

Senate Armed Services Committee
Advance Policy Questions for Austin Dahmer
Nominee to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities

Duties and Qualifications

1. What is your understanding of the duties and responsibilities of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities (ASD(SPC))?

My understanding is that the Assistant Secretary of War for Strategy, Plans, and Forces (ASW(SPF)) is primarily responsible for advising and supporting the Under Secretary of War for Policy (USW(P)), the Deputy Secretary of War, and the Secretary of War on the formulation, coordination, implementation, and assessment of national security and national defense strategy; the military forces, plans, and posture necessary to execute the national defense strategy; and security cooperation plans and policies.

My understanding is that, although ASW(SPF) is not one of the Assistant Secretaries whose role is prescribed in law, through custom and convention, this role is the principal assistant to the USW(P) in his statutorily-defined roles for the development and promulgation of the National Defense Strategy and any other Departmental strategic documents; representing the Department in the development of the National Security Strategy, and ensuring the integration of the Department's activities and plans with the National Security Strategy; the development and promulgation of policy guidance for campaign, contingency, and operational plans, and for their review for alignment with Departmental and national policy objectives and criteria; the development and promulgation of policy guidance for global force posture; the development and promulgation of the Defense Planning Guidance to guide the formulation of program and budget requests by the Department; and, in coordination with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Director of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation, for developing planning scenarios to assess the Joint Force's capabilities and readiness and to develop and conduct assessments of progress toward meeting specific objectives the Joint Force should be ready to achieve.

2. If confirmed, what additional duties and responsibilities do you expect that the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)) would prescribe for you, particularly in light of the lines of effort comprising the Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance (INDSG)?

I am not aware of any additional duties and responsibilities that may be prescribed to me. If confirmed, I would be prepared to assume additional duties and responsibilities that are compatible with effectively meeting the core responsibilities and duties of the position.

3. What background, experience, and expertise do you possess that qualify you to serve as the ASD(SPC), including in the following areas:

- **Defense Strategy, Force Planning, Force Development;**
- **Development and review of campaign and contingency plans, major**
- **force deployments, and military operational plans;**
- **Joint capabilities requirements and Joint Warfighting Concept Development**

I believe my background is well-suited to the position of ASW(SPF). My career has been dedicated to public service and to grappling with these precise issues. President Trump appointed me to the Department on January 20th, 2025, as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Force Development. For the last nine months, I have had the opportunity to lead various parts of the Policy organization, including performing the duties of the Deputy Under Secretary of War for Policy, and previously performing the duties of the ASW(SPF).

Prior to joining the Department, I served as National Security Advisor to Senator Josh Hawley, and previously as his Defense Policy Advisor. My tenure in Congress provided me a range of invaluable experience. During this time, I traveled extensively across the United States and the Indo-Pacific visiting and assessing U.S. and ally and partner military forces' capabilities and limitations, posture, plans, training, readiness, and related issues.

Prior to the Senate, I worked in the defense industry, primarily providing analytical services to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, and the Intelligence Community. During this time, I worked on a number of different strategic and military-technical issues through studies and analysis, and through the development, facilitation, and analysis of wargames and tabletop exercises. These issues included the development of the Joint Warfighting Concept and subordinate concepts, globally integrated wargames testing joint force development priorities and military operational plans, space warfighting, and a number of issues related to deterrence dynamics in crisis and conflict.

During this time, I also conducted research on defense strategy, military force planning, and the defense program at The Marathon Initiative, where I authored a report as well as articles for *The National Interest*, *National Review*, and other outlets.

Finally, my time as an officer in the United States Marine Corps and my training and education at the United States Naval Academy continue to afford me invaluable leadership and management experience, as well as subject matter expertise in military forces and capabilities, force deployments, operational planning, readiness, and related issues.

4. What leadership and management experience do you possess that you would apply to your service as ASD(SPC), if confirmed?

If confirmed, I pledge to draw on all of my experience to fulfill my duties. With respect to leadership and management experience specifically, I have led teams of various sizes, from policy offices and intelligence staff sections of four and five personnel; to commanding the Scout Sniper Platoon, 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, of 24 Marines and Sailors, and later the Regimental Surveillance and Target Acquisition Company, 1st Marines, of 125+ Marines and Sailors; to my current role performing the duties of the Deputy Under Secretary of War for Policy, an organization of 800+ civilians, military, contractors, and political appointees. I am confident that I am able to lead organizations of various sizes, providing the strategic management necessary to produce results.

Major Challenges and Priorities

5. In your view, what are the major challenges that will confront the next ASD(SPC)?

If confirmed, the major challenges I would confront as the ASW(SPF) would be the fundamental challenge that our Nation faces: the scope and scale of the threats we face—from China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, Islamic and narco-terrorists, etc.—with the scarce resources the Joint Force has to address all of them. This fundamental gap between resources and threats impels a sound and coherent defense strategy. The development and implementation of that strategy, especially in ensuring that our military forces, plans, posture, and security cooperation activities with allies and partners, are optimized to execute the strategy, will be the central focus of my work.

6. If confirmed, what plans would you implement to address each of these challenges?

If confirmed, my first priority would be completing the development of the National Defense Strategy. The Department's capstone strategic document, mandated in law, provides the strategic framework for all of the Department's actions over the life of the strategy, and it is crucially important that the Strategy rationally correlates the political and strategic ends of the Nation with the military, fiscal, industrial, manpower, and other ways and means which the Department and the Joint Force can reasonably and practically expect to be afforded.

If confirmed, and once the National Defense Strategy is released, my priorities will be in ensuring that the other subordinate strategic documents—most notably the Defense Planning Guidance, the Contingency Planning Guidance, and the Guidance for the Employment of the Force—are developed expeditiously and coordinated robustly across the Department's many stakeholders.

If confirmed, I would also expect to participate in various other Departmental processes, including but not limited to the Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE) cycle, especially Program and Budget Review (PBR); the Global Force Management (GFM) process; and reviews of the Department's war plans.

7. If confirmed, what broad priorities would you establish?

I am committed to the President's America First and peace through strength agenda. I believe the President and Secretary Hegseth's focus on defending the U.S. Homeland and deterring China in the Indo-Pacific, while significantly strengthening burden-sharing with allies and partners to address the simultaneity problem, and revitalizing the American defense industrial base, are the right priorities. If confirmed, I would make those priorities my own.

National Defense Strategy

8. The Trump Administration's 2018 National Defense Strategy and the Biden Administration's 2022 National Defense Strategy framed the international security environment in terms of great power competition. Will this continue to serve as the framing construct for the upcoming National Defense Strategy? If not, why?

The 2018 and 2022 National Defense Strategies' framing of the international security environment in terms of great power competition will continue while clearly prioritizing homeland defense and restoring deterrence in the Indo-Pacific. Given the range of threats to the U.S. Homeland and the growing threat of China's military build-up in the Indo-Pacific, the Secretary has directed the Department to invest in the forces and capabilities required to defend the U.S. Homeland, deter China in the Indo-Pacific, and enable our allies and partners to step up their efforts for their own and collective defense.

9. Do you believe that the 2018 NDS accurately assessed the strategic environment when it prioritized long term strategic competition with both China and Russia?

The Trump Administration's 2018 National Defense Strategy rightly shifted the Department's focus from counterinsurgency toward great power competition. Recognizing the most important, dangerous, and consequential threats to Americans' interests, the Secretary has directed the Department to prioritize defending the U.S. Homeland while restoring deterrence in the Indo-Pacific.

10. The Department of Defense's (DOD) INDSG describes China as the pacing threat for the DOD. Does the U.S. have the right force posture to deter and, if necessary, defeat Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific region, including the First Island Chain?

Consistent with President Trump's America First agenda and approach of achieving peace through strength, I believe U.S. forces should be postured and employed consistent with our strategic objectives and to benefit Americans' security, freedoms, and prosperity. In the Indo-Pacific in particular, forward deployed and stationed forces play a critical role, especially in a denial defense along the First Island Chain. However, if confirmed, I commit to continually reevaluating our overseas posture and presence to ensure the United States is optimally posturing U.S. forces in the event of conflict and ensuring allies adequately invest in their own security.

11. How does a U.S. strategy of denial to deter Chinese aggression in the First Island Chain complement Taiwan's plans to field a layered defense that privileges a strategy of erosion?

It will take a variety of types of forces, concepts, and posture to effectively deter and, if necessary, defeat a Chinese assault in the First Island Chain. The U.S. strategy of denial complements Taiwan's plans for layered defense by providing combat-capable forces on operationally relevant timelines, to provide a strong local defense that is difficult and painful to dislodge while bolstering allied confidence in our resolve. That said, Taiwan needs to do more and faster, first and foremost by significantly increasing its defense spending and rapidly acquiring the appropriate weapons and systems needed to deter aggression from China. The United States and Taiwan do not stand alone in deterring Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific. The most important thing the United States and its regional allies can do is ensure they have sufficient military forces to deter China. If we do this, then Beijing's attempts to expand its influence and dominate its neighbors can be resisted.

12. What role should our allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region play in deterring Chinese aggression?

As Secretary Hegseth has said, maintaining deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region requires capable and interoperable allies and partners to augment our forward postured military capabilities. Allies must strengthen their own defense capabilities to enhance credible deterrence against adversary aggression and proactively engage in regional security initiatives.

13. Russia's military is larger today than before it invaded Ukraine, and it continues to replenish its conventional capabilities despite western sanctions. It is now one of the world's most battle-hardened militaries and it maintains the world's largest and most diverse nuclear arsenal. Given this, why does the INDSG downplay the threat posed by Russia?

As was stated in the Hague Summit Declaration, Russia poses a threat to European security. This Administration calls upon allies to increase their defense spending to ensure that they have the forces, capabilities, resources, infrastructure, warfighting readiness, and resilience needed to deter and defend themselves to meet this threat.

Allies themselves have recognized this necessity and committed to 5% spending at the NATO Summit earlier this year.

14. In your view, is the U.S. force posture in Europe sufficient to deter Russian conventional aggression in Europe?

As the Secretary of War made clear at the NATO Defense Ministerial Meeting this past June, it is responsible for the United States to continually assess its force posture in Europe. It is prudent that we review force posture, in real time, alongside our allies and partners to make sure it is right sized.

15. There is much discussion of the need for U.S. allies, especially those in Europe, to spend greater sums on defense. What are the capabilities and force structure we want the Europeans to build?

The call for greater defense spending echoes the need for U.S. allies and partners in Europe to take primary responsibility for their conventional defense. While the President and Secretary Hegseth have set spending goals for our allies and partners, further deliberation is necessary to identify what capabilities and force structure will best accomplish these goals. If confirmed, I would focus on collaborating with allies and partners to find the most effective application of resources.

16. How should the U.S. respond to the deepening strategic partnership between China and Russia? Does it present a military threat or is their partnership largely political and/or symbolic?

The partnership between China and Russia is transactional but has become more cohesive in recent years, and both countries are supporting and enabling one another in ways that are mutually advantageous. This partnership is symbolic, but the risk that simultaneity could pose to the balance of power remains a concern. This is a challenge I would closely monitor if confirmed.

17. What role should the U.S. play in deterring North Korea?

As President Trump stated in a recent Truth Social post, America's defense alliance with the Republic of Korea is "stronger than ever before." The United States and its allies continue to deter North Korean aggression in the region. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues, to include the Assistant Secretary of War for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs, to ensure we continue to do so.

18. What role should our allies and partners, play in deterring North Korea?

The United States and its allies have successfully deterred North Korean aggression since 1953, but North Korea continues to threaten the Republic of Korea on multiple levels. It also poses a direct nuclear, missile, and unconventional threat to the United States, Japan, and other allies.

We need to be clear-eyed, frank, and realistic with our allies about the nature of the threats we face and the allocation of responsibilities among ourselves, to include increasing the degree of responsibility our allies bear for their conventional defense, in the service of ensuring our alliances are best defended and strategically sustainable.

19. What role should Japan play in the conventional deterrence of North Korea

Japan is a critical ally for deterrence in the region against threats posed by our adversaries. Japan can strengthen the U.S.-Japan Alliance by rapidly increasing relevant defense capabilities and boosting associated defense spending to ensure it can defend itself and conventionally deter North Korea.

20. If confirmed, what revisions or adjustments would you make to the Department's implementation of the Trump Administration's 2018 NDS?

If confirmed, I would prioritize the implementation of the new National Defense Strategy as required by statute. Consistent with President Trump's America First approach, the Strategy will clearly identify and prioritize those threats that are most consequential to Americans' interests and apply a realistic and prioritized approach to aligning resources to achieve peace through strength.

21. If confirmed, what specific indicators would you use to holistically evaluate how well implementation of the NDS is progressing?

If confirmed, I will ensure that a holistic methodology for assessing implementation of the Strategy is put in place. Until publication of a new National Defense Strategy, I believe it would be inappropriate to discuss specific indicators of progress vis-a-vis its implementation. If confirmed, I would be happy to brief the committee once the Strategy is completed.

22. What is your understanding of the Department of Defense's processes for strategic assessment, analysis, decision making, and reporting for the development and implementation of the NDS?

The development of the National Defense Strategy has taken a comprehensive approach with close collaboration between senior civilian and military leaders across the Department. However, I believe that it would be inappropriate to discuss specific processes for assessment and reporting regarding the implementation of the NDS until its publication. If confirmed, I would be happy to brief the committee once the Strategy is completed.

23. If confirmed, what recommendations would you make, if any, to improve the Department's processes for strategic assessment, analysis, policy formulation, and decision making?

The effective use of assessments and analysis are critical to successful policy formulation and decision-making. If confirmed, I will work to enhance the

Department's processes for strategic assessment and analysis.

24. In your opinion, should the NDS be budget-driven or budget-informed and what key indicators reflect that one or the other of those approaches is being pursued?

I assess that the National Defense Strategy should be budget-informed rather than budget-driven. We must be clear-eyed regarding the fact that the Department faces real resource constraints. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the Department acts consistently with the President and the Secretary's guidance. The best indicator of whether our National Defense Strategy is budget-informed will be our progress in implementing it—including our progress developing the key forces and capabilities associated with achieving our strategic priorities.

25. What is your understanding of the role of the Defense Planning Guidance (DPG) and Guidance for the Employment of the Force (GEF) in the implementation of the NDS?

The DPG and GEF, alongside the Contingency Planning Guidance (CPG), are the Secretary's primary tools for translating the National Defense Strategy to articulate the priorities and direction for force development (the DPG) (i.e., over the life of the Future Years Defense Program, 2-7 years) and force employment (the GEF) (i.e., 0-2 years, before new forces and capabilities can be developed) of the Joint Force. The role of the DPG is to translate the NDS into programmatic guidance for the Military Departments, Defense Agencies, and Combatant Commands. The role of the GEF is to translate the NDS into specific military planning guidance for the employment of military forces through operational activities day-to-day, major exercises, and security cooperation under the rubric of the defense strategy.

26. If confirmed, what recommendations would you make, if any, to update, improve, or make the DPG and GEF more transparent and useful to the Department and to Congress, including this Committee?

The DPG is an annual, internal, and pre-decisional DoW planning document and I will aim to secure its completion for the Secretary's approval as early as possible each year. This would allow leadership of the Military Services and DoW Components to integrate the DPG's direction before their Program Objective Memoranda have been finalized. If confirmed, I will also ensure the GEF prioritizes attention and resources on the most serious and urgent national security threats in support of National Defense Strategy implementation. If confirmed, I will identify recommendations for improving transparency of the DPG and GEF, including for Congress.

27. Will you commit that, if confirmed, you would undertake all necessary action to ensure that each of these strategic guidance documents is timely generated and issued, and updated, as necessary to reflect changes in assumptions, policy, or other factors? If confirmed, what specific steps would you take to effectuate this commitment, and on what timeline?

Yes.

The implementation of these strategic guidance documents will be a central focus of my tenure, and I commit to undertaking all necessary action to ensure they are generated and issued, updated, and reflect changing policy and circumstances in a timely manner. I am not in a position at this stage to give specific recommendations. If confirmed, I would make it a priority to identify the necessary steps to effectuate this commitment on a timely basis.

Contingency Planning

One of the purposes of the Goldwater-Nichols Act was to increase military and civilian attention on the formulation of strategy and contingency planning. The ASD(SPC) supports the USD(P), who is required to assist the Secretary of Defense in preparing written policy guidance for the preparation and review of contingency plans and in reviewing such plans.

28. What is your view of the civilian role, as compared to the military role, in the formulation of strategy and contingency planning?

Civilian leaders in the Department of War provide political and policy guidance for, and oversight of, contingency planning to ensure the President and Secretary of War have feasible, risk-informed military options to prepare for and respond to designated crises. While military planners at combatant commands develop contingency plans, civilian leaders within the Department provide independent analysis and ensure strategy and plan implementation is in line with the National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, and the Presidentially-approved Contingency Planning Guidance. Civilian oversight ensures strategy and plans are threat-informed, policy-aligned, resource-informed, and designed to meet directed end-states. It is important for civilian and military leaders to work together to provide the President and Secretary with the best military options to address directed contingency scenarios.

28. In your opinion, does the civilian leadership currently have an appropriate level of oversight of strategy formulation and contingency planning? Please explain your answer.

I assess civilian leadership has an appropriate level of oversight of strategy formulation and contingency planning, and this should be robustly upheld. U.S. Code Title 10, Section 113 directs the Secretary of War to create the National Defense Strategy and Contingency Planning Guidance to prioritize Department of War missions, shape the roles and missions of the armed forces, and prioritize military resources. If confirmed, as Assistant Secretary of War for Strategy, Plans, and Forces, I would support the Undersecretary of War for Policy and the Secretary in carrying out these duties. Per Department of Defense Instruction, civilian leadership within OSW Policy uses these documents to oversee the development, coordination,

and review of contingency and campaign plans; develop policy objectives; articulate priorities; and evaluate the risks associated with these plans. Civilian leaders in OSW Policy review contingency plans at multiple levels to help ensure that plans are aligned with administration policy guidance and can be implemented at acceptable levels of risk to mission and force.

30. What specific steps, if any, do you believe are necessary to ensure effective civilian control and oversight of strategy, contingency, and force planning?

I believe the necessary steps to ensure civilian control and oversight of strategy, contingency planning, and force planning processes are already in place and if confirmed I would commit to upholding this civilian control and oversight. Within ASW(SPF), the Deputy Assistant Secretary of War for Strategy and Force Development generates Department-wide strategy to articulate the Department's priorities and guide investments. The Deputy Assistant Secretary of War for Plans and Posture oversees Department-wide contingency and force posture through dedicated plan and posture reviews. In addition, these teams work closely with the Joint Staff, Services, and Combatant Commands to ensure the President and Secretary receive the appropriate advice regarding strategy, contingency plans, and force planning.

31. What is your understanding of the capability and capacity of both the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff to provide comprehensive, objective, and realistic joint analysis in support of formulating and evaluating strategy and operational plans and related force planning?

The Office of the Secretary of War and the Joint Staff have the processes, people, and information support mechanisms in place to provide comprehensive, objective, and realistic analysis to support the formulation and evaluation of strategy, operational plans, and force planning. Although each National Defense Strategy is tailored to the priorities and preferences of the Secretary of War, all are underpinned by the requirements captured in U.S. Code Title 10 Section 113. Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 3000.15, "Plan Review and Approval Process," clearly lays out the responsibilities and processes for senior Policy leaders to review and approve strategy, operational plans, and force planning. In addition, OSW(P) has dedicated offices within ASW(SPF) that oversee the day-to-day operations of strategy and plan development. The Joint Staff follows the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 3110.01 series, "Joint Strategic Campaign Plan," and CJCSI 3141.01F, "Management and Review of Campaign and Contingency Plans" to manage and review campaign and contingency plans. Both OSW(P) and the Joint Staff adhere to DoDI 3000.12, "Management of U.S. Global Defense Posture," to provide oversight of force planning processes and management of the Global Posture Executive Council (GPEC), which manages the defense posture process.

29. If confirmed, how would you determine whether modifications of a combatant commander's contingency or operational plan are warranted, considering geo-

strategic change, risk assessments, potential adversary and our own capability enhancements, and fiscal realities?

Per DoDI 3000.15, combatant command contingency plans tasked in the Contingency Planning Guidance (CPG) go through multiple reviews where objectives, end-states, assumptions, concepts, timelines, forces, and risks are analyzed and approved. Plans are tasked, reviewed, and updated on a two-year cycle pursuant to the Contingency Planning Guidance. In between these prescribed review points, I have the option to review, and can recommend the Secretary or Under Secretary review, plans that may need updating due to a changing risk assessment, operational environment, or capability enhancement. These processes ensure that I have the ability to evaluate and recommend changes to plans to ensure these materials remain useful tools for senior leaders.

Joint Operational Concept Development

30. How will you, if confirmed, account for the Joint Warfighting Concept (JWC) when formulating the NDS?

If confirmed, I will ensure that the JWC and future joint concept development efforts are fit for purpose and aligned to the NDS.

31. In your opinion, can a single JWC adequately address adversaries as diverse as China and Russia, or should DOD have separate Joint Operational Concepts, including separate theories of victory, for China and Russia?

A joint operating concept is an important tool to guide force development and design decisions and to inform how the Joint Force fights. It should therefore be aimed at addressing the most important, dangerous, and consequential threats to Americans' interests to ensure that the Joint Force is sized and shaped accordingly. If confirmed, I will work closely with my counterparts in the Joint Staff to ensure that joint operating concepts address NDS priorities.

If confirmed, what would be your role in reviewing the JWC?

ASW(SPF) is the lead entity within Policy that interfaces with Joint Staff on joint concept development. As such, if confirmed, I would prioritize review and oversight of the joint concept development to make sure there is no daylight between it and our strategic priorities.

32. What are your views on the Joint Concept for Competing (JCC)? How does the JCC complement the JWC?

If confirmed, I will work to ensure that joint concept development is laser-focused on addressing the Department's top priorities of defending the U.S. Homeland and deterring China, and that joint concepts align with strategic guidance including the forthcoming NDS.

33. If confirmed, how would you work to ensure that Military Service Warfighting Concepts are properly nested under the JWC and JCC, and that the Military Departments and Services focus on generating capabilities that support both concepts?

If confirmed, I would closely monitor the development of Joint and Service concepts to ensure they are properly nested, mutually supporting, and ultimately, aligned to strategic guidance including the forthcoming the NDS.

34. Do you consider the Department's war gaming capabilities to be adequate? If confirmed, what, if anything, needs to be done to improve the Department's war gaming capabilities, in your view?

The Department has come a long way in embracing wargaming as an analytic tool to better understand a wide swath of operational and strategic problems. If confirmed, I would leverage ASW(SPF)'s role in the Analytic Working Group (AWG) to ensure that wargames are methodologically robust, the results transparent and appropriately applied, and that the Department is prioritizing the development of new analytic tools and methods that improve the quality of wargaming outputs.

35. What is your understanding of the progress DOD has made in developing, modeling, and validating the joint operational concepts required to address the challenges identified by the 2018 NDS, 2022 NDS, and 2025 INDSG?

If confirmed, I would undertake a thorough review of the steps the Joint Staff has taken to validate past joint operating concepts and establish a plan to ensure robust and analytically underpinned validation of future concepts.

36. What is your understanding of the Department of Defense's current organizational structure, capability, and capacity concerning joint operational concept employment? If confirmed, what recommendations, if any, would you make to improve joint concept employment?

At present, the Joint Staff J7 is responsible for formulating the joint operating concept based on strategic priorities and approaches articulated in the NDS. The military services also develop supporting operational concepts that, in theory, should be consonant and aligned with the overarching joint operational concept. If confirmed, I will undertake a thorough review of how to improve joint and service concept formulation and employment.

37. In your opinion, how can the Department successfully produce short- and mid-term joint operational concepts that drive change in the Joint Force in response to identified shortfalls?

Warfighting concepts should be clear, succinct, and closely aligned with the Department's established priorities and strategic approaches articulated in the

forthcoming NDS. They also need to account for realistic timelines for technology maturation and capability acquisition. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that future concepts possess these characteristics.

38. In your view, how can DOD best contribute to a “whole-of-government” effort to develop more holistic strategies and operational concepts—integrating all tools of national power—for prevailing in competitions short of war?

The State Department and other non-DoW departments and agencies play crucial roles in U.S. national security policy and the formulation of national strategy. The Department must work closely across the government to implement the President’s America First and peace through strength agenda, by ensuring alignment of the Department’s activities with national strategy and other elements of national power.

Joint Force Requirements

39. What is your understanding of the Department of Defense’s current process for establishing a prioritized list of Joint Force requirements derived from the INDSG and forthcoming NDS? If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you make to this process?

The Secretary of War recently signed new guidance regarding the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System through the Joint Requirements Oversight Council. If confirmed, I will leverage current Joint Force requirements processes, informed through the lens of the Secretary’s recent guidance, to develop requirements aligned to our Nation’s strategic guidance.

40. What is your understanding of the Department’s current process for assessing both U.S. and adversary capabilities? If confirmed, what would be your recommendations, if any, for improving these processes?

The Department uses a wide range of analytic tools, intelligence, experimentation, analysis working groups, and observation when assessing U.S. and adversary capabilities. If confirmed, I will work to streamline the processes of aggregating this wealth of information, strengthening our analytic frameworks which we rely on to inform the PPBE process.

41. In your opinion, is this process adequate in identifying potential solutions (through procurement and concept development), assigning responsibility for implementing those solutions to the appropriate organization, and aligning the defense program to strategic priorities?

The President and Secretary have made clear their intentions to streamline acquisition processes to better align our military capabilities to their priorities and our Nation’s strategic guidance. I agree with the President and Secretary, and if confirmed, will work to modernize our acquisition processes and improve their strategic alignment.

42. If confirmed, what recommendations, if any, would you make to improve the Department's processes for establishing Joint Force requirements?

The Joint Force requirements system must be able to cost-effectively deliver capabilities at the speed of relevance to address our strategic challenges. If confirmed, I will seek to reorient the Department's thinking away from developing expensive, exquisite platforms over many years that we cannot afford to lose, toward delivering innovation at scale on compressed cycles. If confirmed, I will also work with my counterparts across the Department to provide strategic policy guidance to deliver capabilities at speed and scale to our warfighters.

43. In your view, are there specific capabilities the Joint Force needs to support U.S. interagency approaches to compete below the threshold of armed conflict?

Under President Trump and Secretary Hegseth's clear leadership, the War Department is focused on restoring deterrence and on warfighting. The Joint Force also supports interagency efforts to compete below the threshold of armed conflict. The further development of forces and capabilities in space, subsea and seabed warfare, cyber, and electromagnetic warfare could benefit both the Department's primary role of deterring and prevailing in conflict but could also benefit competition below that threshold.

Joint Force Capabilities

44. The Trump Administration's 2018 NDS identified long-term strategic competition with China and Russia as the organizing concept for the Department, although China was defined as the pacing threat. The INDSG makes clear that China is the sole principal adversary focus of the Department. In your assessment, what are the capabilities the Joint Force needs to prevail in competition with China?

The Joint Force will require a range of forces and capabilities across all warfighting domains, from seabed to space, to defend the Homeland and deter or deny China in the Indo-Pacific. Further maturation and fielding of undersea forces including manned submarines and unmanned undersea vehicles; mobile, ground-based long-range fires; long-range air forces such as bombers; space forces including space control capabilities; and other enabling capabilities.

45. Does the reduced focus on Russia allow for the divestment of military capabilities? If so, what are they?

The Department is continuously evaluating its capability and force structure requirements in an evolving strategic environment. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that force development and design decisions are informed by robust analysis, aligned with the President and the Secretary's priorities, and make the best use of the Department's resources provided by Congress.

46. What lessons have we learned from our experience fighting the Houthis, the war in Ukraine, and Israel's military operations in the Middle East?

U.S. leadership and the application of military power have been critical to defending U.S. interests and deterring our adversaries in Europe and the Middle East. I believe these conflicts underscore the urgency of enabling our regional allies and partners to significantly expand their own defense capabilities such that they can take greater responsibility for their own security and for the security of their respective regions.

47. In your opinion, have those lessons been sufficiently integrated into strategic planning, capabilities development, and operational concepts? If yes, please provide specific examples from each contingency.

Secretary Hegseth has emphasized bolstering the lethality, combat credibility, and resiliency of the Joint Force while also rebuilding America's defense industry. I assess that there is still more to be done as we translate lessons from those conflicts into our defense program. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the Department cost-effectively reprioritizes resources from less relevant capabilities towards those capabilities necessary for to achieve the Secretary's strategic objectives. I will also work to ensure that the Department incorporates lessons from these conflicts into our planning, strategy implementation, force development, and operational concepts.

48. Are the lessons learned from these conflicts germane to the threats we are likely to face in the Indo-Pacific?

I assess that each of these conflicts reflects characteristics unique to the specific combatants, strategic circumstances, and geographies involved. However, a few more generalizable insights on the future character of war can be gleaned from these conflicts. The proliferation of unmanned systems and the saturation of sensors across the battlefield, the importance of long-range strike capabilities and missile defenses, and the criticality of electromagnetic warfare will all play a significant role in shaping the threat environment the Joint Force may face in the Indo-Pacific. The rapid pace of military innovation observed in the Ukraine conflict has reinforced that it will be crucial to build the Joint Force's ability to iterate and adapt prior to and during a conflict. I also assess that deterring China by erecting and maintaining a credible denial defense along the First Island Chain will require the Department to rapidly and rigorously prioritize investments in key forces and capabilities, strengthen our regional posture, and mature our operating concepts.

49. How do you define the successful end-state for prevailing in long-term strategic competitions with China and Russia?

Under the Secretary's leadership, the Department is implementing President Trump's America First, commonsense approach to achieving peace through strength. The Department is therefore rebuilding the Joint Force and re-establishing deterrence while encouraging our allies and partners, which are fully capable of taking the lead in defending themselves and ensuring the security of their regions, to bear a greater

share of the responsibility for their conventional defense. Further, the Department will work alongside the interagency to set the conditions for a lasting peace around the world, consistent with President Trump's intent.

50. In your assessment, what are the key areas each Military Service must improve to provide the necessary capabilities and capacity to the Joint Force to prevail in long-term strategic competitions with China and Russia?

If confirmed, I would work closely with stakeholders across the Department to determine the Joint Force capability and capacity required to achieve the President and the Secretary's strategic priorities as articulated in the forthcoming National Security Strategy and the forthcoming National Defense Strategy.

51. In your assessment, what capability and/or capacity shortfalls in the current Joint Force present the most significant challenge to addressing threats posed by China and Russia?

If confirmed, I would work closely with stakeholders across the Department to determine the Joint Force capability and capacity required to achieve the President and the Secretary's strategic priorities as articulated in the forthcoming National Security Strategy and the forthcoming National Defense Strategy.

52. In your assessment, which programs are the highest priorities for mitigating current and emerging warfighting capability and/or capacity shortfalls in the Joint Force?

If confirmed, I would work closely with stakeholders across the Department to determine the Joint Force capability and capacity required to achieve the President and the Secretary's strategic priorities as articulated in the forthcoming National Security Strategy and the forthcoming National Defense Strategy.

53. In your view, are there additional capabilities that DOD requires to successfully execute operational concepts in support of the INDSG? Please explain your answer.

Consistent with President Trump's America First approach and the Secretary's guidance, if confirmed, I will work stakeholders across the Department to define the specific capabilities required to defend the U.S. Homeland and restore deterrence in the Indo-Pacific. In this context, I believe the U.S. priority and focus should be on developing the forces and capabilities necessary to defend the Homeland and deter or deny China in the Indo-Pacific, while maintaining a strong and secure nuclear deterrent and homeland defense capabilities against multiple potential foes and the abilities to prevent terrorist attacks against America.

54. Does DOD have the requisite decision support—analytic expertise, processes, and tools—to support the Secretary of Defense and you, if confirmed as the ASD(SPC), in evaluating warfighting return on investments?

If confirmed, I look forward to further reviewing the portfolio of analytic support capabilities available to the Office of the Secretary of War to ensure that they are aligned with the decision-making needs of the Secretary and other senior leaders as they evaluate warfighting return on investment. Where advisable, I will seek to further enhance these capabilities by supporting the Department's integration of modern data analysis tools and techniques and their adaptation to Department processes.

Global Force Posture

59. If confirmed, what would be your role in the Global Force Posture Review?

If confirmed, my role would be to ensure alignment of U.S. force posture with the Department's national defense priorities and oversee any processes to execute.

60. What changes, if any, in the strategic and operational environment do you think have consequences for how U.S. forces are postured around the world, particularly in Europe, the Indo-Pacific, and the Middle East?

Changes in the strategic and operational environment, such as other nations' military behavior, can inform how U.S. forces are postured around the world, including in the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East. For example, as allies in Europe increase defense spending in line with their commitment at the Hague Summit, the United States force posture in Europe will reflect the greater capability, capacity, and burden-sharing from NATO allies. In the Indo-Pacific, as China continues to modernize its military, the United States needs to continue to adjust its force posture to ensure deterrence remains credible. If confirmed, I would continue to assess with my team, the Joint Staff, and Department components this strategic and operational environment and make recommendations to the Under Secretary and Secretary of War to balance global risk.

61. Previous Commanders of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command have indicated that the balance of military power in Western Pacific has eroded in a way that is more favorable for China. Do you agree, and if so what elements of U.S. force posture must be modified to restore a more favorable balance of power for the United States and its allies and partners?

The rapid growth of the Chinese military is a source of deep concern. The growth of China's military portends not only a direct challenge in the Western Pacific but, if China is successful in dominating in that region, it has the potential for global power projection to impose Beijing's will well beyond its own shores.

Maintaining our military edge for a denial defense along the First Island Chain must be the top priority for U.S. and Asian allied conventional forces. We cannot have a single-threaded solution to the problem of China's military challenge. It will take a variety of types of forces, concepts, locations, and posture to effectively deter and, if necessary,

give the President credible military options to defeat a Chinese assault in the First Island Chain.

62. What is your understanding and assessment of the relative cost and benefits of the permanent versus rotational forces forward stationed overseas, particularly in Europe and the Indo-Pacific?

U.S. forces postured overseas, both permanent and rotational, should advance the President's national defense priorities in line with the Department of War's strategy. Rotational forces allow the Department to respond dynamically to changes in the strategic or operational environment, and permanent forces consist of the Department's forward-deployed personnel and capabilities essential to enduring deterrence and warfighting requirements. Permanent forces in Europe and the Indo-Pacific usually have greater costs associated with their stationing overseas due to military construction and dependents, whereas rotational forces are more readily deployed and redeployed. If confirmed, I would ensure the balance of permanent and rotational forces in Europe and the Indo-Pacific reflects the President's national defense priorities.

63. What is your understanding and assessment of the Department of Defense's methodology and assumptions used to evaluate the relative costs and benefits of overseas posture compared to stationing forces in the United States?

The Department uses a detailed process to develop, coordinate, and approve requests to station a unit overseas or bring an assigned unit back to the United States. Requests are evaluated for political-military and operational risk, infrastructure, resources, personnel, and diplomatic considerations. By using this process, the Department brings in all necessary stakeholders to weigh costs and benefits of overseas posture in line with our national defense priorities.

64. If confirmed, what actions would you take, or what changes would you recommend, if any, to the Department's methodology and assumptions in evaluating the costs and benefits of overseas force posture compared to forces stationed in the United States?

If confirmed, I would thoroughly evaluate existing Department processes governing assignment and allocation of forces across commands. U.S. forces should be postured, stationed, and employed abroad in furtherance of our national strategy designed to benefit Americans' security, freedoms, and prosperity. Our forces in the United States and abroad play a critical role in the furtherance of the Department's strategic objectives.

65. Are there any gaps or shortfalls in force size, or deficiencies in force posture that must be remedied to implement new operational concepts, in your view? If confirmed, what would be your role in addressing any gaps, shortfalls, and deficiencies?

The Joint Force must be modernized to achieve the priority missions that matter most for

Americans' security, freedom, and prosperity. The Joint Force must therefore be capable of defending the U.S. Homeland and deterring China in the Indo-Pacific while enabling allies and partners to assume a greater share of the burden for their own defense and revitalizing the defense industrial base. The Department's force posture must likewise be updated to support employment of these capabilities.

The Joint Force must be modernized to meet modern threats, with a particular focus on submarines, bombers, ground-based mobile long-range fires, and space control. The Department's force posture must be updated to support employment of these capabilities, with a focus on defense of the U.S. Homeland, deterring China in the Indo-Pacific, and increased burden-sharing from U.S. allies and partners. If confirmed, my role would be at the nexus of force development and posture, and I would work to ensure the Joint Force is prepared for the security environment the nation faces.

66. Does DOD have the requisite modeling, simulation, experimentation, and wargaming processes and tools—to support the Secretary of Defense and you, if confirmed as ASD(SPC)—in rigorously testing and validating DOD's force size and posture constructs? Please explain your answer.

I understand that the Department of War has robust modeling, simulation, experimentation, and wargaming processes and tools to support the Secretary of War and the ASW(SPF) in testing and validating DoW force size and posture constructs. Strong collaboration between the Joint Staff, relevant OSW components such as CAPE, and Combatant Commands is essential. If confirmed as ASW(SPF), I would seek to improve upon these tools to ensure timely and relevant data use to further test, validate, and improve upon these constructs.

67. How will you use the Global Posture Executive Council (GPEC) to make changes to U.S. military posture abroad?

If confirmed as ASW(SPF), I will co-chair the Global Posture Executive Council with the Director, Joint Staff, to provide senior level oversight of posture processes. In practice, I will co-convene the GPEC to review proposals on forces, footprint, and agreements submitted by the Combatant Commands and the Services, and to advance the Secretary's vision for the Department's overseas force posture. The GPEC is an advisory body, and GPEC participants, including OSW Components, Services, Combatant Commands, and the Joint Staff, offer significant expertise that inform U.S. military posture abroad.

68. What role will the State Department have in evaluating changes to U.S. overseas force posture?

The State Department plays a crucial role in U.S. national security policy. OSW Policy will liaise with the State Department on posture issues, to include coordination of Overseas Force Structure Change (OFSC) requests, Commands' Theater Posture Plans, and engagement with host nations to advance the President and Secretary's posture priorities.

69. What role will the State Department have in executing any changes to U.S. overseas force posture?

The Department of War coordinates with the Department of State on the implementation of U.S. force posture changes overseas. In particular, the Department works closely with the Department of State to execute Host Nation Notifications for overseas force structure changes to ensure synchronized messaging to the affected host nations, as appropriate.

70. The State Department's Special Negotiator for Agreements (SNA) is responsible for negotiating with foreign nations to gain basing access, host nation support and special measures agreements and logistic support arrangements on behalf of DOD. Please explain how DOD will work with and through the SNA to improve overseas access for the U.S. military.

The Department will continue to work closely with the State Department and specifically the Special Negotiator for Agreements (SNA) to identify agreement requirements and feasibility as informed by the combatant commands, host nations, U.S. embassies, and overall departmental and strategic guidance. The Department regularly coordinates with SNA regarding prioritized agreements to guide interagency negotiation efforts and operates as a seamless negotiating team when securing the necessary agreements and arrangements to support U.S. posture overseas.

Approaches to Strategic Competition

The 2018 NDS called for “expanding the competitive space” against China and Russia. This idea is broadly analogous to the Cold War concept of horizontal escalation in that it seeks to compete with adversaries in domains in which the U.S. and its allies have an advantage. Using different approaches, both China and Russia have been successful at doing this in competing with the United States below the threshold of armed conflict.

71. Will the second Trump Administration continue to use “expanding the competitive space” as a means for competition with China and Russia?

If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the Department's approach to China and Russia is aligned to, and implements, President Trump's guidance.

72. What are the capabilities the Joint Force needs to compete below the threshold of armed conflict?

Secretary Hegseth has directed the Department to reestablish deterrence in the Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, I will take a clear-eyed, commonsense approach to identifying and prioritizing the critical capabilities the Joint Force requires to achieve the President and the Secretary's strategic objectives.

The 2018 NDS also stated that “effectively expanding the competitive space requires combined actions with the U.S. interagency to employ all dimensions of national power. We will assist the efforts of the Departments of State, Treasury, Justice, Energy, Homeland Security, Commerce, USAID, as well as the Intelligence Community, law enforcement, and others to identify and build partnerships to address areas of economic, technological, and informational vulnerabilities.”

73. In your view, has the interagency been effective in planning and executing whole-of-government efforts to expand the competitive space? Please explain your answer.

President Trump’s peace through strength agenda provides a roadmap for the interagency to navigate the most dangerous security environment we have faced in decades. To fulfill its role under this approach, the Department must clearly prioritize resources to address the military threats that are most dangerous and consequential to Americans’ interests. If confirmed, I will work to work to do so in accordance with the Secretary’s strategic guidance and President Trump’s direction to put America’s interests first.

74. If confirmed, what recommendations, if any, would you have to better employ all dimensions of national power in competing with and countering Chinese and Russian hybrid and malign influence operations?

If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the Department prioritizes its resources toward overcoming the military threats that are most dangerous and consequential to Americans’ interests to ensure that the Joint Force fulfills its role in achieving President Trump’s peace through strength agenda.

Missile Defense

Rapidly growing Russian, Chinese, North Korean, and Iranian missile arsenals are outpacing United States’ capabilities for defeating these threats to the homeland, allies, and U.S. forces abroad.

75. If confirmed, what would be your priorities for scaling and posturing U.S. missile defense capabilities to address threats to the homeland and U.S. forces abroad?

The President has directed that the United States will develop and field the Golden Dome for America—a next generation missile defense shield to provide for the common defense of our citizens and the Nation, and deter, defend against, and defeat any foreign aerial attack on the U.S. Homeland, to include ballistic, hypersonic, and cruise missile threats. The Department is likewise continuing to develop and deploy missile defenses to ensure U.S. forces deployed overseas can defend themselves against threats, while also asking our allies and partners to do more. If confirmed, I will support the implementation of President Trump’s Golden Dome for America while also supporting the Secretary’s efforts to defend U.S. forces from a range of missile and advanced aerial threats.

76. In your view, are the roles and responsibilities for Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) appropriately assigned across the Military Services and Defense Agencies?

Through its execution of President Trump's ambitious direction for Golden Dome for America, the Department is constantly assessing how to improve implementation of the critical IAMD mission. If confirmed, I look forward to working across the Department to assess roles and responsibilities and to recommend any required changes to the Secretary.

In January of this year, the President issued an executive order, "The Iron Dome for America" which outlined an ambitious plan for developing a comprehensive integrated air and missile defense architecture for the United States. Since renamed the "Golden Dome," this architecture portends a capability to address all forms of missile threats, regardless of their origin, unlike current missile defenses, which are primarily designed to counter North Korean and Iranian systems.

77. What is your understanding of this architecture?

The Department will field Golden Dome for America defenses as rapidly as possible. Existing missile defenses, several of which have demonstrated their value in recent conflicts, will work together with next-generation defensive systems. The Golden Dome for America architecture also ushers in a new era of layered space- and terrestrial-based defenses that provides more opportunities to destroy enemy aerial attacks.

78. In your view, how do you believe the development and deployment of this architecture will affect strategic competition between the United States, Russia, and China?

Missile defenses are a vital element of our strategic force posture, both to deter adversary aggression and defend the U.S. Homeland and our forces around the world. Offensive missile capabilities are now a central feature of modern warfare. Our adversaries routinely employ advanced missile systems to coerce and intimidate opponents, terrorize civilians, and carry out strategic campaigns. Our adversaries are also heavily investing in air and missile defense capabilities of their own. Programs to expand and modernize our missile defenses are vital to maintain U.S. strategic competitiveness and keep Americans safe.

79. If confirmed, how would you ensure the Military Services make the investments required to fulfill their IAMD responsibilities, including for base defense? How would you ensure effective integration of the Services' current capabilities, as well as of the capabilities each is separately developing?

If confirmed, I would work with stakeholders throughout the Department to ensure that the Joint Force has the right types and mix of forces and capabilities to conduct IAMD to defend the Homeland and deter China.

Over the past several years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of unmanned aerial systems (UAS) operating, both lawfully and unlawfully, in U.S. airspace domestically and over American military installations overseas.

80. If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure the Department appropriately prioritizes and resources detection and defeat capabilities for UAS that pose a threat to U.S. military assets?

The President has rightly recognized the UAS threat to our forces and to the Homeland. If confirmed, I will work with my counterparts across the Department to provide commanders the critical information, situational awareness, and defeat capabilities they need to make timely decisions. I believe the recently established Task Force to Restore American Airspace Sovereignty is an essential element to facilitate collaboration between the Department and other federal Departments and Agencies. I understand the Department also recently established a joint interagency task force, JIATF-401, to unify and resource counter-UAS efforts. If confirmed, I plan to work closely with JIATF-401 and the Services, communicating clear policy guidance to prioritize needed capability and to take action to mitigate nefarious actors in the airspace over our installations.

81. If confirmed, will you commit to working with Congress and the interagency to better clarify U.S. government roles and responsibilities for detecting, tracking, and if necessary, defeating, UAS within U.S. airspace?

Yes, securing the U.S. Homeland and defending U.S. airspace from all classes of threats are Presidential priorities. If confirmed, I look forward to collaborating across the Department and the U.S. government to update, clarify, and further refine counter-UAS policy and authorities, while in parallel developing and employing the requisite capabilities. I understand section 925 of the FY2025 NDAA directed an update of all DoW C-UAS policy and guidance in the U.S. Homeland. If confirmed, I look forward to working across the Department to bring this process to fruition.

In recent months, missile and rocket attacks by Iran and Iranian-backed proxies in the Middle East have highlighted the shortage of Theater Integrated Air and Missile Defense (TIAMD) assets available to protect deployed U.S. forces. This same shortage is most acute in U.S. European Command and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, where the missile threats are much more sophisticated. Air defense units remain the highest-demand, lowest-density forces in the Army.

82. In your view, should DOD expand its theater missile defense capabilities (including improvements to existing systems or the development of new systems), capacity (increased procurement of existing systems), or both? Please explain your answer.

I assess that the Department should leverage existing forces and capabilities, develop new ones, and ensure we have sufficient capacity for both. I support the President's vision for the Golden Dome for America which will include both developing new systems and expanding production capacity for existing systems. If confirmed, I will ensure the Joint Force has the right mix of capabilities in the right capacity to defend the Homeland and deter China in the Indo-Pacific.

83. Do you believe the United States should encourage regional allies and partners to increase their missile defense capabilities to contribute to regional security and help reduce the burden on U.S. forces and requirements? If confirmed, on which specific allies and partners would you focus on in this regard, and specifically what would you encourage each to do?

The Department is completing an Allied and Theater Missile Defense Review to identify ways in which allies and partners can: increase bilateral and multilateral cooperation on missile defense technology development, capabilities, and operations; improve theater missile defenses of forward-deployed United States troops and allied territories, troops, and populations; and increase and accelerate the provision of U.S. missile defense capabilities to allies and partners. If confirmed, I will draw on the Review's recommendations to drive coordination with our regional allies and partners as they assume greater responsibilities and reduce the burden on U.S. forces.

Stability Operations

84. In your view, what are the key lessons learned from the stability operations conducted in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan?

The 2018 Stabilization Assistance Review (SAR) analyzed several U.S. engagements in conflict-affected areas, including Iraq and Afghanistan. Lessons learned during stability operations in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan, and through the SAR remain relevant today. Examples include: setting realistic political goals; enabling burden-sharing; quantifiably assessing strategic progress and holding partners accountable; and synchronizing activity across the diplomatic, development, and defense sectors.

85. What do you believe is the proper role for the Department of Defense in the planning and conduct of stability operations in future contingencies?

The Department of State is the lead federal agency for U.S. stabilization efforts and the Department of War serves in a supporting role. As a supporting element, the Department may reinforce civilian efforts where appropriate and when consistent with available statutory responsibilities. The Department incorporates stabilization into planning across all lines of effort for military operations.

Defense Security Cooperation

DOD's contribution to strengthening alliances and partnerships comprises a wide range of programs and activities designed to improve security cooperation and foster interoperability and preparedness. These programs include foreign military sales, foreign military funding, exercises and training events, military-to-military exchanges, and partnering to develop key technological capabilities.

86. What is the appropriate role of the Department of Defense in the conduct of security sector assistance?

The Department's security sector assistance should enable our allies and partners to take on roles and responsibilities that support U.S. national security objectives and enhance greater burden-sharing across the globe.

87. What should be the Department of Defense's relationship with the Department of State in the conduct of these activities?

The Department should continue its close collaboration with the Department of State to ensure security sector assistance programs are complementary and mutually supportive of the President's guidance and direction and U.S. national security objectives.

88. How does DOD coordinate the development of partner security cooperation priorities with the Department of State?

The Department of War and the Department of State routinely and extensively coordinate security cooperation priorities from inception through execution. State is involved in all phases of security cooperation planning, from the individual country teams to combatant commands to discussions in Washington. With the Department's "dual-key" authorities, the legal requirement for the Secretary of State's formal concurrence on the Department's security cooperation programs ensures alignment with foreign policy.

89. What should be the strategic objectives of the Defense Department's efforts to build the capabilities of a partner nation's security forces?

U.S. security cooperation efforts should build the capabilities of partner nation security forces to deter shared threats, counter coercion, enhance interoperability, and promote burden-sharing. By enabling allies and partners to shoulder their fair share of security responsibilities, we prevent regional threats from reaching the U.S. Homeland and reduce long-term U.S. investment abroad.

90. What steps, if any, would you recommend for ensuring that the Defense Department's strategy for security cooperation in each of the geographic combatant commands is fully aligned with the INDSG and forthcoming NDS?

The Department is continuously working to ensure alignment of the combatant commands' security cooperation activities with strategic intent.

In response to the President's Executive Order on Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid, the Department, in coordination with the Department of State, conducted a detailed review of security cooperation activities. This review shaped the development of Significant Security Cooperation Initiatives and other programs in the combatant commands to ensure activities are aligned with strategy.

91. In your view, is the Defense Department appropriately organized and resourced to effectively conduct such activities? If not, what changes would you recommend, if confirmed?

The Department is appropriately organized and resourced to effectively conduct security sector assistance activities. The Department is able to carry out these activities efficiently and effectively as a result of current policies. These policies are often revisited and revised to meet changing demands, as they have been in response to the President's Executive Order on Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid.

92. How does DOD ensure that the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, the Defense Technology Security Administration and Service technology release components align security cooperation decisions with the National Defense Strategy and related defense planning documents?

The Department of War aligns security cooperation decisions with defense planning documents through a multi-layered approach. First, the Under Secretary of War for Policy (USW(P)) provides overarching policy guidance derived directly from other strategic directives. This guidance vectors all security cooperation activities, including those managed by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), the Defense Technology Security Administration (DTSA), and Service technology release components.

The USW(P) maintains oversight of all DoW security cooperation decisions, ensuring that proposed activities support strategic objectives and are consistent with strategy. This oversight includes reviewing and approving key security cooperation initiatives, technology transfer requests, and partnership development plans. DSCA, DTSA, and the Service technology release components incorporate Policy's strategic guidance into their internal processes and decision-making frameworks. They conduct assessments to ensure that proposed security cooperation activities contribute to desired strategic outcomes, mitigate potential risks, and comply with relevant policies and regulations. This includes evaluating the impact of technology transfers on U.S. military advantage and regional stability.

93. How often does the Arms Transfer and Technology Release Steering Group (ATTRSG) convene and what types of issues does it consider?

The ATTRSG was designed to provide guidance and direction to DoW's technology release and foreign disclosure processes to support the protection of critical U.S. technologies and to ensure that release considerations are balanced with building allied

and partner-nation capability objectives. It is being enhanced to meet the intent of Section 918 of the FY 2024 NDAA and the current Trump Administration's Executive Order 14268, which is to ensure the expeditious and transparent resolution of complex technology release actions, as well as to exchange relevant information on technology release and foreign disclosure policy matters to the ATTRSG members. This re-designed body has met at the 3-star/SES equivalent level twice in 2025 and is scheduled to meet again in January 2026. The new forum will focus on complex and entangled arms transfer cases.

94. The Missile Technology Control Regime was established in 1987 and was designed to limit the spread of theater range missile technology. In 1992 unmanned aerial systems were added to the MTCR because they were considered a potential WMD delivery system. Has the MTCR succeeded in limiting the spread of theater missile and UAV technology?

The MTCR continues to be an important element of U.S. national security by preventing the proliferation of missiles and related technologies that our adversaries could use against the United States and our allies. Consistent with the direction in EO 14628 to reevaluate restrictions imposed by MTCR on Category I items, the Secretary supports the development of a new MTCR implementation policy for the Department that would be more forward leaning than current policies. An updated Department approach will ensure that the U.S. government's export controls on missile technology keep pace with the speed and scope of technological developments, especially as the use of unmanned systems on the battlefield has become increasingly common.

Additional information, including examples of the MTCR's success, would be more appropriate for a classified setting.

95. Should Category 1 UAVs be treated as WMD delivery systems or as airplanes that no longer need to be controlled by the MTCR?

On September 15, 2025, the Department of State announced an update to national arms transfer policies, to subject MTCR Category I unmanned aerial systems (UASs) to the same export controls as manned fighter aircraft. The Secretary supports this update.

96. What is the primary purpose of security cooperation with allies and partners?

Security cooperation with allies and partners should further U.S. national security objectives. This includes enabling foreign security forces' interoperability with United States in coalition operations and enabling foreign security forces to fight in lieu of the United States, shouldering the burden of their own regional security.

97. Since the end of the Cold War the U.S. has privileged building the capacity of developing nations in the Middle East and Africa for counterterrorism missions rather than building the capacity of its treaty allies to better share the burden of strategic competition with peer adversaries. If confirmed, will you prioritize using

U.S. security cooperation authorities and resources on front line states combatting China and Russia?

The Department is committed to ensuring security cooperation investments are squarely aligned with the priorities outlined by the President and Secretary.

Regarding Europe, our goal is to empower our NATO allies to be more capable of taking primary responsibility conventional defense against Russia. This involves encouraging greater defense spending and investment in collective security mechanisms by European allies, and prioritizing security assistance packages designed to promote burden sharing in the region, to include defending against Russia.

Concurrently, we must significantly enhance our support for allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region. This requires security cooperation with countries like Taiwan and the Philippines who are on the front lines of countering Chinese coercion.

Importantly, this shift in priorities does not mean abandoning our commitments to counterterrorism. We must continue to address terrorism as a persistent threat if there are credible threats to the U.S. Homeland. However, we must calibrate our approach, working with partners to build their capacity to address these threats independently while ensuring that our resources are strategically allocated to address our highest priority challenges.

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.

98. 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.

99. 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.

100. 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.

101. 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.

102. 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.

103. 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.

104. 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.