S. homeland. The mission continues to pay off today. Our Syrian partners are crucial to providing security for 8,300 ISIS detainees and 32,000 internally displaced persons and facilitating repatriations to buy down risk. Our Iraqi D-ISIS partners continue to target and remove ISIS leadership in partnered operations with our forces – in March of this year, a partnered operation eliminated the global ISIS number two leader in Anbar province.

Another example is our support to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), for which there is no alternative in Lebanon. Our investments continue to pay off following the

disintegration of Lebanese Hezbollah and provided the rare chance to finally turn the page on the terrorist group's malign influence over Lebanon's security and that of the region. These opportunities are directly attributable to our advise, train, and assist missions, which enable burden sharing, lessen demand on U.S. forces, and provide the opportunity to right-size our posture in the region.

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

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

Pakistan

18. What is your assessment of the strategic relationship between the United States and Pakistan?

The relationship between the United States and Pakistan is complex and dynamic, and the military-to-military relationship is vital for U.S. security interests – especially to counter VEOs. Our counter terrorism cooperation has directly enabled the capture of multiple high value ISIS-K individuals, including the planner behind the Abbey Gate suicide attack that took the lives of thirteen Americans. Our military relationship is strong and will only become more relevant as the Taliban continues to face security challenges within its borders and ISIS-K continues to exploit the porous border areas between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

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

The U.S. and Pakistan have mutual security issues which are critical to a stable and prosperous Pakistan, particularly one free from internal terrorist and extremist threats. Pakistan has made significant progress in combating terrorism within its borders, and we appreciate their efforts to target groups like ISIS-K and other extremist organizations and I believe we can build on this progress to further degrade and defeat terrorist organizations in the region. USCENTCOM maintains a strong connection with Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, and we have a history of openness and transparency during times of heightened tension.

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

During my role as Deputy Commander, I have observed General Kurilla maintaining a

consistent relationship with his counterpart in Pakistan, the Chief of Army Staff Field Marshall Munir. If confirmed, I will continue that relationship. As in the past, we can communicate and work together to ensure regional stability. Continued support to FMS projects allows us to elevate our relationship, as well as support Pakistan's procurement of military equipment needs for their counter terrorism fight. By showing the United States is a reliable partner through cooperation, training, and equipment sales, we will deepen mutual trust and find additional ways to collaborate on the shared CT fight.

Central Asia

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

I believe Russia and China seek to increase their influence and access in Central Asia at the expense of U.S. interests. The potential for Salafi extremist expansion in the region remains a concern for both countries, who are seeking to fill the presence vacuum through diplomatic, informational, military, and economic levers. Russia considers Central Asia as within its sphere of influence and views the region as a security buffer against unwanted United States, European, and Chinese influence. Meanwhile, Beijing seeks access to Central Asian resources, to expand the use of Central Asian transportation infrastructure, and to counter perceived security threats. Beijing does not desire to be a regional security guarantor and is focused on threats that directly affect China while capitalizing on Russia's approach to perceived regional threats.

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

Central Asia provides significant opportunity to influence Russian and Chinese actions with measured, limited investments of time, talent, and equipment as Central Asian countries are all diversifying their security relationships and equipment. This is an opportune time for the United States to increase its influence, access, and placement that can promote U.S. interests, strengthen sovereignty, while also contesting adversarial influence within the region. USCENTCOM participates in a whole-of-government approach to strengthen our relationships in Central Asia. Increased cooperation should continue to focus on areas where U.S. and partners' interests intersect such as combating ISIS-K.

ISIS-K presents a formidable global External Operations (EXOPS) threat that requires a network of partners – such as Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan – to combat. The bad actors who call the region home are committed to harming Americans and their methods are not limited to direct attacks on our streets, rather encompassing multiple domains. Our Central Asian partners are all addressing threats emanating from Afghanistan and are seeking to expand their cooperation with the United States. Expanding on this

opportunity could create additional opportunity against ISIS-K networks in the Region.

We seek to expand and maintain our approach with sustainable resourcing to address multiple security concerns which is consistent with the themes of regional security, stability, and national sovereignty. We will use a patient, persistent and sustainable approach that employs security cooperation activities to create advantage for the United States. We will engage Central Asian partners at their pace and rapidly take advantage as opportunities present themselves.

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

I believe active engagement with our Central Asian partners is critical to advancing U.S. interests in the region. Given Russian and Chinese efforts to expand their access and influence, limiting our engagement would risk our own, particularly as our adversaries and competitors foment the U.S. “abandonment” narrative. I also believe that failure to engage in Central Asia increases risk to the homeland due to prevailing VEO threats.

Iraq and Syria

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

The security situation in Syria remains tenuous as the new government attempts to reconcile the various warring factions and reintegrate with the other regional governments. While still nascent, confidence building measures undertaken by the Syrian government continue to signal an intention to root-out malicious actors from within its borders. These include serious efforts to remove Iranian aligned threat groups from Syria that threaten its fragile stability. I am concerned about the potential for continued turmoil providing space for ISIS to regenerate and refill their ranks. Syrian leadership is focused on gaining broad international acceptance and is unlikely to get involved in the ongoing Israel-Iran conflict. Russia is mostly repositioning from the sudden downfall of its longtime ally and is attempting to retain a foothold in Syria – the new government is in the process of negotiating terms but consider the negotiations low priority at this time.

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

The military's mission in Syria is to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS working by, with, and through, our regional partners. Although the so-called physical caliphate is territorially defeated, the group has transitioned to an insurgency that possesses a diminished but persistent threat to the U.S. homeland, our allies, and the stability of our regional partners. This continued threat is exemplified by recent attacks against the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Syrian Interim Authority.

26. How, if at all, does the fall of Assad and the transition to a new Syrian government change your assessment?

The Assad regime's fall and ongoing political transition represents an accelerated opportunity to achieve the defeat of ISIS and further U.S. national security objectives while reducing risk to force by incorporating a whole-of-government approach to support Syrian security and stability under a new Syrian government.

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

Conditions on the ground should determine troop levels in all operations and there are always a series of operational factors that must be considered. Risk to force and risk to mission must be considered in locations such as Syria where minimal U.S. and partner force footprint exist.

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

I assess Iraq's security and political situation remains fragile, particularly as the hostilities between Iran and Israel continue. Iran and Iran-aligned militia groups remain the most direct threat to U.S. forces and interests in Iraq. Those same entities threaten to undermine the Iraqi government while undercutting the Iraqi Security Forces. ISIS in Iraq remains a credible threat to Iraqi security and our partners in Iraq remain crucial to D-ISIS efforts and enabling the repatriation of ISIS prisoners and displaced persons.

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

The primary U.S. objective in Iraq is moving towards a stable and sustainable bilateral relationship with the Government of Iraq. The strategy relies on a whole-of-government approach, to include a military focus on the development of capable, self-reliant, and accountable security forces, supported by and accountable to the Government of Iraq.

Iran

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

Iran remains the primary and enduring threat to security and stability in the USCENTCOM AOR through its use of increasingly sophisticated military capabilities and broad network of proxies and partners. As seen in the current ongoing conflict, Tehran's primary power projection tools are its vast ballistic missile and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) inventories. Iran's missile inventory includes both medium and short-range ballistic missiles capable of holding many regional targets at risk. Tehran's rapidly expanding UAV inventory – and its willingness to export this capability to partners and proxies – advance its power base and builds strategic depth. Iran also

processes a formidable maritime capability that is capable of disrupting energy infrastructure and lines of communication.

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

U.S. military forces have surged into the USCENTCOM AOR during the current crisis, and I am confident they are prepared to deter Iran, defend our partners, and, if directed, respond to Iranian offensive actions. If confirmed, I will continuously evaluate the dynamic Iranian threat and request additional forces as needed to protect U.S. national security interests and carry out the orders of the President and the Secretary of Defense.

32. In your view, what impact would a nuclear armed Iran have on regional security?

A nuclear-armed Iran would likely have significant destabilizing military and diplomatic consequences. If Iran acquires a nuclear weapon, other countries in the region would likely seek to develop or acquire their own to balance power, sparking a regional arms race and undermining the global non-proliferation regime. Iran would be able to further threaten U.S. Forces and U.S. interests in the AOR. A strategically stronger Iran could also embolden its proxy/partner groups, creating further instability. The risk of miscalculation and accidents would likely also rise. Additionally, the balance of power would shift, as Iran would become a global hegemon and maintain regional dominance for many years. Iran's nuclear weapons capability would alter its position in strategic and economic negotiations very likely leading to increased geopolitical tensions and instability. Diplomatic efforts with Iran could become more challenging, reducing chances for peaceful resolution on contentious issues.

33. What is your understanding of national Security Presidential Memorandum (NSPM-2), dated February 4, 2025, regarding Iran, and CENTCOM's roles and responsibilities in support of NSPM-2?

NSPM-2 represents a comprehensive whole-of-government directive to impose maximum pressure on the Iranian regime. It integrates economic sanctions, legal authorities, export controls, law enforcement, and diplomatic tools to deny Iran a nuclear weapon, counter its regional aggression, and disrupt its proxy networks.

It is USCENTCOM's role to provide military solutions to problems that are posed in pursuit of our nation's political objectives. To that end, USCENTCOM will provide military options as directed.

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

First, based on the current Israeli Iranian conflict, there is great uncertainty. If confirmed, I will assess the current regional environment and state of Iranian Regime to determine military options, both traditional and irregular approaches, to counter Iran's conventional military capabilities. Universally, I would recommend applying pressure across all elements of national power – Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic – and implementing a multifaceted approach with our allies and partners targeted at mitigating Iranian influence in the region. Considering current events, we now have an unprecedented opportunity to advance the vision of a prosperous and integrated Middle East in which U.S. national interests are advanced and Iran's violent attempts to upend this peaceful order are permanently defeated. Key to this is integrating and harnessing partner capabilities and increasing collaboration and cooperation that connects the Gulf and the Levant regions in a substantive way that shares the burden of regional defense. There has never been a greater opportunity to drive home these relationships and comprehensively counter Iran's behavior.

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

U.S. military posture in the region serves an important role in unifying a coalition of regional partners and provides a counterbalance to Iran's malign regional influence. As the security situation in the region evolves, so will U.S. force posture requirements. This includes increased force presence during times of crisis, such as during the current conflict between Iran and Israel, and a potentially reduced presence as threats diminish. Even in times of relative stability, sustaining military ties with regional partners enhances the United States' deterrence efforts and ability to respond to crisis.

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

As I write this, Iran is launching ballistic missiles at Israel. Iran's missile program increases the threat to U.S. forces and interests in the region, as well as the security of our allies and partners. Iran views its ballistic missile arsenal as a key deterrent to external aggression, compensating for limitations in other conventional capabilities, and providing a strategic strike option, as we've seen play out against Israel, as Iran's traditional proxy strategy fell into disarray.

The United States and regional partners are well postured to counter the Iranian ballistic missile threat. USCENTCOM employs a regional security construct with our AOR partners to increase all-domain awareness and deter, de-escalate, and, if called upon, defeat Iranian aerial threats. The construct includes arrangements for information sharing and early warning of threats to facilitate protection. We use the spectrum of kinetic, non-kinetic, left-of-launch, and missile in flight options to defeat air and missile threats.

37. What is your assessment of Iran’s support of international terrorism and proxy forces throughout the CENTCOM AOR?

Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Quds Force (QF), Intelligence Organization (IO), and Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) support international terrorism and proxy forces in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon through the proliferation of advanced conventional weapons and destabilizing actions. IRGC QF is responsible for covertly organizing, supporting, and – at times – leading proxy and partner forces to best support Iran’s goals. This is primarily accomplished through the IRGC QF’s regional departments – each headed by a commander – in Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen. These departments work with well-known partners (Lebanese Hizballah/Houthis), proxies (Iran-aligned militia groups) and surrogates (HAMAS/Palestinian Islamic Jihad) within the AOR. The IRGC IO and MOIS run operations—ranging from kidnappings to bombing to cyber-attacks – both in and outside of the USCENTCOM AOR. IRGC IO and MOIS attempt to covertly recruit assets within the USCENTCOM AOR for lethal operations. The IRGC-QF manages proxies and partners. Additionally, Iran allows some Al-Qaeda senior leaders to operate within the country to avoid counterterrorism pressure. We don’t anticipate this changing despite recent leadership losses.

Yemen

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

U.S. national security interests in Yemen are focused on Yemen’s location along strategic maritime routes, its position next to important U.S. allies, and the existence of terrorist organizations inside Yemen which present threats against the U.S. homeland. The present security vacuum in Yemen further serves to empower terrorist groups such as the Houthis, Iran’s Islamic Republican Guards Corps-Quds Force, and Lebanese Hezbollah.

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

Though the Houthis have so far abided by the ceasefire negotiated on May 6, 2025, I assess the Houthis maintain the ability to attack and hold at risk U.S. and Partner interests, as well as the ability to disrupt freedom of navigation in the future. In the months following October 7, 2023, the Houthis conducted over 300 attacks on U.S. Navy and international merchant ships, employing hundreds of Anti-Ship Ballistic Missiles and UAVs, and dozens of Anti-Ship Cruise Missiles. In addition to targeting shipping, the Houthis directly targeted Israel, launching over 90 attacks using dozens of Land-Attack Cruise Missiles and Medium Range Ballistic Missiles and over a hundred UAVs against civilian targets. Through this designated Foreign Terrorist Organization, Iran retains the ability to close two strategic chokepoints and significantly impact nearly half of global commerce while benefiting U.S. competitors.

40. In your view, what role, if any, should the United States play in supporting the regional partners and allies against the Houthis?

Our actions against the Houthis up to this point have focused on reopening sea lines of communication for commercial shipping and re-establishing deterrence in the region, in line with the U.S. priority of maintaining Freedom of Navigation. We continue to monitor the Houthis adherence to their agreed upon cessation of maritime attacks and are standing by to provide any additional support to our partners and allies, if directed by the President.

41. What is your assessment of Operation Rough Rider? In your assessment, did the United States successfully deter the Houthis and restore freedom of navigation in the Red Sea?

The President had a very clear and specific objective for Operation ROUGH RIDER – to end attacks on U.S. forces and U.S. shipping in the Red Sea. The campaign achieved this end state. However, we are clear-eyed that all deterrence is temporal, and USCENTCOM stands ready to respond if the Houthis attack U.S. ships and assets.

On March 15, 2025, in response to the hundreds of missiles and UAVs fired at our forces, we began a large-scale operation against the Houthis – Operation ROUGH RIDER. Alongside our international partners, the 52 days of kinetic attacks and imposing costs on the Houthis set conditions for a diplomatic solution to restore Freedom of Navigation in the Red Sea and deterrence. The sustained, aggressive series of operations supported a whole of government efforts was designed to degrade Houthi leadership and capabilities, deny them the ability to impede merchant shipping, and ultimately compel them to cease their attacks. Our combined operations significantly degraded Houthi strike capabilities, command and control, and demonstrated U.S. resolve to assure Freedom of Navigation through this strategically important maritime chokepoint.

However, deterrence remains temporal and conditional. The Houthis retain strike capabilities, and their decision calculus is influenced by broader regional dynamics, including the Gaza conflict, Iranian strategic guidance, and the Israel-Iran conflict. The Houthis have openly stated that Israel's strikes on Iran could expand to a regional conflict while implying potential retaliation against U.S. interests if the Houthis perceive active U.S. involvement. Our ability to sustain deterrence depends on maintaining whole of government pressure to impose costs and maintaining credible response forces with continued support and engagement from key regional partner nations. USCENTCOM is closely monitoring Houthi adherence to the ceasefire and is ready to defend America's sailors and mariners as Freedom of Navigation returns to the region.

Egypt

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

Egypt is a key regional partner who provides access, basing, and overflight for U.S. Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines at the critical intersection of Europe, Middle East, and Africa. Since the signing of the 1979 Camp David Accords, Egypt views U.S. security assistance as the cornerstone of the U.S.-Egyptian partnership as well as a public litmus test for Egypt's standing in Washington. Approximately \$54 billion in foreign military financing in the last 40 years has built Egyptian military capacity to support U.S. regional interests. If Egypt is prioritized and resourced, this relationship will endure as a critical pillar of regional stability.

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

Grounded in its transformative peace with Israel, Egypt views itself as a strategic partner eager to align with U.S. priorities for a more stable and prosperous Middle East and Africa. Some recent examples included, Egypt has pressed for the release of all hostages held by Hamas, full implementation of the January 2025 Israel-Hamas ceasefire, and seeks to rally Arab efforts on a credible plan for rebuilding Gaza. Egypt's military routinely contributes to regional security, conducting counterterrorism operations, participating in multinational exercises in both USCENTCOM and USAFRICOM, and serves as a driving force in bringing other nations to participate in USCENTCOM's Regional Security Construct framework.

44. What is your assessment of Egypt's counterterrorism operations?

Egyptian counterterrorism forces are undergoing a reorganization and there have been limited opportunities for recent engagement. Their requests for counterterrorism engagements have increased for Fiscal Year 2026 and, if confirmed, I anticipate I will develop a more fulsome assessment of their capabilities and ongoing operations over the next fiscal year.

Lebanon

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

Following Israel's conflict with Hezbollah, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) are more capable of displacing Lebanese Hezbollah's influence than it has been in recent memory, although the LAF does not yet have the full capability and capacity to secure Lebanon's borders and prevent Lebanese Hezbollah from reconstituting. To achieve this, the LAF requires continued support and training to build a more capable and effective force to make sustainable progress towards securing the border with Syria, and long-term institutional support to build the LAF's capacity to sustain itself. A viable and capable LAF enables the Government of Lebanon to more effectively prevent a resurgence of Lebanese Hezbollah and promotes political stability and security, ultimately reducing the threat to Israel's northern border and contributing to regional stability.

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

The United States currently supports the LAF through various security cooperation programs under Title 10 and Title 22 authorities. To displace armed groups like Lebanese Hezbollah, the LAF must enhance its credibility and demonstrate its ability to maintain internal security and stability. To this end, the U.S. military security cooperation relationship with the LAF is critical in Lebanon and has broader impacts for the region. The LAF have consistently proven to be effective partners in the fight against ISIS and other violent extremist organizations whose networks pose a threat to the U.S. homeland. Supporting the LAF is a strategic investment in U.S. and Israeli security. A strong and capable LAF is essential to Lebanon's recovery and growth and can serve as the backbone of a stable, secure Lebanon.

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

The LAF is a capable and effective partner, as demonstrated particularly in the fight against ISIS between 2014 and 2017, when they denied ISIS territorial control within the borders of Lebanon. They continue to be an effective counter-ISIS force, securing borders and conducting internal operations, though resource constraints limit their capabilities. They use U.S.-provided equipment effectively and comply with all end use monitoring procedures and regulations. In addition, as economic conditions in Lebanon have deteriorated and impacted the LAF's ability to fund personnel expenses, the LAF have increasingly expressed a need for personnel-related funding, which USCENTCOM has limited authority to provide, except in relation to sustaining the defeat of ISIS.

48. What is your assessment of the LAF's relationship with Hezbollah?

Fears of a renewed civil war and Lebanese Hezbollah's political influence have historically dissuaded the LAF from taking direct action against the terrorist organization. However, the severe degradation of Hezbollah leadership and fighters by the IDF, combined with on-going ceasefire implementation efforts offer the opportunity to strengthen the LAF's position and empower it to reassert control over all Lebanese territory. USCENTCOM continues to advocate for efforts to reinforce the LAF and enable it to shoulder the burden of securing Lebanon against destabilizing non-state actors.

Combating terrorism

49. In your view, within the CENTCOM AOR, what do you consider to be the highest priorities to combat terrorism and violent extremism?

Overall, for VEOs, ISIS-Core and AQAP remain intent on assisting or directing subordinate branches and affiliates to conduct external operations against the United States and the West. AQAP maintains their intent on conducting EXOPs on the U.S.

homeland and the West. However, my current assessment is that AQ currently lacks the logistical capability to conduct directed EXOPs out of Yemen. As AQAP makes efforts to recover from the losses of safe-havens, camps, and senior leaders, I assess the group will focus on re-establishing these capabilities, conduct attacks on local forces, and advance their weaponized UAV capabilities.

Recently ISIS-Iraq and Syria suffered several severe setbacks as a result of a focused CT campaign. Key leadership removals have resulted in the loss of experience and knowledge. The removal of personnel focused on technological advances will limit innovation moving forward. I believe the group will likely rely on inspired operations and the organization will continue to focus on survival, fundraising activities, and reconstitution.

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

I assess ISIS, al-Qaeda, and their associated forces remain a persistent threat to the U.S. homeland and U.S. interests overseas. Both groups retain their ideologies and ambitions and encourage their networks, branches, and supporters to inspire, enable, or direct attacks worldwide. Moreover, the challenges and turmoil in the Levant, Middle East and Central Asia allow groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda the operational space to strengthen their position while creating opportunities to generate new threats to Europe and the U.S. Homeland.

51. What is your understanding of the Department's role in the U.S. strategy to combat terrorism and violent extremism in the CENTCOM AOR?

The DoD sets the policy for- and oversees a critical component of- national power to defeat our enemies and protect our interests and citizens. If confirmed, I will direct and manage the counterterrorism strategy in the AOR in close consultation with the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman, and the Commander of USSOCOM.

The DoD is an integral component in implementing the Interim national Defense Strategic Guidance (INDSG) where line of effort one is defend the homeland.

CENTCOM will implement the U.S. government's primary objective, defense of the homeland by combating terrorism by, with, and through our partners. Through security cooperation and capacity building, we can support partners' internal stability and counterterrorism capability, to protect our homeland from external terrorist threats.

Our regional security construct supports our partners in the Middle East and Central and South Asia to prevent the emergence or growth of terrorist capabilities through (1) counter-drug, (2) counter-threat finance, and (3) border security activities. As an institution, that regional security construct shares the burden in countering terrorist radicalization and recruitment, strengthening counterterrorism abilities of international partners.

52. Given your current knowledge of CENTCOM operations and activities, do you believe the Command's resources are aligned in a manner consistent with counterterrorism and countering violent extremism priorities?

CENTCOM continues to leverage counterterrorism and counter-VEO authorities and funding consistent with the President's and Secretary of Defense's priorities. This includes ongoing execution of the CTEF to support partner forces in Iraq and Syria and 10 U.S.C. § 127e programs to conduct counterterrorism operations through partner forces in the region. These CTEF and 127e programs are critical for maintaining the defeat of ISIS and countering other extremist threats.

Building Partner Capacity and Security Assistance

53. In your view, what should be our strategic objectives in building the capacities of partner nations in the CENTCOM AOR?

Our strategic objectives should focus on enhancing partner nation's security, stability, and self-sufficiency through tailored capability; capacity-building efforts; promoting regional cooperation; and maintaining strong relationships. Specifically, our partners should be organically capable of:

1. Securing and sustaining their own sovereign territory across the air, land, sea, space and cyber.
2. Maintaining an internal security environment such that they are not victims of, exporters of, or safe havens for violent extremism

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

Our partners in the AOR should be prepared to defend against adversaries, operate interchangeably with the United States and promote regional security and stability, not just with the United States, but also with one another. This effort requires consistent engagement to build capacity, define requirements, and oversee lifecycle management. Achieving the right level of capability for meaningful burden sharing is a key USCENTCOM effort.

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

Our Partners are on the front lines, directly engaging threats that seek to undermine their stability and threaten Americans at home and abroad. They have been the driving force behind critical diplomatic initiatives. Their unique skillset of brokering peace talks has encouraged breakthroughs in some of the region's most difficult issues resulting in

unprecedented progress toward peace, stability, and the saving of American lives. It is critical that we ensure alignment of these diplomatic and political efforts with implementation of technical, tactical, and operational capabilities to effectively support regional defense and stability.

Civilian Casualties

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

USCENTCOM has a team of civilian subject matter experts whose sole purpose is to assess, investigate and respond to all allegations of civilian harm. This team rigorously implements Department of Defense policy for responding to alleged civilian casualties. If confirmed, I will continue to devote careful attention to information or reports of civilian casualties and take all appropriate action to effectively investigate and resolve civilian casualty allegations.

57. 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.

The USCENTCOM Civilian Harm Assessment Cell (CHAC) is organized to ensure they are not part of the targeting process in order to maintain a degree of separation that enables an impartial review of civilian casualty allegations. At the same time, by working as part of the USCENTCOM staff, the CHAC personnel maintain real-time awareness of USCENTCOM 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 assessment, this ensures the CHAC is well positioned to evaluate all civilian casualty allegations thoroughly and in a timely manner, while maintaining their impartiality.

58. What is your understanding of CENTCOM's obligation to report civilian casualty incidents to Congress?

USCENTCOM is required to submit quarterly and annual reports to Congress via the Joint Staff describing civilian harm reports and their status. USCENTCOM provides input, through the Joint Staff, to the annual report to Congress detailing civilian casualties that resulted from U.S. military operations during the preceding year. This report is submitted annually by OSD (Policy). These reports must include specific operational details, such as the date, location, and the number of civilian deaths and/or injuries that occurred, among other relevant details.

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

Consistent with Department of Defense policy, USCENTCOM publishes reports regarding substantiated civilian casualty allegations on its public facing website on at least a quarterly basis. Combined Joint Task Force-Operation INHERENT RESOLVE also reports the results of all assessed civilian casualty reports on their public facing website. If confirmed, I will continue to ensure transparency and regular public reporting of the results civilian casualty allegations.

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

Ex gratia is an expression of condolences 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 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 the payments could be diverted to support terrorist activities. USCENTCOM considers ex gratia as part of any civilian casualty assessment or investigation and if it is clearly shown that harm to non-combatants resulted from U.S. operations, ex gratia may be appropriate. In recent years, USCENTCOM has recognized several instances where ex gratia is appropriate and has either paid or offered ex gratia. If confirmed, I will continue to ensure that ex gratia payments are considered and approved consistent with legal requirements and Department of Defense policy.

Strategic Communications and Information Operations

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

Operations in the information environment can be effective when they are planned with a specific military effect in mind and when integrated with other activities. Within USCENTCOM, we have seen success when we are able to scope our influence objectives to small audiences who have existing biases that can be exploited. This is typically mid-level leadership of adversary militaries and militia groups. The most effective means of influencing the region is through our robust partnerships. Over decades of hard work, we have built strong relationships within the region. Our partnerships enable access, basing and overflight and it is important that we foster and maintain close ties, so we are able to execute operations in times of need.

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

USCENTCOM has a series of internal reviews to ensure information operations are in line with policy guidance. All military information support operations (MISO) are coordinated across the CENTCOM and undergo detailed legal review. They are also staffed to interagency partners for concurrence. Additionally, USCENTCOM reports all MISO executions to the Joint Staff in quarterly and annual reports. If confirmed, I will continue to ensure full staffing and coordination within USCENTCOM and through the Joint Staff.

63. Do you believe CENTCOM and other agencies within the U.S. Government are appropriately organized to respond effectively to the messaging and influence efforts of our adversaries?

I believe we need a whole of government approach that is resourced and responsive. Information moves quickly and we need to have authorities, capabilities and narratives in-place so we can be proactive rather than reactive. One advantage that we have and that we can maintain is that USCENTCOM-attributed information is truthful and trusted across the region. However, USCENTCOM lacks the ability to operate at scale without additional resourcing.

64. What should be CENTCOM's approach to counter Chinese and Russian strategic narratives across the AOR?

Words and deeds matter. USCENTCOM has been able to highlight several instances where the United States supports our partners in times of need while Russia and China stand on the sidelines. Humanitarian assistance to Gaza, freedom of navigation in a strategic chokepoint, and theater missile defense are just a few recent examples of the U.S. commitment to the region. USCENTCOM continues to invest heavily in mil-to-mil relationships and our presence is felt across the region. Nations want to partner with the United States. A more streamlined Foreign Military Sales process would help expand on our influence in the region and prevent countries from turning to Russia and China when purchasing military equipment.

Interagency Collaboration

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

65. 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?

USCENTCOM benefits from U.S. interagency representatives within its headquarters and at component headquarters. Interagency Task Forces or similar structures have been integrated into past and current operations, contribute to the accomplishment of the

command's mission and mutually supporting national security objectives. These integration efforts have led to key lessons learned:

- **Need for a "whole of government" approach.** Collaboration between agencies enables more effective and efficient accomplishment of national security objectives.
- **Value of co-location.** Co-location facilitates information flow, drives common understanding of the problem, builds consensus, and consolidates unique expertise to meet national security challenges head-on.
- **Effectiveness of interagency collaboration on specific security issues.** Fusion cells and task forces like the Regional Narcotics Interagency Fusion Cell and Threat Finance Cells (Iraq, Afghanistan, and ISIS) demonstrated the effectiveness of interagency collaboration in disrupting key adversary capabilities.
- **Interagency coordination challenges.** Continuing challenges include restrictive data-sharing policies, siloed information systems, and varying priorities, cultures and organizational structures that lead to occasional misunderstandings and conflicts.
- **Value of international cooperation.** Whole of government collaboration with international partners enhances USCENTCOM's military partnerships and efforts to counter threats that transcend national or regional boundaries.

These lessons learned are not unique and they continue to apply to efforts against future threats, including those posed by Russia and China. An interagency, unified approach will continue to be necessary to address complex and evolving threats, while shared analytical platforms and standardized reporting protocols can help foster seamless collaboration and information sharing among relevant agencies. Interagency efforts can be enhanced by international cooperation, including coordinated diplomatic efforts, security cooperation initiatives, intelligence and law enforcement information sharing, and combined military planning to address mutually identified priorities.

Relations with Congress

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

Combatant commanders must maintain strong and transparent relationships with Congress, including the defense committees. As the Deputy Commander of United States Central Command and former head of Navy Legislative Affairs, I am intimately familiar with and embrace the mutual benefits of a robust Congressional Engagement Plan (CEP) that establishes an operational framework across the legislative cycle. If confirmed, I plan to execute a robust CEP, inclusive of quarterly engagements with the Chairs and Ranking Members of the defense committees. If confirmed, I would also welcome and encourage member and staff visits to the USCENTCOM headquarters and the USCENTCOM region.

Congressional Oversight

In order to exercise its legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this Committee and other appropriate committees of Congress are able to receive testimony, briefings, reports, records (including documents and electronic communications) and other information from the Department.

67. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to appear and testify before this committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes.

68. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to provide this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs such witnesses and briefers, briefings, reports, records (including documents and electronic communications), and other information as may be requested of you, and to do so in a timely manner? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes.

69. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to consult with this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs, regarding your basis for any delay or denial in providing testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information requested of you? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes.

70. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to keep this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes.

71. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this committee and its subcommittees with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes.

72. 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.

73. 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.