

Senate Armed Services Committee
Advance Questions for General Christopher J. Mahoney, USMC,
Nominee for Reappointment to the Grade of General and to be Vice Chairman of
the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Duties and Responsibilities

Section 154 of title 10, U.S. Code, establishes the position of Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (VCJCS) and provides that the VCJCS performs the duties prescribed as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in addition to such other duties as may be prescribed by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), with the approval of the Secretary of Defense (SecDef). Furthermore, other provisions of law and Department of Defense (DOD) issuances assign to the VCJCS a breadth of duties and responsibilities.

1. What background and experience do you possess that qualify you to perform the VCJCS's duties and responsibilities?

I have been honored to serve our nation as a military officer for over 37 years. In my current role as the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, I execute the Commandant's vision for the Corps, perform service Vice Chief roles and responsibilities, and serve as a member of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council. These duties have prepared me to think strategically, align resources with strategy, and work collaboratively across the whole of government and with Allies and partners. I have command experience at squadron, group, and wing levels, including multiple deployments to the INDOPACOM, CENTCOM, and EUCOM areas of responsibility that have prepared me for the duties and responsibilities of the VCJCS. My formative joint tours include Chief of Staff of the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization and Deputy Commander, U.S. Forces, Japan.

2. Do you believe that there are any steps you need to take to enhance your ability to perform the duties and responsibilities of the VCJCS?

I am prepared to perform the duties and responsibilities of VCJCS. If confirmed, I look forward to building relationships with key stakeholders and glean insights from a variety of experts to ensure our warfighters are positioned and equipped to defend our nation and win its wars.

3. What other duties do you anticipate the CJCS would prescribe for you, if confirmed?

If confirmed, I will support the Chairman in emphasizing his three priorities of ensuring our Joint Force is properly armed, globally integrated, and ready to fight. I look forward to discussing, with the Chairman, how I might best support his objectives. I intend to operate as a strategic partner, anticipating challenges and opportunities, and provide him with the freedom he needs to effectively carry out his statutory authorities and responsibilities.

4. Are there other roles or responsibilities that should be assigned to the VCJCS, in your view?

From my current perspective, the distribution of duties between the Chairman and the Vice Chairman is appropriate to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of each position. I am foremost concerned with the Vice Chairman's ability to support the Chairman in his role as the primary military advisor to the President, Secretary of Defense, and National Security Council. If confirmed, I will re-examine and provide my assessment to the Committee.

Deputy Secretary of Defense

The Deputy Secretary of Defense (DSD) and the VCJCS often partner to lead the DOD in addressing emergent issues and policy challenges that require the integration of civilian and military expertise and perspective.

5. If confirmed, how would you structure your relationship with the DSD?

If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the DSD to build a strong professional relationship in which we can collaborate both in private and public. I see this relationship as being essential to ensuring the meetings and forums, especially those which we co-chair, are efficient and productive in addressing the critical issues facing the Joint Force and the nation.

6. If confirmed, how would you expect responsibilities to be allocated between the DSD and yourself as co-chairs of the Deputy's Management Action Group?

If confirmed, I will close coordination and collaboration between Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and The Joint Staff, ensuring we are fully engaged and integrated with our OSD counterparts.

7. In your view, can the Deputy's Management Action Group be more effective in ensuring that issues with resource, management, and broad policy implications are addressed in a manner that aligns with the SecDef's priorities and the DOD's planning and programming schedule? Please explain your answer.

If confirmed, I will continue the close coordination and collaboration between Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and The Joint Staff, ensuring we are fully engaged and integrated with our OSD counterparts. This close coordination and collaboration will ensure alignment of resources, management, and policy while providing timely and accurate military advice to address joint warfighter needs.

Major Challenges and Opportunities

8. What do you consider to be the most significant challenges you will face if confirmed as VCJCS?

If confirmed, I consider the most significant challenges will be continuing to improve on long-standing, complex issues within the Joint Force – often with stakeholders that have competing equities. This includes implementing reform in the requirements-acquisition-resources space, embracing emerging technology and capability integration at scale while preserving security of these systems, and countering evolving global threats in a tenuous security environment.

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

If confirmed, I will work with the Chairman, Combatant Commanders, the Services, and direct report program managers to ensure we are effectively executing the strategies our civilian leaders set out. I will drive the Joint Staff to work collaboratively across the interagency and with Congress to assess the information environment and global security landscape to identify risks and provide options to decision-makers that harness the latest technologies, capabilities, and warfighting concepts.

10. To the extent that the Joint Staff perform functions that overlap with those of other DOD components, what would be your approach, if confirmed, to consolidating and reducing those redundancies?

If confirmed, I will look into the existence of overlapping functions of the Joint Staff with other components. I will assess if there remains a need for redundancy and provide advice to ensure our talented workforce is best aligned against requirements.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff

Section 151 of title 10, U. S. Code, codifies the role of the Joint Chiefs as military advisors to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense.

11. If confirmed, would you commit to provide your best military advice to

the President, the National Security Council, and the Homeland Security Council, even when your advice and opinions might differ from those of other members of the Cabinet, the President's other senior advisors, or from the President's own views?

Yes.

12. If confirmed, would you commit to provide your best military advice to the Secretary of Defense, even when your advice and opinions might differ from those of other DOD senior officials, or from the Secretary's own views?

Yes.

13. If confirmed, how would you elicit from the individual Service Chiefs, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and the Combatant Commanders, their best military advice, including advice and opinions that may diverge your own?

If confirmed, and working on behalf of the Chairman, I would elicit military analysis and advice from the Joint Force, to include other Service Chiefs, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and Combatant Commanders. The Unified Command Plan directs communications between the President, or the Secretary and the Combatant Commanders be transmitted through the CJCS unless otherwise directed by the President or the Secretary. Working in support of the Chairman as the global integrator, I will reinforce the mechanisms he has put into place to elicit this advice and communications from all Combatant Commanders and pass them through the appropriate channels along with my own advice.

14. What is your assessment of the size, the scope of activities, and the effectiveness of the Joint Staff?

My assessment of the Joint Staff is that it is manned with capable and dedicated service members, civilians, and contractors who fill a crucial role in integrating and synthesizing information, activities, plans, and posture of the combatant commands, the Services, and the interagency to inform the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and enable him to craft his best military advice for the President, Secretary of Defense, and the National Security Council. From my perspective, the Joint Staff fills a unique role in our military by providing objective, dispassionate analysis and assessment of world-wide operations, Service initiatives and programs, and investment in the Joint Force to realize the most capable and responsive military possible. If confirmed, I will continue to assess the size, scope, and effectiveness of the Joint Staff to validate my assessment or recommend changes if required.

Defense Strategy

The United States faces a rising China, an aggressive Russia, and the continued threat from rogue regimes and global terrorism. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the National Defense Strategy Commission testified in July 2024 that China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea have formed an “axis of aggressors”, supporting each other’s military aggression and illegal wars.

15. What is your assessment of the military threat posed by the People’s Republic of China?

China is a peer competitor of the United States, with hegemonic ambitions in the western Pacific and beyond. This is, foremost, evidenced by the rapid growth, in both capability and capacity, of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). The PLA has the world’s largest active-duty military force and navy by quantity—over 2 million active-duty personnel and 370 total ships and growing—and improvements to PLA air and naval systems are enabling PLA forces to operate further from China for longer periods. The PLA is progressing toward its military modernization goals by adjusting its military structures, fielding modern indigenous systems, building readiness, and strengthening its competency in joint operations. New PLA missile systems, such as the DF-17 HGV-armed MRBM, continue to improve China’s ability to strike foreign military bases and fleets in the Western Pacific. The PLA’s conventional capabilities are further supplemented by technological systems including robust counterspace and rapid satellite launch capabilities, cyber operations, Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning (AI/ML) enhanced decision making, and efforts to achieve quantum computer supremacy. The PLA is also engaged in an expansion of their nuclear forces, which could threaten the homeland.

16. What is your assessment of the military threat posed by Russia?

Russia's war against Ukraine has weakened the Russian military, but it remains a capable force that can threaten the homeland with nuclear weapons and asymmetric capabilities and threatens our European allies. As a point of reference, Russia's strategic reserve of armored vehicles and artillery have been depleted, and it has sustained at least a million casualties in Ukraine. Despite this, Russia’s conventional capabilities still pose an acute threat to the eastern flank of NATO. If confirmed, I will continue to work with our NATO allies as our European partners take primary responsibility to deter and defend against threats and build resilience against malign influence and hybrid threats.

17. What is your assessment of the military threat posed by collusion among Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea?

China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea's growing alignment presents a concerning and escalating military threat to U.S. national security. While often transactional, their increasing collaboration—through joint exercises, technology sharing, and

coordinated actions—enhances their collective capabilities and complicates the strategic landscape. This collaboration fosters multi-domain threats, challenging U.S. interests globally. The potential for coordinated aggression or destabilizing actions necessitates a robust and adaptive U.S. military strategy to protect U.S. interests and allies.

18. In your view, should the Defense Department’s force sizing construct be based on the need to conduct simultaneous conflicts in Asia and Europe?

Our force sizing construct is a matter of policy and national security priorities set forth by our policymakers. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the current guidance, weighing the risks, and advising the Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense, based on my experience, on the best option to maintain a credible and responsive Joint Force.

I can say that China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea are pursuing unprecedented levels of cooperation. This cooperation poses three distinct but related challenges to the Joint Force: (1) the challenge of simultaneity, where U.S. tensions or conflict with any one of these adversaries could draw in another, (2) the challenge of strategic surprise, where coordinated action by our adversaries could invalidate core assumptions in our contingency plans and Joint Force structure and design, and (3) the potential for eroding our military advantage, where our adversaries share lessons learned, intelligence, and technology, even if they never coordinate their military actions or form an alliance against us. None of these challenges foreshadow a simultaneous conflict in Asia and Europe, but they must be considered as the current trajectory of our adversaries, and we should assess our force needs accordingly.

19. If confirmed, what revisions or adjustments, if any, would you recommend the Secretary of Defense make to the 2025 Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance (INDSG) as a result of changes in assumptions, policy, or other factors?

The National Defense Strategy (NDS), informed by the INDSG, is currently under review by the Joint Force. I am confident this review will yield comprehensive analysis to inform the Chairman’s advice to the Secretary in accordance with his statutory responsibilities. I look forward to supporting the Chairman in his role to provide such feedback and to implement the final NDS, when complete.

20. In your view, what should be the priority missions of the DOD and the capabilities by which DOD can achieve its objectives in the context of the current strategic environment? What do you perceive as the areas of greatest risk?

The President has directed the Joint Force to defend our Homeland and secure our borders. Meanwhile, the threat posed by China and their increasing partnerships with Russia, Iran, and North Korea evolving. If confirmed, I will support the Chairman's approach to assessing risk and developing Joint Force capabilities to counter these threats, minimizing their risk to U.S. interests. I will support the Chairman, as the global integrator of the Joint Force, in ensuring we have the capacity and capabilities to meet the priority missions outlined by the President and the Secretary of Defense.

21. In your view, are the plans and programs of the Commanders of the Combatant Commands appropriately focused, scoped, and resourced to counter the threats and achieve current national security objectives?

In my current position, I know that there are strong feedback mechanisms to receive input from the combatant commanders and the Joint Force, to maintain a focus on our national security priorities. While Combatant Commands were designed with regional or functional focus, the problems of today are rarely localized. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Chairman, as the global integrator, assess and integrating combatant command plans and programs, and resourcing those programs.

22. If confirmed, what changes might you propose to the missions, responsibilities, and force structure allocated to the Combatant Commands, best to achieve current national security objectives? Please explain your answer.

Under Title 10 U.S. Code Section 161, the Chairman conducts a periodic review of the missions, responsibilities, and force structure of each combatant command and recommends to the President and the Secretary any changes that may be necessary. If confirmed, I will support the Chairman in this role to ensure the Joint Force is prepared to meet the current national security priorities outlined in the INDSG and the forthcoming NDS.

National Military Strategy

The Committee remains concerned that the processes for translating the explicit and implicit priorities reflected in the National Military Strategy into the budget proposals submitted by the military services are not as effective as they need to be.

23. In your view, does the Defense Planning Guidance consistently and clearly set priorities for joint capabilities that emerge from the National Military Strategy and the Joint Military Net Assessment?

The Defense Planning Guidance (DPG) is the Secretary's primary tool for ensuring the Department's resources are aligned with strategy. The DPG provides priorities for developing and investing in forces and capabilities. The 2025 Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance serves as the foundation of DPG development, with its priorities, and themes, echoed and amplified throughout the document. The most recent DPG clearly articulates defense resourcing priorities for the Joint Force and is aligned with the current strategic guidance.

24. In your view are the Chairman's Annual Joint Assessment and annual Program Assessment effective in aligning service budget proposals with joint priorities?

In these annual assessments, we seek to leverage statutory requirements, like the Chairman's Risk Assessment to inform meaningful change in the Joint Force. The Annual Joint Assessment is a survey given to the Combatant Commands and Services, seeking their insight to inform a multitude of Joint Assessments, to include the Chairman's Risk Assessment and Chairman's Program Recommendation. The 2025 Chairman's Risk Assessment sought deliberate alignment between the Program Review and Risk assessment of joint priorities to inform the Defense Planning Guidance. We will continue to seek strong alignment in our products as we work with OSD to ensure the Joint Force is properly armed, ready, and globally integrated.

25. What are your views on the current version of the Joint Warfighting Concept as it supports the National Military Strategy?

The current version of the Joint Warfighting Concept (JWC) supports the future vision for joint operations – as articulated in the current National Military Strategy – by providing a framework for integrated, all-domain operations to address near-peer competitors, regional adversaries, and transnational threats. The JWC prioritizes Joint Force integration, adaptability, and technological innovation to maintain a competitive advantage in a complex global security environment. The JWC also prioritizes emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and autonomous systems to enhance decision-making and operational effectiveness. By fostering interoperability among services and allied nations, the JWC supports a resilient and adaptable force capable of achieving strategic objectives in contested environments. If confirmed, will work with the Chairman and the Joint Staff ensure the JWC continues to provide a framework for force development are in alignment current policy, technology advances, and the security environment evolves.

DOD Readiness

26. How would you assess the current readiness of the DOD Components—across the domains of materiel and equipment, personnel, and training—to execute current Combatant Commanders’ plans?

If confirmed, I will review the current readiness of the Joint Force and provide my recommendations to the Chairman and Secretary of Defense in accordance with established priorities.

27. What is your assessment of the risk the Combatant Commands and the Combat Support Agencies have accepted in regard to their readiness to execute existing operational plans?

If confirmed, I will assess these risks and make recommendations to the Combatant Command in coordination with the services. With sustained, predictable, adequate, and timely funding from Congress and the Secretary-directed reprioritization, we can continue to improve readiness, maintain military advantage, and decrease risk.

28. If confirmed, specifically what actions would you recommend in order to improve full spectrum readiness in all DOD Components—across the domains of materiel and equipment, personnel, and training—and on what timelines?

If confirmed, I will work with services, and the Combatant Commands to assess challenges to readiness and make recommendations to the Chairman as needed to inform his best military advice.

29. If confirmed, what role would you play in improving joint force readiness?

If confirmed, I will work with the services and Combatant Commands to assess current readiness metrics and challenges to readiness. I will then make recommendations to the Chairman as needed to inform his best military advice with a focus on synchronizing aligning capabilities to national security priorities and Combatant Commanders’ operational plans.

National Defense Budget

30. In your view, are the programs and resources required to generate the capabilities necessary to meet current military requirements properly prioritized within the Department of Defense? If confirmed, do you believe the Department needs to realign or refocus programs and funding, if at all?

The Defense Planning Guidance, aligned with the Interim Defense Strategic Guidance, provides direction on the prioritization of DOD programs and resources, with clear linkages to the national priorities. I think this guidance

properly prioritizes DOD efforts and resources to meet our requirements. The Department is working to appropriately adjust its programs and funding allocation in accordance with this newly published guidance to achieve national security objectives and secure U.S. interests. If confirmed, I will continue to support alignment of resources to required capabilities as we receive additional guidance through the forthcoming National Defense Strategy.

31. Do you believe that 3-5% real budgetary growth through the FYDP is required to adequately resource the Department of Defense? Please explain your answer.

Any effort to produce real growth in the defense budget would provide resourcing for modernization and readiness. If confirmed, I look forward to assessing what percentage would be needed to achieve our strategic priorities and advocating for prudent real growth in the defense topline.

32. Looking forward, what types of resource shortfalls are likely to hamper the Department's execution of national defense priorities in your view? How would you address or mitigate these shortfalls, if confirmed?

Expanding industrial capacity for military hardware while also modernizing our force and capitalizing on emergent capabilities will be a challenge. If confirmed, I will work through the Chairman, the Service chiefs, industry, and the Congress to ensure future budgets and messaging reflect the right mix of capabilities and capacity to address current and future threats.

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

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

The Department builds a budget request that balances joint priorities and strategic alignment. These lists are helpful tools in communicating to Congress the areas where additional resources could enhance military readiness and capabilities while fostering meaningful dialogue between Department leadership and Congress.

34. If confirmed, would you commit to supporting the Service Chiefs and Combatant Commanders in providing their unfunded priorities lists to Congress in a timely manner?

Yes.

Joint Force Headquarters and Component Commands

35. Is the current model for creating joint force headquarters below the unified command level appropriate and adequate to meet the challenges articulated in the 2025 INDSG? In your view, are there other models you have seen that we should be considering?

If confirmed, I will assess this construct and, if needed, explore alternative models and making recommendations to the Chairman. This review will encompass an examination of various Joint Force headquarters structures to ensure the Joint Force is optimally postured.

36. Given the time required to stand up, man, and train joint force headquarters, and the short warning time that is expected before a potential conflict in certain areas of operation, would Combatant Commanders' operations and contingency planning and preparedness be improved by creating and exercising subordinate joint force headquarters during the competition phase?

Proactively establishing subordinate Joint Force headquarters before a crisis erupts could enhance operational readiness, planning, and preparedness. Doing so incurs costs to manpower allocation, staff workload, and financial implications across the Joint Force and require analysis on a case-by-case basis. If confirmed, I will collaborate with the Combatant Commanders and the Joint Chiefs to carefully evaluate this approach.

37. What are the most significant obstacles to establishing and exercising joint force headquarters in advance of a crisis, and what could be done to overcome those obstacles, in your view?

One of the primary challenges in prematurely establishing Joint Force headquarters lies in the potential strain on resources. Combatant Commanders currently possess sufficient staffing to manage daily operations and pre-crisis scenarios. Creating additional headquarters diverts critical resources from ongoing missions. If confirmed, I will work with the Combatant Commanders and Joint Chiefs of Staff to assess each unique situation in advance of a crisis on its resources to best posture the Joint Force for success.

38. What new technical capabilities, processes, or concepts of employment do you think would be needed to improve our ability to achieve high levels of readiness for, and realistically exercise, joint force headquarters prior to a crisis, or to rapidly establish in the event of an unforeseen crisis?

The Joint Force conducts regular exercises and tests to ensure the ability to stand up these headquarters efficiently, even in the face of unforeseen crises. Regular joint exercises play a crucial role in this process, allowing the Joint Force to test and refine these advancements while informing the development of new concepts. New technologies such as live virtual training environments can augment these exercises by reducing time and resources required to test and exercise new or novel concepts. If confirmed, I will ensure these efforts continue and will actively seek opportunities to further enhance our readiness in this critical area.

Use of Military Force

39. In your view, what is the appropriate role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in establishing policies for the use of military force and the rules of engagement?

The President determines when to use military force. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are advisors to the President and the Secretary of Defense and should actively advise on the policies for the use of military force and the rules of engagement.

40. If confirmed, what factors would you consider in making recommendations to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense, and the President on the use of military force?

The use of military force must always be carefully considered. If confirmed, my recommendations on the use of military force will be consistent with U.S. domestic and international law and take into consideration the current threat environment, probability of success, cost in terms of casualties, and strategic risk.

41. What factors would you consider, if confirmed, in recommending to the CJCS and the Secretary of Defense which forces of other nations should be eligible for Collective Self-Defense by U.S. forces, and under what conditions?

As I understand it, when collective self-defense rules of engagement are authorized, U.S. forces may defend foreign forces against any attack or threat of imminent attack. If confirmed, when making a recommendation to the Chairman and Secretary of Defense, I would consider whether the self-defense is legal, and whether it is in U.S. interests to do so.

42. What is your understanding and assessment of the authorities and agreements in place to permit U.S. military personnel to carry out missions under the provisions of title 50, U.S. Code?

My understanding is that relevant authorities and agreements provide the framework for U.S. military forces to support activities of other U.S. Government

Departments and Agencies when requested by the President or Secretary of Defense, as the situation dictates.

43. If confirmed, how would you modify these agreements or authorities, if at all?

If confirmed, I look forward to continuing working within the Department of Defense, and with colleagues across the interagency to update existing arrangements if the need arises.

Chain of Command & Civilian Control of the Military

Section 162(b) of title 10, U.S. Code provides that the chain of command runs from the President to the Secretary of Defense to the Combatant Commands. Section 163(a) of title 10 further provides that the President may direct that communications between the President or the Secretary of Defense and the Commanders of the Combatant Commands be transmitted through the CJCS and may assign duties to the Chairman to assist the President and the Secretary in performing their command function.

44. Do you believe that these provisions of law enact a clear and effective chain of command?

Yes.

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

Yes. However, regardless of any special command relationships outside of title 10 provisions, U.S. military personnel are still accountable to the title 10 chain of command and are subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Additionally, our armed forces must act consistent with the law of war in all military operations.

46. In your view, do these provisions properly effectuate civilian control of the military? Please explain your answer.

Yes. The chain of command originates with the President and runs through the Secretary of Defense, and from the Secretary to the commanders of the combatant commands. If confirmed, I will be dedicated to participating in the decision-making process and executing lawful orders given by my civilian leadership.

47. How would you define effective civilian control of the military? Aside

from civilian control of the military via the Executive Branch, please describe the extent to which you believe Congress plays a role in furthering civilian control of our military.

Article 1 of the Constitution charges the Congress to raise armies, provide a navy, and govern the regulation of these forces. Congress is a key constituent in the totality of our national defense - in terms of both authority and appropriation.

48. As a military officer, you take an oath to support and defend the Constitution. How do you balance this obligation with the responsibility to provide your best military advice to civilian leadership, even when that advice may differ from civilian political priorities?

My oath is and has been to support and defend the Constitution. In my current role, I provide military advice to the chain of command, identifying options that I believe best support policy and security priorities. If confirmed, my advice will continue to be focused on strategic priorities, associated risk, readiness implications, and resourcing considerations to best enable decisions from the nation's civilian leadership.

49. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to ensure that your tenure as VCJCS epitomizes the fundamental requirement for civilian control of the Armed Forces embedded in the U.S. Constitution and other laws?

The Constitution and the laws that govern the Department of Defense clearly articulate that we are a nation under civilian control. If confirmed, I will ensure military options provided through the Chairman in full support of our civilian leadership.

50. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to support the Chairman in ensuring that the Secretary of Defense and the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy are fully engaged in preparing guidance for and reviewing contingency plans?

If confirmed, I will support the Chairman's role in strategic and contingency planning as specified in Section 153 of title 10 U.S. Code. Specifically, the development of Secretary of Defense Priority Integrated Plans and supporting the Office of the Secretary of Defense in the preparation and review of campaign and contingency plans as directed in the Defense Planning Guidance.

51. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to support the Chairman in ensuring that the Secretary of Defense and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness are fully engaged in evaluating and reporting on the readiness of DOD Components, and if necessary, in mitigating readiness gaps and shortfalls?

If confirmed, I will continue to stress the importance of a strong relationship with OSD components as we do our respective work.

If confirmed as VCJCS, you will testify regularly before Congress and may be asked to comment on partisan political matters.

52. What is your view of your responsibility to provide your best military advice to Congress while also ensuring that you and your office remain apolitical, recognizing that you serve as a model for other senior uniformed officers and the entire armed forces?

If confirmed, my responsibilities include providing advice to the Chairman and Secretary of Defense and consult with Congress. I will provide my best military advice as a military officer, remaining non-partisan and apolitical.

Joint Acquisition

The VCJCS is a member of the Defense Acquisition Board (DAB), the DOD acquisition system's senior advisory board. The DAB reviews and advises the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment on Major Defense Acquisition Programs—the most complex and expensive DOD acquisition projects.

53. What is your understanding of the VCJCS's role as a member of the DAB?

The DAB assesses the development, procurement, delivery, and sustainment of our nation's joint warfighting capabilities in the capacity required for the continued success of joint acquisition programs. Given an increasing reliance on multi-domain capabilities, candidates for future joint development and acquisition will address requirements across functional capability areas. If confirmed, I see my role as supporting the Chairman as an integrator between the needs of the Combatant Commanders, the realities of Service budgets, and the priorities of Department leadership.

54. Do you believe that the VCJCS's role in the DAB should be modified to enhance the Board's effectiveness? If so, how?

If confirmed, I would assess my role in the DAB in alignment with the Requirements and Resourcing Alignment Board (RRAB) acquisition decisions and priorities.

55. What are your views regarding the effectiveness of joint acquisition programs, especially in delivering integrated and interoperable solutions for the Department and which programs would you consider to be candidates

for joint development and acquisition?

From my experience, joint acquisition programs have seen some success at delivering integrated and interoperable solutions for the Department. One example is the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle program, which has been balancing performance and cost to provide the Joint Force with a tactical vehicle fleet that is both survivable and sustainable. Additionally, early development of Golden Dome for America is demonstrating the ability to coordinate across the services to rapidly develop emerging high priority joint capabilities. Moving forward, the Future Vertical Lift family of systems would be a good candidate for joint development. It implements a Modular Open Systems Approach that improves affordability, enhances capability, and reduces supply chain risk across the Services.

56. What are your views on joint, enabling or cross-cutting capabilities that may not be treated as acquisition programs, such as JADC2? Do you have sufficient authority to ensure that the services are responsive to warfighter capability needs at the seams of individual acquisition programs?

Integrating data across domains, especially cyber, is an essential capability. Achieving integrated outcomes through joint capabilities like CJADC2 presents significant challenges, including consensus-building and technical complexity, particularly given the dynamic cyber threat landscape. If confirmed, I will assess the sufficiency of authorities cross-cutting capabilities like CJADC2, but believe ensuring Service responsiveness primarily requires strong leadership, budgetary influence, and acquisition oversight that prioritize cyber resilience.

57. If confirmed, what role would you assign to yourself in ensuring that joint acquisition priorities are given full and fair consideration in Military Service budget processes?

If confirmed, I would use the new authority granted by the Secretary of Defense to the Vice Chairman as the co-chair of the Requirements and Resourcing Alignments Board (RRAB) to ensure that funding is allocated to top-ranking operational problems, and that Service-specific requirements or activities stay within their proper limitations.

58. Do you believe that the combatant command's role in the acquisition process is sufficient to ensure that they can get needed capabilities fielded to them in a timelier manner? If not, are there other tools or authorities needed?

If confirmed, I will ensure the Defense Acquisition System continues to seek and consider input from the Combatant Commanders through the JROC. This ensures that the voices of the Combatant Commanders are integrated into a defined process and carefully considered. I understand the importance of maintaining and

continuing to evolve the Department's Adaptive Acquisition Framework (AAF) comprised of several acquisition pathways, each tailored for unique characteristics and risk profile. If confirmed, I will seek opportunities for increased Combatant Command involvement in the AAF, particularly in the development of software, where operator input to the developer can create more useful capability in a shorter timeline.

Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC)

The Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) established the Chairman of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) as “the principal advisor to the CJCS on joint military capabilities or joint performance requirements”.

59. How would you assess the effectiveness of the JROC in establishing joint requirements for submission to the DOD acquisition process?

From my current position, my assessment is that no other entity is more responsible for Joint Force Design and balancing the Joint Force's current needs with its future needs than the JROC. The JROC provides a critical forum for the Service Vice Chiefs to assess joint military requirements and identify, approve, and prioritize joint capabilities to ensure the Joint Force can implement the National Defense Strategy. One of the JROC's key strengths is its ability to provide a high-level, strategic perspective on capability development, ensuring that major acquisition programs align with Joint Warfighting Concepts and multi-domain operational needs. It has also significantly improved cross-Service coordination, particularly through initiatives like Capability Portfolio Management (CPM), which help identify capability gaps, solutions, redundancies and promote Joint Force integration. While the JROC is effective – it could be better, and it is essential that we continue to improve. In July, the Joint Staff delivered its Section 811 report to congress on requirements reform directed in the FY24 NDAA. This report provides a “clean sheet” approach to Joint requirements and reorients the JROC to focus on Joint Force Design and Joint Capability Integration while preserving our responsibility to address Combatant Command needs and relying on the effectiveness of our CPM process. Our Section 811 work provides the foundation laid out by the Secretary of Defense in his August 20, 2025, memorandum on “Reforming the Joint Requirements Process to Accelerate Fielding of Warfighting Capabilities.”

60. If confirmed, how would you ensure that the JROC focuses on joint performance requirements without overprescribing key performance parameters and key system attributes that overly constricts system design space?

The way I see, the JROC should be in the business of providing top-down, strategic-level direction to the Services to drive Joint Force Design without micro-managing Service acquisition decisions. The JROC currently delegates the

identification of key performance parameters and key system attributes to the Services unless they are deemed Joint Performance Requirements, meaning they are critical to ensure interoperability or integration of the Joint Force. While use of rapid acquisitions pathways such as Middle Tier of Acquisitions (MTA) are designed to improve speed and efficiency, that must be balanced with strong joint oversight to prevent fragmentation of the future force. The JROC's ability to assess and enforce joint performance requirements remains critical in ensuring our warfighters receive interoperable, integrated, and effective capabilities for future conflicts.

61. What is your view on the Capability Management Portfolio Review process for the JROC to issue requirements from the top-down?

As I understand, Joint Staff recently revamped Capability Portfolio Management (CPM), creating a new approach to drive strategic alignment across requirements, acquisition, and research and development. This was done in partnership with the offices of the Under Secretaries for Acquisition and Sustainment, and Research and Engineering to create a comprehensive portfolio view of capability development. As a result, capability requirements are fully informed by new technologies and commercially developed products that may fill requirements and capability gaps identified within the Joint Force. This approach has holistically evaluated gaps from a portfolio perspective while driving top-down, concept-driven, future-facing requirements. The success and value the CPM process provides to the JROC and Joint Force Design efforts is precisely why it remains a critical element of our requirements reform efforts.

62. How does the JROC intersect with the Deputy's Management Action Group (DMAG) and to what degree and how does that intersection allow enforcement of JROC strategic direction to the Services?

The JROC's authorities and responsibilities are clearly defined in Title 10, Section 181 of U.S. Code. The DMAG is a senior level advisory board within OSD, not governed by statute, that provides the Deputy Secretary of Defense a forum for senior leaders in the department, including the VCJCS, to address strategic priorities, budgetary decisions, and cross-cutting issues, such as those identified during the Capability Portfolio Management process, that require coordination across the Department.

Modern warfare demands unprecedented levels of interoperability, integrated systems of systems kill chains, and joint command and control, for which no service is responsible.

63. Do you believe the JROC has a responsibility to ensure that joint operational problems are properly identified and assigned to the Services' roles and missions?

Yes.

64. In your view, how has the Capability Portfolio Management Review process been used to address these issues?

In my view, the Capability Portfolio Management (CPM) process is effective at driving strategic alignment across requirements, acquisition, and research and development. The Joint Staff partnered with the offices of the undersecretaries for Acquisitions and Sustainment, and Research and Engineering to create a holistic portfolio view of capability development. This includes the Capability Portfolio Management Review led by the JROC, the Integrated Acquisition Portfolio Review led by USD(A&S), and the Technology Modernization Transition Review led by USD(R&E).

CPM was created to analyze inherently joint problems and provide a structured framework to assess, prioritize, and align capability development across the Joint Force while allowing warfighters producing capability requirements to be fully informed of new technologies and commercially developed products that may fill requirements and capability gaps identified within the Joint Force. This mission-oriented approach to addressing joint operational problems has been successful at evaluating gaps holistically while driving top-down, concept-driven, future-facing requirements. The success and value the CPM process provides to the JROC and Joint Force Design efforts is precisely why it remains a critical element of our requirements reform efforts.

65. If confirmed, what other steps would you recommend to address this deficiency?

In July, the Joint Staff delivered its Section 811 report to congress on requirements reform directed in the FY24 NDAA. This report provides a “clean sheet” approach to Joint requirements and reorients the JROC to focus on Joint Force Design and Joint Capability Integration while preserving our responsibility to address Combatant Command needs and relying on the effectiveness of our Capability Portfolio Management process. Our Section 811 work provides the foundation laid out by the Secretary of Defense in his August 20, 2025, memorandum on “Reforming the Joint Requirements Process to Accelerate Fielding of Warfighting Capabilities.” If confirmed, I am committed to assessing and driving ongoing requirements reform efforts aimed at delivering capabilities to the warfighters at speed.

Currently, strategic capability gaps derived from exercises and experiments as they are applied to helping refine the Joint Warfighting Concept are being used by the JROC to deliver strategic direction and joint capability requirements to the Services.

66. Do you agree this is an effective methodology for providing strategic direction to the Services?

Yes. We must take every opportunity to identify capability gaps across the Joint Force. While experimentation and exercises do not represent the full breadth of how we assess Joint Force Design, they provide venues to test and challenge our Joint Warfighting Concept and supporting concepts. Once gaps are identified, they must be incorporated into our capability development processes. The JROC provides a forum for the Service Vice Chiefs to assess joint military requirements and identify, approve, and prioritize joint capabilities. One of the JROC's key strengths is its ability to provide a high-level, strategic perspective on capability development, to include capability gaps identified through experimentation and exercises.

67. What is your understanding of how this strategic direction is to be enforced by the Department to ensure the Services fulfill joint capability requirements?

My understanding is the JROC provides a critical forum for the Service Vice Chiefs to assess joint military requirements and identify, approve, and prioritize joint capabilities to ensure the Joint Force can implement the National Defense Strategy. One of the JROC's key strengths is its ability to provide a high-level, strategic perspective on capability development, ensuring that major acquisition programs align with Joint Warfighting Concepts and multi-domain operational needs. It has also significantly improved cross-Service coordination, particularly through initiatives like Capability Portfolio Management (CPM), which help identify capability gaps, solutions, redundancies and promote Joint Force integration. While the JROC is effective – it could be better, and it is essential that we continue to improve. Recent changes provide for a “clean sheet” approach to Joint requirements and reorients the JROC to focus on Joint Force Design and Joint Capability Integration while preserving our responsibility to address Combatant Command needs and relying on the effectiveness of our CPM process. Recent work provides the foundation necessary to achieve the objectives laid out by the Secretary of Defense in his August 20, 2025, memorandum on “Reforming the Joint Requirements Process to Accelerate Fielding of Warfighting Capabilities.”

68. If confirmed, what action would you take to ensure this capability is developed and fielded?

Fully implementing recent changes and assessing their impact is the appropriate near-term action. This is specific to the objectives laid out by the Secretary of Defense in his August 20, 2025, memorandum on “Reforming the Joint Requirements Process to Accelerate Fielding of Warfighting Capabilities.” If confirmed, I am committed to driving ongoing requirements reform efforts aimed at delivering capabilities to the warfighters at speed.

Commercial industry investment in research and development exceeds that of DOD and the technology emerging from industry is expected to drive military capabilities globally.

69. In your view, are the JROC staff, with the advice of the USD (R&E), USD (A&S), and the DOT&E, able to effectively assess whether requirements proposed by the Military Services are technically realistic?

In my view, industry is driving the innovation impacting future military capabilities. Under the reoriented JROC construct, the JROC will prioritize Key Operational Problems and capability gaps, while the Military Services lead requirements determination. Supported by USD(R&E), USD(A&S), and DOT&E (in an advisory role), this streamlined approach ensures technical feasibility through mission engineering, industry engagement, and experimentation led by the Mission Engineering and Integration Activity. If confirmed, I will lead the JROC and continuously challenge our assumptions to ensure requirements are realistic and achievable given the state of commercial technology.

70. What specific changes to DOD's requirements and budgeting processes could incentivize greater private sector investment in dual-use technologies, such as AI or hypersonics, while ensuring alignment with national security priorities?

In my view, we need to be a better customer of industry. We must engage industry early and often throughout our requirements generation process. At the right classification levels, industry must understand the joint operational problems we are trying to solve. They must understand our warfighting gaps and our approach to requirements and capability development well before our requirements enter the Defense Acquisition System. Using the Joint Warfighting Concept to inform the selection of Research and Development (R&D) projects facilitates stronger alignment with warfighting needs from the onset. Furthermore, engagements to introduce concept frameworks to the broader research and engineering community, to include industry, academia, labs, and defense innovation entities have the potential to influence their respective internal investment strategies to help accelerate development of needed capabilities.

The way I see it, incentivizing private sector investment in critical technologies like AI and hypersonics requires a deliberate approach. First, we must adopt modular, open standards and performance-based requirements to reduce friction, encourage innovation, and allow industry greater flexibility in delivering solutions. Second, predictable, multi-year budgeting and dedicated funding for dual-use technology maturation is essential to give companies the confidence to invest in high-risk, high-reward areas. Third, we must streamline export controls and clarify intellectual property rights to strengthen partnerships with industry and allies while safeguarding U.S. advantages. Coupled with robust technology

forecasting, supply chain security measures, and sustained internal DOD R&D, this ensures alignment with national security priorities and preserves our technological edge. We must remain a smart customer—strategic, agile, and collaborative—not just a demanding one.

71. How can the DOD incorporate agile development methodologies, used by commercial technology companies, into the requirements process?

The speed of commercial innovation demands that we adapt, and that begins with fundamentally shifting our requirements process. We must transition from lengthy, prescriptive specifications to defining desired outcomes and key performance parameters, allowing industry greater freedom to innovate. We need to embrace iterative development through frequent prototyping and experimentation, leveraging tools such as Other Transaction Authority to accelerate progress and incorporate lessons learned in near-real time. Additionally, we should empower program managers with greater flexibility to adjust requirements based on operational feedback and testing. This approach does not sacrifice rigor; rather, it injects speed and adaptability into a traditionally rigid process. By treating requirements as living documents, continuously refined through collaboration with industry, we can better align with the pace of commercial innovation and deliver cutting-edge capabilities to the warfighter faster.

According to Section 181 of title 10, U.S. Code, “The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that, in the case of a recommendation [of a requirement] by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary that is approved by the Secretary, oversight information with respect to such recommendation that is produced as a result of the activities of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council is made available in a timely fashion to the congressional defense committees.”

72. Do you commit, if confirmed, to provide such information to Congress when requested?

Yes.

Joint Capabilities Integration and Development Systems (JCIDS)

Section 811 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 required the Joint Staff to review and propose a clean-sheet approach to the JCIDS process focused on streamlining approvals, integration of commercial technologies, and taking advantage of iterative development processes.

73. In your view, is the JCIDS process effective in providing information the JROC requires to anticipate both the current and the future needs of the Joint Force?

We have recently seen significant changes on the topic of JCIDS. In July, the Joint Staff delivered its Section 811 report to Congress on requirements reform directed in the FY24 NDAA. This report provides a “clean sheet” approach to Joint requirements and reorients the JROC to focus on Joint Force Design and Joint Capability Integration while preserving our responsibility to address Combatant Command needs and relying on the effectiveness of our Capability Portfolio Management process. Our Section 811 work provides the foundation necessary to achieve the objectives laid out by the Secretary of Defense in his August 20, 2025, memorandum on “Reforming the Joint Requirements Process to Accelerate Fielding of Warfighting Capabilities.” One key feature of this reform effort is the development and establishment of a Mission Engineering and Integration Activity (MEIA) led by USD(R&E). My understanding is that the MEIA is designed to rapidly engage with industry, conduct mission engineering analysis to refine capability requirements, and conduct rapid integration of capabilities and structured and iterative experimentation campaigns addressing joint operational problems identified by the JROC. These activities create opportunities to integrate industry contributions and innovations as well as Military Service capabilities and to support the development of new operational concepts and potentially non-material solutions.

74. How effective has JCIDS been in delivering capabilities that meet the evolving needs of the Joint Force, particularly in the face of rapidly advancing threats?

My view is that the JCIDS process was developed to ensure due diligence and accountability for the development of large, legacy platforms that cost billions of dollars of taxpayer money. Today, given rapid technological change and the rapid modernization of the nation’s adversaries, this system no longer fully meets the Department’s needs. The Department has made several changes, through the Middle Tier Acquisition and Software Acquisition Pathway, to respond to the evolving needs of the Joint Force amidst a rapidly changing technology environment. However, overreliance on rapid acquisition increases the risk of service-centric solutions that may not align with broader joint operational concepts. Additionally, without appropriate joint oversight, programs leveraging the rapid acquisition pathways may move quickly at the expense of joint integration and interoperability. Furthermore, increased use of these pathways increases the risk of overall inefficiency as Services may be unaware of the similar efforts by their sister Services and unnecessarily duplicate their efforts. If confirmed, I will continue to work with the Joint Chiefs and JROC to ensure that Service controlled initiatives are not stove-piped or unnecessarily redundant and that all strive to present joint integrated solutions.

75. What do you see as the most significant gaps in the current JCIDS process that prevents it from ensuring interoperability and channeling investments toward warfighters’ priorities?

The way I see it, the JROC and JCIDS processes provide a structured framework for identifying opportunities for multi-Service collaboration, but there remains room for improvement. The JROC has made progress in fostering cross-Service coordination, particularly through initiatives like the Joint Warfighting Concept and Capability Portfolio Management Reviews. JCIDS has been effective in reducing redundancy and improving coordination across the services, but it must continue to evolve to keep pace with rapidly emerging threats and technological advancements. However, the JROC lacks directive acquisition and budget authority, which prevents it from filling the high-priority gaps identified by the Combatant Commands. Additionally, the JCIDS process and documentation is antiquated and cumbersome. Lastly, continued modernization of KMDS, the joint requirements database, is critical to ensure real-time visibility of joint and Service requirements. DOD must smartly go faster and pick up the pace.

The 2021 General Accountability Report “Weapon Systems Requirements” found that staffing documents through JCIDS took an average of 800 days compared to a notional timeline of 103 days.

76. In your view, what is the appropriate role of Combatant Commanders in the JCIDS process?

My view is that Combatant Commanders are uniquely positioned to articulate both near-term operational needs and long-term capability gaps based on real-world threats and evolving mission requirements. Their direct input ensures that joint requirements are not just service-driven but are aligned with the operational realities of multi-domain conflict and regional security challenges. The Combatant Commanders submit their Integrated Priority Lists (IPLs), which are prioritized by the JROC and submitted to Congress annually. Additionally, Combatant Commands can submit urgent and emergent requirements for any gaps they may face during a contingency or anticipated contingency operation that would result in mission failure or loss of life if not resolved. Addressing Combatant Command needs remains one of four focus areas driving requirements reform. If confirmed, I will ensure the JROC continues to seek and consider input from the Combatant Commanders as we reform our joint acquisitions process.

77. If confirmed, how would you improve the effectiveness of the process in identifying both the near-term and long-term needs of the Combatant Commander?

My current perspective is that the needs of the Combatant Commanders are currently addressed through the Capability Gap Assessment process, where the JROC evaluates and prioritizes CCMD IPLs, as well as executes the Joint and Emergent Operational Need (JUON/JEON) processes, whereby urgent CCMD requirements are rapidly triaged and sent to OSD(A&S) for immediate funding, if validated. While the CGA/IPL process is successful at identifying gaps, these

gaps often remain unfilled because of the JROC's limited acquisition and budget authorities. In contrast, a validated JUON/JEON can result in funding direction from OSD(A&S), however, this approach still requires hard to come by Service offsets. A funding set aside for JUONs/JEONs may be able to address this problem.

78. Do you have any recommendations for changes to the structure, authority, or processes of the JROC or the JCIDS?

The way I understand it, the Joint Staff is currently reforming the structure, authorities, and process of the JROC and JCIDS in alignment with the following principles:

- Accelerate the right capability to the warfighter at capacity
- Empower the joint warfighter voice while balancing speed and operational risk
- Reduce bureaucracy while ensuring joint interoperability and integration.
- Optimize alignment and agility between requirements, acquisition, and budgeting
- Ensure authorities match responsibilities across DOD, Congress, and DIB.

We should fully implement these changes and assess their impact.

79. If confirmed, how would you drive the development and articulation of future joint concepts from which each Military Service's concept development, requirements generation, and acquisition processes will derive?

The way I understand it, the Department is addressing inefficiencies through the disestablishment of JCIDS and the reorientation of the JROC. This is being done to focus on strategic-level guidance, Joint Force Design, and the integration of Service capabilities with cross-Service dependencies. Prioritizing Key Operational Problems (KOPs) and addressing Combatant Command (CCMD) gaps, allows the JROC to ensure alignment with the NDS while empowering Service-level requirements validation. Integrating these efforts with the emerging Requirements and Resourcing Alignment Board (RRAB) ensures joint concepts are actionable and tied to resourcing and acquisition priorities. If confirmed, my focus will be on fostering collaboration across the Services and Combatant Commands, streamlining experimentation, and accelerating the delivery of capabilities at the speed of relevance, ensuring the Department remains agile, effective, and responsive to future challenges.

80. In your view, does DOD have the requisite modeling, simulation, and analytic capabilities to develop and assess future joint concepts, and the associated capabilities and force structure?

In my view, while the Joint Force and the Services possess modeling, simulation, and analytic capabilities that add value today. These capabilities include:

- Synthetic Theater Operations Research Model
- Joint Training Synthetic Environment
- Advanced Framework for Simulation, Integration, and Modeling
- and the Joint Live Virtual Constructive Environment.

Yet more can be done to expand modeling, simulation and analytic capabilities to shape the force and deliver advanced capabilities to the warfighter. What is “state of the art” for modeling and simulation are continuously evolving with the expanded use of supercomputing and the advent of AI-enabled modeling. The Department should capitalize on these advancements and accelerate the development of data-driven insights that prioritize the delivery of future concept-driven capabilities to the warfighter to better encapsulate the all-domain missions the Joint Force must undertake.

81. In your view, are the JROC and JCIDS processes sufficient to identify where opportunities for multi-Service collaboration exist, or where programs could or should be modified to take advantage of a related acquisition program?

In my view, while the JROC and JCIDS processes provide a structured framework for identifying opportunities for multi-Service collaboration, there is still room for improvement in fully leveraging joint synergies and aligning related acquisition programs. The JROC has made progress in fostering cross-Service coordination, particularly through initiatives like the Joint Warfighting Concept and Capability Portfolio Management Reviews. JCIDS has been effective in reducing redundancy and improving coordination across the services, but it must continue to evolve to keep pace with rapidly emerging threats and technological advancements.

The way I see it, there are three additional areas for improvement that can be made to these processes. First, the JROC needs adequate acquisition and budget authority to facilitate filling the high-priority gaps identified by the Combatant Commands. Second, our processes and documentation need to be updated to take advantage of modern information systems. This would ensure the Joint Staff is able to prioritize outcome over process – which I believe they are already working on. Lastly, continued modernization of KMDS, the joint requirements database, is critical to ensure real-time visibility of joint and Service requirements.

Joint Officer Management

82. If confirmed, what modifications to law and policy would you suggest to provide DOD and the Military Services with the force management and talent management tools necessary to recruit, develop, sustain, and retain a 21st century joint, All-Volunteer Force?

If confirmed, I will continue to work with OSD and the Service Chiefs to assess talent management strategies to maintain our competitive edge and strengthen the lethality of the All-Volunteer Force.

83. In your opinion, are current DOD and Military Service procedures and practices for reviewing the records of officers pending the President's nomination for promotion or assignment sufficient to enable fully-informed decisions by the Secretaries of the Military Departments, the CJCS, the Secretary of Defense, and the President?

Yes.

84. In your view, are these procedures and practices fair to the individual military officers proceeding through the promotion or assignment process?

Yes.

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

85. What is your assessment of the effectiveness of the FY 2017 modifications to the JQO system?

My assessment is that two significant modifications have provided the Department with additional flexibility in our Joint Qualification System. The expansion of the "joint matters" definition has ensured the ability to award joint duty credit to additional officers making contributions to the development and achievement of strategic objectives. The reduced statutory tour length required (from 36 months to 24 months) for joint duty credit has provided the Services additional flexibility in officer assignment for tightly managed career timelines and milestones.

86. In your view, do current JQO requirements appropriately balance the need for joint experience with the operational and professional development demands of Service line officers, particularly in relation to promotion and selection for senior leadership?

Yes.

87. Considering the substantial investment in developing joint leaders, what additional reforms, if any, should be pursued to strengthen the JQO system, improve its effectiveness, or explore alternative models for preparing officers for joint and combined operations?

From my perspective, there are not additional changes needed at this time. The existing joint officer qualification requirements provide a tested and flexible means to ensure officers develop the skills necessary for successful service at the operational and strategic levels.

General/Flag Officer Reductions

In March 2025, the Secretary of Defense directed the DOD to reduce the total number of general and flag officers by at least 10 percent, and a minimum of 20 percent among the ranks of 4-star general and flag officers.

88. What is your understanding of the progress the Department has made in reducing its number of GO/FO in accordance with the Secretary's direction?

My understanding is that, in reviewing the GO/FO population, staff analysis and senior leader expertise shaped several courses of action to achieve the Secretary's benchmarks.

89. In your view, should joint billets be exempted from the reductions?

In my view, this is a policy decision that should be carefully weighed to right-size the GO/FO population in accordance with the Secretary's objectives, while accounting for the breadth and depth of experience we expect of senior officers.

Legal Counsel to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

In 2008, Congress enacted section 156 of title 10, U.S. Code, inaugurating the requirement that the Legal Counsel to the CJCS be selected by a board of officers convened by the Secretary of Defense. To this day, the Chairman's Legal Counsel remains the only joint duty officer selected from among qualified officers of the Armed Forces in this manner.

90. Do you consider the board selection process required by section 156 to be an effective and efficient process for selecting an officer to serve in this critical joint position?

Yes, the selection process for the position of the Legal Counsel to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is an effective, efficient, and equitable means to select an officer for this position from a pool of talented judge advocate leaders across the Services.

91. What lessons, if any, have been captured from this joint process that could improve the selection board processes used by the Military Services?

I am not intimately familiar with lessons garnered from implementation of the section 156 board that are transferrable to other selection boards. However, wherever we can expand the use of best practices in our selection boards to ensure we are retaining and promoting our most talented commissioned and non-commissioned officers, we should look toward doing so, while remaining cognizant of the Services' existing, established processes.

92. Would you support expanding application of the process employed to select the Legal Counsel to the CJCS to other joint officer positions? Why or why not?

From my perspective, I do not see it being necessary to expand the Legal Counsel selection process to other joint billets. The Legal Counsel selection process pertains to a uniquely specific, statutorily authorized Joint Staff billet. The current, well-established processes used to select general/flag officers to other joint staff positions effectively facilitates a pool of candidates representing the best officers from each service. The Joint Staff process for identifying officers gives the Combatant Commander and the Chairman flexibility to meet operational demands and emergent requirements. The Joint Staff can select from across the Services (to include the Coast Guard) and the Active, Guard, and Reserve Components to identify the individual with appropriate skills and experience. Moreover, the current process provides commanders and other senior leaders an opportunity to quickly review a slate of nominated officers and conduct interviews as necessary. The Joint Staff can alert the Services to quickly identify eligible personnel, select candidates, nominate them, and have them in position in as little as 90 days, if necessary.

Joint Professional Military Education (JPME)

93. Based on your assessment of the threats facing the United States, now and in the future, what knowledge, skills, and abilities will officers need to succeed in great power competition against the nation's adversaries?

Future officers must possess a deep understanding of joint warfighting, adversary strategies, and the rapidly evolving character of war. They need the ability to frame military challenges within national policy, develop globally integrated strategies, and recommend viable military options to senior leaders to advance U.S. interests. Officers must anticipate and lead innovation in response to disruptive technologies, plan and execute all-domain operations with allied and partner integration and dynamically adapt strategies to achieve policy objectives. Critical and creative thinking, and effective communication skills are essential for developing and implementing complex strategies and operations. Professional military education must prepare leaders at all levels to navigate these demands and excel in a competitive and rapidly changing global environment.

A number of independent reviews have found that the current JPME system insufficiently prepares future military leaders and lacks sufficient rigor and instruction in strategic deterrence missions.

94. In your view, what additional steps should be taken to increase the proficiency of future senior military leaders in leading the Joint Force during a period of increased strategic competition, particularly in the nuclear domain?

To enhance the proficiency of future senior military leaders in strategic competition, particularly in the nuclear domain, the Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) system should expand its focus on strategic deterrence and escalation dynamics. This includes leveraging existing doctrine and coursework on coercion theory while incorporating the latest thinking on contemporary nuclear operations through faculty development seminars and expert instruction. JPME programs should prioritize strategic deterrence as a Chairman's special area of emphasis, ensuring all officers receive rigorous and comprehensive education on this critical mission. Additionally, integrating advanced scenarios and case studies on escalation dynamics and nuclear strategy will better prepare leaders for complex decision-making. These steps will ensure JPME programs provide the rigor needed to address the demands of great power competition.

95. In your view, is there a role for JPME in developing basic product management skills across the Joint Force to ensure that military leaders are proficient in the employment of software and automation in warfighting?

From my perspective, yes. JPME is designed to develop Joint warfighting leaders who can win in war, with its curriculum defined in Title 10 U.S. Code Chapter 107. To generate leaders with appropriate skillsets, the JPME program has incorporated the most strategically important elements of emerging information and automation technologies, including artificial intelligence-driven tools, into its curriculum. Instruction on the operation and technical use of software is more appropriately categorized as training rather than education. Existing onboarding initiatives within joint organizations are well-suited to equip military leaders with the specific product management skills needed for software and automation in their daily roles, ensuring relevant application within the operational environment. Therefore, JPME will continue to execute the role of providing leaders with the operational and strategic context of integrating emerging management technologies into their leadership toolkit while the development of basic product management skills is addressed through organizational training programs.

DOD Senior Official Education and Training

96. In your view, do a sufficient number of General/Flag officers and members of the Senior Executive Services (SES) have the advanced training, academic degrees, and expertise in scientific and technical disciplines needed to lead the future joint force and the scientific and technical civilian workforce?

From my perspective, the Joint Force does have sufficient expertise to lead the future Joint Force. The Joint Force makes significant efforts to attract and retain the expertise it needs in science and technology, including offering a range of degree-granting programs to ensure General/Flag Officers and SES members are equipped with advanced training and expertise in scientific and technical disciplines. Institutions such as the Air Force Institute of Technology and the Naval Postgraduate School provide graduate-level education in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. Additionally, the National Defense University offers programs that integrate technical and strategic education, while partnerships with civilian universities further expand opportunities for advanced academic training. These programs collectively aim to proactively build a cadre of General/Flag officers and SES members well-equipped with the scientific and technical acumen necessary to lead the future joint force and civilian workforce effectively.

97. Do you believe the career paths for General/Flag officers and SES with technical skills are sufficient to ensure that DOD and its components can develop capability performance requirements that will counter rapidly changing technological threats, execute complex acquisition programs, and make informed investment decisions? If not, what would you do to address this deficiency, if confirmed?

From my perspective, yes. The career paths for General/Flag officers and SES provide them informed and well-rounded management, leadership, and organizational skills to ensure that DOD and its components can develop capability performance requirements that will counter rapidly changing technological threats, execute complex acquisition programs, and make informed investment decisions.

98. In your view do current General/Flag officer and SES assignment policies incentivize highly qualified senior leaders to serve in acquisition programs? Do established tour lengths enable and empower senior leaders so assigned to manage effectively the long-term acquisition programs under their purview? If not, what changes do you believe are necessary to improve the effectiveness of the senior leaders assigned to such positions and duties?

From my perspective, yes. We have a very robust acquisition corps with Department-level priorities engaging our general/flag officers at strategic levels of implementation. Our tour lengths are designed to ensure long-term acquisition systems are managed in an effective and efficient manner. In my judgment, the

Department's biggest civilian workforce challenge is ensuring we continue to attract and retain the highest quality talent necessary to achieve our national security objectives. To do that, we must continue to compete with the private sector for talent and further establish the Department as an employer of choice, by effectively describing the importance of the nation's defense priorities to prospective employees.

99. Are you satisfied that OSD, the Joint Staff, and the Military Services have in place sufficient ethics training and resources to provide General/Flag officers and members of the SES the training, advice, and assistance needed to perform their duties in an ethical manner? Please explain your answer.

From my perspective, yes. Sufficient training and resources are in place to provide senior military and civilian leaders the training, advice, and assistance they need to perform their duties in an ethical manner. The ability to make ethical decisions is a foundational characteristic we look for in recruiting processes and is identified as a specific desired leader attribute for leaders throughout the military. It is foundational to all Joint and Service developmental efforts. The ethical foundation is laid at the outset of these individuals' careers and is further developed and reinforced in formal education and training throughout their careers.

100. What is your understanding of the impact of shuttering the Federal Executive Institute to the SES program and the members of the SES service?

I have limited knowledge of the impact of the closing of the Federal Executive Institute (FEI). My understanding is that FEI offered a range of leadership and development courses designed to enhance the skills and capabilities of senior Federal civilian employees. Therefore, FEI's closure may pose a challenge for the executive development short term, but the new Office of Personnel Management Senior Executive Development Program is scheduled to begin in October 2025 with a curriculum expected to be tailored to SES roles and designed to equip SES personnel to advance their agencies goals. The curriculum will also align with the revised Executive Core Qualifications expected to go into effect in October.

Joint Operations

Military operations are increasingly joint: the Marine Corps plans to deploy in larger numbers and on a wider range of Navy ships; the Army and Air Force invest in counter-maritime capabilities; and both air and naval forces continue to develop and implement capabilities to defeat anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) networks.

101. In your view, which other Military Service doctrines and capabilities offer the greatest opportunity for synergy in joint operations?

In my view, the objective of the Joint Force must be for all its elements to be capable of joint integration. Beyond traditional land, sea, and air integration, several service-specific doctrines and capabilities present opportunities for greater synchronization in joint all-domain operations. Cyber and electronic warfare integration across the Army, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, and Marine Corps can disrupt enemy networks and protect friendly systems. Likewise, Special Operations Forces from all services provide a flexible, high-impact capability can be tailored for unconventional missions and direct action in contested environments. Other critical areas for joint synchronization include intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), where multi-service and space-based platforms can generate a fused, real-time intelligence picture; logistics and sustainment; and Integrated Air and Missile Defense, where combined service assets create a layered shield against advanced threats. Together, these capabilities strengthen joint all-domain operations by enhancing resilience, improving decision-making, and in increasing combat effectiveness in complex environments.

102. If confirmed, what innovative ideas would you propose to increase Service interdependence and interoperability to accomplish missions and tasks in support of joint operations, to include logistical operations?

If confirmed, I would focus on strengthening joint integration and resilience across the logistics enterprise to mitigate current demands and build interdependence to sustain joint force operations. The challenges of contested logistics require bold moves and an intensified effort for interoperability, including a comprehensive coalition logistics strategy, and prioritizing co-production and co-sustainment with our allies and partners through the Regional Sustainment Framework.

To improve joint force integration and optimize Service interoperability, especially in logistics, three key initiatives could be pursued:

- 1) Create a secure, resilient joint Unified Data Environment as the single source of real-time awareness, breaking down data silos through standardized protocols
- 2) Develop Modular Sustainment Packages of interchangeable, standardized logistical units (fuel, medical, maintenance) deployable across Services, using common platforms and inter-Service agreements
- 3) Prioritize adaptive Distributed Logistics by leveraging host-nation resources, allied contributions, and prepositioned stocks, tested through rigorous joint exercises.

These initiatives will foster standardization, integration, and joint training, creating a more cohesive joint force.

103. In your opinion, what are the most critical shortfalls in capabilities to support the Joint Force?

In my opinion, there are five critical capability priorities to ensure that the United States remains effective in future conflict:

- 1) Sustaining and modernizing the nuclear deterrent
- 2) Strengthening homeland defense against advanced threats
- 3) Joint, all domain command and control
- 4) Advancing C5ISR to enable integrated, all-domain operations
- 5) Global mobility, distribution, and sustainment in contested environments.

104. Do you believe the respective services are on the correct path to modernize and overcome those shortfalls?

Yes. The Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance, Defense Planning Guidance, and our Joint Warfighting Concept provide clear guidance and direction to the Joint Force. Additionally, the JROC's key strength is its ability to provide a high-level, strategic perspective on capability development, ensuring that major acquisition programs align with Joint Warfighting Concepts and multi-domain operational needs required of the future Joint Force.

105. How would you use your unilateral authority as Chair of the JROC if needed to correct such shortfalls?

From my perspective, no other entity within the Joint Force is more responsible for Joint Force Design and balancing the current needs of the Joint Force with its future needs than the JROC. This is reinforced by recent directives to better align requirements to resources. If confirmed, while there are still many details to be worked out, I would use the new authority granted by the Secretary of Defense to the Vice Chairman as the co-chair of the Requirements and Resourcing Alignments Board (RRAB) to ensure that funding is allocated to top-ranked operational problems and that Service-specific requirements or activities stay within their proper limitations.

106. What is your understanding of how DOD intends to execute joint airborne battle management in a high-end fight?

Executing joint airborne battle management command and control relies on two main elements:

- 1) Timely decision-quality information
- 2) Effective communication defined as commander's intent via machine-to-machine and/or verbal authority.

The Department is focusing on CJADC2, the Air Force's contribution of ABMS, the Navy's Project Overmatch, and the Army's Project Convergence, to deliver target quality tracks in order to rapidly complete the Find, Fix, Track, Target, Engage, Assess (F2T2EA) targeting cycle for the high-end fight.

107. What is DOD doing to make machine-to-machine command and control, across multiple domains, a reality?

The way I understand it, the CJADC2 Capstone Requirements define the need for machine aided course of action selection (planning for all joint functions/decision advantage) and machine aided effects brokers (C2 of effects/execution advantage). The Services are developing and experimenting with machine-aided command and control processes focused at the Joint Force Component (CCMD, JTF) level to share data across joint functions and domains (and in multi-level security environments). Some have focused on streamlining the actual command and control decision processes, others have made inroads on machine-aided weapons-target pairing, algorithmically enhanced information and intelligence sharing across systems, and mesh networking capabilities. Across DOD we see significant multi-agency and cross department efforts to address the underlying challenges to machine-to-machine C2 such as Space and Cyber domain awareness data sharing.

108. In your view, are the Services doing enough to ensure airborne data links are interoperable and resilient against peer competitors?

In my view, the Services are progressing in the conceptualization and development of interoperable and resilient airborne data links through improvements and modernization in link architecture, gateways, and prototypes; however, much of this work is siloed based on Service-specific needs and priorities. This further highlights the requirement for a joint framework. Additionally, some allies and partners remain behind due to delayed vendor production or the inability to afford contract costs which has slowed collective fielding. As a result, the U.S. is advancing, but the lack of integration and uneven partner modernization may leave the Joint Force at risk of shortfalls against peer competitors in a coalition environment who are increasingly sharing production and technology.

109. In your view, how successful has the Joint Staff and the Department of Defense been at developing and refining the joint operational concepts that will govern this integrated fight?

In my view, the Joint Staff and DOD have made demonstrable progress in developing and refining joint operational concepts, by articulating a clear way forward for force development through the JWC and leveraging that concept to drive capability development to focus on critical operational needs. The shift towards a Key Operational Problem (KOP)-driven approach represents a significant step towards ensuring that the Joint Force is equipped to address evolving threats and maintain a competitive advantage in the integrated fight. This strategic alignment will be a key contributor in deterring conflict and securing victory should deterrence fail.

110. Do you think that there needs to be a different or tailored joint operational concept for the European and Indo-Pacific theaters? Why or why not?

The Joint Force must tailor operations to each unique circumstance, within a unified framework. The purpose of a Joint Warfighting Concept is to singularly focus the Department on a coherent, threat-informed approach to prevailing in future conflict. Our pacing challenge should drive our Joint Operational Concept. That said, the application of the concept should account for the unique key operational problems posed by different theaters. Geography, force posture, and the structure of alliances and partnerships all demand tailored execution of the operational imperatives in our joint warfighting concepts.

111. Who do you believe acts as the lead for contested logistics in how both efficiencies are created and executed?

The Services generate capabilities, Combatant Commands employ them, and USTRANSCOM integrates global mobility and distribution. As the Global Integrator, the Joint Staff synchronizes across these efforts to ensure a unified, aligned military approach to resourcing and prioritizing risk for coherent decision making.

112. Do you believe the Department of Defense needs to identify a single service or entity to act as the global contested logistics manager?

Contested logistics is an integrated, joint logistics enterprise-wide effort. It is achieved through a cooperative coalition of key global logistics providers within and beyond the Department. The Joint Staff synchronizes the Services' investments and Combatant Command requirements and will continue to assess whether changes are needed to advise the Chairman, Secretary of Defense, as well as to inform Congress.

113. What is your current assessment for how the Department of Defense views contested logistics when it comes to both war games and operational planning?

My assessment is that the Department recognizes logistics as a cornerstone of military success and has elevated it from a traditional support function to a decisive, pacing function in modern warfare. The Department is prioritizing contested logistics as a key enabler of mission success into operational planning, exercises, and wargames to shape development and design of the Joint Force.

Nuclear

Nuclear Policy and Force Modernization

United States nuclear forces are the bedrock of our nation's defense, underpin our most critical alliances, and have deterred nuclear aggression and great power conflict for more than 70 years. Unfortunately, long deferred investments have left us with systems nearing the end of their useful lives. These capabilities must be updated to maintain a viable nuclear deterrent.

114. Do you agree with the assessment of past Secretaries of Defense that nuclear deterrence is DOD's highest priority mission and that modernizing our nation's nuclear forces is a critical national security priority?

United States nuclear deterrence underpins our national security and should remain a top priority mission for the DOD.

Successive Commanders of U.S. Strategic Command have referred to reports of China's nuclear force expansion as "breathtaking" and contend that China's efforts to become a nuclear peer to the U.S. and Russia is a "strategic breakout," which represents an unprecedented threat to global stability.

115. Do you agree with this assessment?

Yes.

116. What is your understanding of how Russia and China have expanded and modernized their nuclear force capabilities?

Over the next decade, China will rapidly increase its nuclear forces. Estimates suggest China has surpassed 600 operational nuclear warheads in its stockpile as of 2024. The PLA's expanding nuclear force will enable it to threaten our allies, partners, and assets in the Asia-Pacific while also targeting more U.S. cities, military facilities, and C2 infrastructure than before. Russian modernization of its strategic nuclear forces is nearing completion. Russia holds the largest foreign nuclear stockpile in the world and has invested heavily in retaining an arsenal of approximately 2,000 nonstrategic nuclear weapons.

117. In your view, do these capabilities pose an increasing threat to the United States and its allies?

Yes.

118. Do you agree with DOD's assessment that China intends to double or triple the size of its nuclear arsenal over the next decade?

Yes.

119. Do you believe that as China completes its build out of a triad of delivery platforms it will adhere to the full meaning of “no first use”?

China is unlikely to change its stated no first use (NFU) policy as it completes its nuclear build up. China’s nuclear modernization is certainly an expansion of a long-term nuclear development goal. China will continue to use NFU to achieve diplomatic benefits. CCP officials and non-government experts cite the country's 60-year commitment to NFU to promote China as a responsible nuclear power. However, a larger and more capable nuclear force would provide China’s leaders with the ability to adopt a range of nuclear strategies beyond NFU in the future.

120. Do you believe our current deterrence policy and force structure effectively accounts for two near peer nuclear competitors? If not, do you believe the U.S. will require additional capabilities, a numerically larger force than exists today, or a combination of both?

I believe we are facing increasing nuclear competition with Russia and China's rapid nuclear expansion is presenting new strategic dilemmas requiring increased focus on new capabilities and/or a larger force. If confirmed, I will continue to assess the force and work with stakeholders across the nuclear enterprise to ensure our nuclear force is sufficient to address this evolved environment.

121. What is your assessment of our regional and extended deterrent capabilities in Europe and Asia and our allies’ views on them?

Our extended deterrence commitments play an important role to enhance the safety and security of the American people, our allies, and partners, which enables our allies and partners to invest more in their own defense. Confidence in our nuclear umbrella assures our allies and partners and dissuades adversaries from coercing our partners around the globe.

122. Do you agree that a triad of land, air, and sea based nuclear delivery platforms is consistent with an effective deterrent posture in an era of great power competition with Russia and China?

Yes. Each leg of the triad serves an important and distinct purpose, and offers unique, but mutually reinforcing, attributes. All three legs are needed to preserve deterrence in the face of growing threats.

123. If confirmed, do you commit to support full funding for efforts to comprehensively modernize the nation’s nuclear deterrent forces, including supplemental capabilities like the sea-launched cruise missile, and accelerate such programs wherever possible?

The United States must continue nuclear force modernization investments, and if confirmed, I commit to supporting full funding for nuclear modernization and

acceleration wherever possible, including additional capabilities that bolster deterrence. A nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile is one capability that will help address regional deterrence challenges in the face of Chinese and Russian theater nuclear force capabilities and their rapid expansion and modernization. Additionally, I believe it is important to work within the Joint Staff and Interagency to assess other supplemental theater nuclear options as suggested by the 2023 Strategic Posture Commission.

124. What is the principal purpose of extending nuclear deterrence to U.S. allies?

Extended nuclear deterrence protects our allies and our interests. Our nuclear arsenal, through extended deterrence, serves as a backstop for our allies' security, which enhances security for the American people and enables our allies to take greater responsibility for conventional deterrence in their regions. Furthermore, extended deterrence assurances contribute to nuclear non-proliferation.

Extending nuclear deterrence to U.S. allies is at the core of our post-war grand strategy and is indispensable to the maintenance of a favorable balance of power in key regions of the world.

125. Do you believe that the capabilities and mechanisms for extending nuclear deterrence is keeping up with the demands of advancing adversary nuclear and conventional capabilities?

If confirmed, I look forward to serving as a member of the Nuclear Weapons Council to ensure that our capabilities and mechanisms for extending nuclear deterrence keep pace with advancing adversary nuclear and conventional capabilities.

126. Do you believe U.S. extended nuclear deterrence assurances are effective in reassuring allies that they do not need to pursue their own nuclear arsenals to ensure their national security?

United States extended nuclear deterrence commitments are and have been instrumental in accomplishing non-proliferation objectives and protecting the United States at home and abroad for decades.

127. How should nuclear, strategic and conventional military forces be combined to achieve our strategic goals, and specifically, allied assurance?

The Joint Force must maintain diverse capabilities in order to deter our adversaries and accomplish the President's priorities. We enhance multi-domain planning and operations across the Joint Force by leveraging tailored options to accomplish objectives in support of United States interests. We must continue to

leverage our strengths and innovate in both the nuclear and non-nuclear domains to maintain our advantage and reassure our allies.

Multiple recent press reports have highlighted allied concerns regarding the credibility of U.S. extended nuclear deterrence assurances, and some – particularly South Korea – have seen increased calls to develop their own independent nuclear deterrent as a means of offsetting reduced confidence in U.S. assurances.

128. Do you believe that the risk of nuclear proliferation will increase if U.S. allies lose confidence in our extended nuclear deterrence assurances?

Yes, it is imperative that we maintain allied confidence in our nuclear umbrella to assure our allies and dissuade adversaries from coercing our partners around the globe.

Successive Nuclear Posture Reviews have concluded that the adoption of a nuclear “No First Use” (NFU) policy by the United States is not advisable.

129. Do you believe a NFU policy would be appropriate for the United States, and what do you believe would be the implications of such a policy on the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence commitments to our allies?

I agree with previous Nuclear Posture Reviews that maintaining strategic ambiguity complicates adversary decision calculus. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing our nuclear policy to include "No first use".

A core tenet of U.S. nuclear strategy since the Cold War has been that only the President of the United States can authorize or terminate the use of U.S. nuclear weapons. This principle is based on preserving civilian control of military forces and ensuring that the United States maintains the ability to respond in a timely manner to strategic attacks. However, there have been periodic calls to revise this policy to constrain presidential authority to direct the employment of nuclear weapons.

130. Do you believe the president should be the sole authority for authorizing and terminating the use of U.S. nuclear weapons?

As the current arrangement preserves civilian control of military forces, any proposal to alter the existing policy would lie with civilian policymakers. If confirmed, my role as Vice Chairman will be to ensure the National Military Command System meets the needs of the President, Secretary of Defense, and Combatant Commanders on behalf of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and the Nuclear Weapons Council (NWC)

If confirmed as VCJCS, you will serve as a member of the NWC. As a member of the Council, you will work closely with the NNSA to coordinate policies and align resources for DOD and Department of Energy nuclear programs.

131. If confirmed, will you commit to fully participating in NWC matters and personally attending meetings?

Yes. I look forward to working through the Nuclear Weapons Council and across the interagency to ensure the credibility of our nuclear deterrent.

132. If confirmed, what would be your priorities for the work of the NWC?

If confirmed, I look forward to understanding the current state of play within the Nuclear Weapons Council and I intend to reach out to other Council members to understand their perspectives before offering my priorities to inform the Council's plan of action.

133. If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you recommend to the membership and responsibilities of the NWC?

If confirmed, I look forward to understanding how the Council executes its statutory responsibilities and offering recommendations.

134. In your view, does the Stockpile Stewardship Program provide the tools necessary to ensure the safety and reliability of the nuclear weapons stockpile without testing? If not, what tools are needed?

It is my understanding that the Stockpile Stewardship Program has developed the tools needed to certify the current stockpile without the need for full-scale nuclear weapons testing.

U.S. nuclear forces are nearing the end of their useful lives. These capabilities must be updated over the next 20 years if the United States is to maintain a viable nuclear deterrent.

135. What is your understanding of the state of U.S. nuclear forces, its global nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3) architecture, and the supporting weapons sustainment and production capabilities within the NNSA?

Our nuclear forces and existing NC3 architecture are safe, secure, and effective today. However, we have greatly exceeded their intended design life. Deferred modernization has removed margin and there is no room for delay. This is further challenged by atrophy in both the defense industrial base for nuclear delivery platforms and National Nuclear Security Administration's outdated infrastructure for nuclear production capabilities.

136. Do you believe the current suite of nuclear modernization programs are sufficient to support the full modernization of the nuclear triad, including delivery systems, warheads, command and control systems, and infrastructure?

Yes. It is imperative to continue current suite of modernization programs to deliver a credible and effective nuclear deterrent. If confirmed, I will work with Department leaders and with the NWC to assess the sufficiency of our nuclear deterrent relative to the challenges we will face in the coming decades.

137. What are your ideas for working across the Joint Force to mitigate the risk that all three legs of the nuclear triad will “age out” simultaneously at the end of the 2020s?

I am not intimately familiar with the timelines associated with the capabilities supporting each leg of the triad, but, if confirmed, look forward to working closely with NNSA, OSD, USSTRATCOM, and other critical stakeholders to assess the likelihood of a capability cliff, and assist in developing options to avoid any such possibility.

The NNSA is responsible for maintaining the nation’s nuclear weapons stockpile and meeting military requirements for nuclear weapons, which are established through the interagency NWC. NNSA’s principal challenge over the next 20 years is to rebuild the Cold War-era U.S. nuclear weapons infrastructure into a responsive and resilient enterprise.

138. Do you support the recapitalization of the NNSA’s capabilities to design, manufacture, and sustain an effective nuclear weapons stockpile?

Yes. Recapitalization is necessary to sustain an effective force, deliver the program of record, and facilitate future requirements.

139. If confirmed, will you commit to working with the other members of the NWC and the interagency to ensure that annual budgets adequately support the modernization and sustainment of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile?

Yes. I look forward to working across the interagency to ensure annual budgets meet the modernization and sustainment needs of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile.

140. What are your greatest concerns with respect to the DOD and NNSA modernization programs?

Although our nuclear forces and existing NC3 architecture are safe, secure, and effective today, we have greatly exceeded their intended design life, and they are

showing their age. Deferred modernization has removed margin and there is no longer room for delay. My greatest concern is atrophy in the defense industrial base for nuclear delivery platforms, National Nuclear Security Administration production capabilities, and infrastructure.

141. Do you support continued collaboration with the United Kingdom in the maintenance of its independent nuclear deterrent?

Yes. Our collaboration with the UK is mutually beneficial and serves U.S. interests.

Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications

The VCJCS serves as the co-chair of the Council on Oversight of the National Leadership Command, Control, and Communications System.

142. If confirmed, how would you use this role to advocate for the modernization of NC3 systems?

If confirmed, I will be a staunch supporter of closing our modernization and maintenance gaps across the spectrum of capabilities, but especially in the nuclear force. Although our nuclear forces and existing NC3 architecture are safe, secure, and effective today, we have greatly exceeded their intended design life, and they are showing their age.

143. In your view, what partnerships do you perceive as most critical in protecting NC3 against cyber threats? If confirmed, what actions will you take to assess the cyber security of the NC3 system on an enduring basis?

In my view, the partnerships I perceive as most critical in protecting NC3 against cyber threats are DOD CIO, NSA, USSTRATCOM, USCYBERCOM, DISA, and USD(P). Together, with other mission partners, we sit on the CONLC3S. If confirmed, I will work with stakeholders to assess the status, resourcing, and prioritization of NC3 cyber initiatives.

144. If confirmed, what would your role on the Joint Staff for NC3 operations be?

If confirmed, my role for NC3 operations—alongside the Deputy Secretary of Defense — would be to lead and oversee the NC3 enterprise on behalf of the CJCS. I would be responsible for operational risk of new systems being integrated into the enterprise, provide operational guidance for mission requirements, and ensure interoperability with other senior leader platforms to support the President and the Secretary of Defense. I will also support the Chairman in his roles supporting national authorities in their NC2 and NC3 roles.

145. In your view, should senior leaders across the Executive Branch regularly take part in NC3 exercises and, if so, why?

In my view, senior leaders across the Executive Branch should take part in NC3 exercises to ensure interoperability and seamless collaboration to inform presidential orders and guidance during steady state or crisis.

The VJCS is responsible for ensuring that the capability of the Integrated Threat Warning Attack Assessment System (ITW/AA) meets presidential intent and associated requirements.

146. What are your views on the ITW/AA system meeting current requirements and the need for modernization?

The Integrated Tactical Warning and Attack Assessment (ITW/AA) system remains a cornerstone of our Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications (NC3) architecture and strategic deterrence, meeting the information needs of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) and the President. However, the system faces challenges in detecting, tracking, displaying, and characterizing advanced threats due to adversary advancements and insufficient sustainment/investment funding. Future United States Space Force (USSF) systems, such as proliferated missile warning and tracking satellite constellations, as well as upgrades to ground-based radars hold great promise for enhancing ITW/AA capabilities, but their integration timeline remains uncertain. I defer to the Chief of Space Operations to prioritize ITW/AA weapon system funding and ensure ground-based radar sustainment and modernization efforts are aligned with the needs of homeland defense and global deterrence. I am committed to supporting a resilient and modernized ITW/AA system to maintain strategic deterrence and address emerging threats effectively.

Arms Control

Arms control, when effective and verifiable, has been a valuable tool for managing competition and international security concerns. In contrast, unverifiable arms control regimes observed by only one party can generate instability.

147. Do you believe that further reductions should be taken only within the context of a formal, verifiable arms control agreement with Russia, China and other nuclear-armed powers?

Any agreement must prioritize U.S. national security. If confirmed, I look forward to understanding the options and providing my recommendations to the Chairman.

148. What are your views on the military significance of Russian tactical nuclear forces not covered by the New START Treaty and whether arms

control measures can adequately address them?

Russian non-strategic nuclear weapons pose a significant military challenge due to their quantity (approximately 2,000 warheads) and diverse delivery systems. If confirmed, I look forward to understanding and making recommendations on options to address these capabilities.

The first Trump administration considered an overall cap on the number of nuclear warheads between the U.S. and Russia rather than platform specific limitations.

149. What are your views on this approach? How does China's nuclear expansion affect this approach?

If confirmed, I look forward to understanding and offering recommendations on the bilateral and multilateral options available to implement arms control efforts with Russia and China.

150. What is your current assessment of the New START Treaty and the likelihood of any follow-on nuclear arms control treaties with either Russia or China?

The New START has proved a valuable tool to limit strategic nuclear arsenals. However, Russia's suspension of participation and China's rapid growth have complicated the arms control landscape. If confirmed, I look forward to understanding and offering recommendations on bilateral and multilateral efforts.

151. Do you believe that the United States should consider accepting limitations on its missile defense, cyber, space, or conventional power projection capabilities to obtain an agreement with Russia or China on nuclear weapons reductions?

Missile defense, cyber, space, and conventional power projection capabilities are capabilities critical to U.S. national security, deterrence, and the ability to respond to a range of threats beyond nuclear conflict. If confirmed, I look forward to understanding and offering recommendations on bilateral and multilateral options for nuclear weapons reduction agreements.

Missile Defense

Golden Dome for America

152. What is your understanding of the purpose, mission, and scope of the Golden Dome for America?

As I understand it, the purpose of the Golden Dome for America is to defend our citizens and critical infrastructure against any foreign aerial attack on the Homeland. The goal is to provide increasing defensive capabilities that contribute to the credibility of U.S. deterrence, strengthen U.S. power projection, deny opponents the leverage of coercive nuclear threats, and limit damage should deterrence fail.

153. What existing and emerging threats is Golden Dome intended to counter?

I understand that Golden Dome for America is intended to counter existing and emerging threats including ballistic missiles, hypersonic missiles, and advanced cruise missiles.

154. In your view, is Golden Dome intended to provide a comprehensive missile defense for a particular geographic region, i.e., will all types of missile threats be addressed?

I understand that Gen Guetlein and the Golden Dome for America Office are developing a plan for the system architecture. Defended areas will be assigned missile defense capabilities at differing levels of protection based on several factors, to include threat and system capability.

155. In your view, is Golden Dome intended to address non-missile airborne threats, such as unmanned systems, high-altitude balloons, or manned aircraft?

The President has directed us to defeat next generation aerial attacks with the Golden Dome for America. Whether through Golden Dome or otherwise, it remains important that we continue to defend the Homeland from all types of threats, including non-missile airborne threats.

156. In designating this effort as “Golden Dome for America,” there is an implication that the program will provide defenses across geographic regions. What is your understanding of the intended extent of this coverage? Will such defenses cover the continental United States? The North American continent? Alaska and Hawaii? U.S. territories?

The United States military’s top priority is to strengthen our missile defenses as a foundational element of our national defense strategy. My understanding is that Golden Dome is intended to protect all 50 states and defeat missiles of all types.

157. If Golden Dome is not intended to provide comprehensive defensive coverage across North America and all non-contiguous U.S. states and territories, what criteria will inform what is to be defended? Who do you

understand will make the determinations regarding the coverage of Golden Dome?

As I understand it, Golden Dome will be a multi-layered defense system of systems that will protect CONUS, Alaska, and Hawaii. If confirmed, I look forward to gaining a deeper understanding of the process to determine scope and coverage.

158. In your view, what role should missile defeat technologies, such as directed energy, electronic warfare, and offensive cyber operations, play in Golden Dome?

It is essential that we create greater defense in depth in a layered approach that provides as many opportunities as possible to defeat threats targeting the Homeland.

159. In what stages or phases would you envision Golden Dome proceeding with regard to each of these goals and objectives?

The Direct Reporting Program Manager for Golden Dome for America is best positioned to provide information on program phasing toward goals and objectives. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Gen Guetlein and the Golden Dome team to best support their efforts toward achieving the level of protection that the President has envisioned.

160. If confirmed, how would you measure the progress toward each of these goals and objectives? What metrics would you apply to each, and what criteria would you apply to ascertain whether a goal or objective has been met or achieved?

The Direct Reporting Program Manager for Golden Dome for America is best positioned to provide information on specific metrics being used, or under consideration for use, to gauge the progress of the Golden Dome program. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Gen Guetlein and the Golden Dome team to better understand their desired benchmarks of success as they work toward the level of protection the President has envisioned for the program.

161. In your view, are there particular lines of effort for Golden Dome that could be executed concurrently? Which lines of effort would likely require a more sequential approach?

Golden Dome for America will integrate existing programs and systems while developing next-generation technologies to achieve the goal of providing a layered Homeland air and missile defense shield. The Joint Staff will support the Golden Dome Direct Reporting Program Manager's efforts to execute a phased

deployment which strategically addresses the areas of highest risk to the Homeland, while building a strong layered defense over time.

162. What lines of effort do you consider readily executable with existing technology and low maturation risk and what lines of effort do you consider nascent technology requiring a high degree of maturation?

The Joint Staff will support the Golden Dome Direct Reporting Program Manager in identifying, fielding, and integrating a layered air and missile defense shield which effectively combines existing programs and systems with future developmental technologies. The Joint Staff acknowledges that some of the next-generation technologies likely to be included in the Golden Dome architecture are first of their kind capabilities which will require more maturation over time.

163. How will you work with the Golden Dome Direct Reporting Program Manager, the Military Services, OSD, and the Missile Defense Agency to support the development and integration of a battle management communication and control system that supports the Joint Force? In your view, what are the major issues with this system of systems integration?

The Joint Staff is supporting the Golden Dome Direct Reporting Program Manager and coordinating closely with other stakeholders to identify potential Battle Management and Command and Control system candidates which will meet the unprecedented requirements for Golden Dome integration. The successful integration of multiple warfighting domains across multiple Combatant Command areas of responsibility will be a critical enabler to the success of the Golden Dome defensive shield.

164. What lessons will you take from the development of the Guam Missile Defense System?

Guam Defense System developmental efforts have highlighted the importance of fielding an integrated air and missile defense architecture that is modular, scalable, and tailorable to any adversary threat. In a potential future conflict, the Joint Force will not be able to rely on individual systems that cannot be woven into a layered architecture. The Joint Staff will support the Direct Reporting Program Manager's efforts to fully integrate all systems into the Golden Dome architecture.

165. In your view, how will the DOD work with other federal and private-sector partners to deliver on the goals and objectives of Golden Dome?

To be successful, Golden Dome will require a whole-of-government approach to deter and, if necessary, defeat attacks against the United States.

Since the United States withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty to pursue ballistic missile defenses, U.S. policy has been to maintain limited defenses against simple threats from North Korea and Iran, while relying on nuclear deterrence to address Russian and Chinese systems.

166. If Golden Dome is intended to address all forms of missile threats, regardless of their origin, do you believe the development and deployment of this architecture will affect strategic competition between the United States, Russia, and China?

Other nations are already racing to develop advanced aerial weapons. They also possess forms of missile defense and actively seek to defeat the systems we rely on for deterrence. Golden Dome represents the United States' clear-eyed recognition of these threats, and our determination to protect the American people from them. If confirmed, I will work to assess whether the deployment of Golden Dome could produce strategic instability and provide my advice to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for his consideration.

167. Do you believe development of a comprehensive missile defense system will alter ongoing Chinese, Russian, or North Korean efforts to substantially expand their nuclear and long-range strike capabilities?

A missile defense system that is comprehensive in geographic coverage could reduce the value of Chinese and Russian programs to attack the United States via non-traditional flight paths; however, both Beijing and Moscow already field substantially more traditional intercontinental-range missiles than can be defeated by the U.S. Ground-Based Midcourse Defense system. Conversely, the U.S. ballistic missile defense is a major factor in mitigating the threat posed by North Korea's limited number of intercontinental-range missiles.

168. The executive order that directed efforts to develop Golden Dome stated that the system would, "guarantee [the United States'] secure second-strike capability". In practical terms, what do you understand this to mean? Does this mean that all U.S. nuclear forces will be defended or only certain aspects of the nuclear triad?

Golden Dome will help us ensure that if an adversary chooses to strike first with a nuclear capability that we will maintain the capacity to respond accordingly across the triad.

169. In your view, what role should nuclear deterrence have with respect to Golden Dome?

United States nuclear weapons undergird our national security. We rely on a whole-of-government effort to defeat missile technology of all adversaries while raising the threshold of escalation by maintaining a credible kinetic defense. A

comprehensive missile defeat and the United States nuclear arsenal are complementary and mutually reinforcing, they are essential for deterring an attack against the United States or our allies and partners.

170. Do you believe the United States should take a more assertive posture in efforts to defeat potential threats from manifesting, i.e., increasing our use of "left-of-launch" capabilities to eliminate missiles prior to launch when warnings indicate the possibility?

I believe that anything we can do to prevent our adversaries from procuring, developing, proliferating, or using threat missiles is an improved posture for the United States and our allies.

171. What is your understanding of U.S. strategic objectives and what role do you believe Golden Dome should play in supporting these objectives?

The U.S. military's top priority is to defend the homeland, which includes strengthening our homeland missile defenses as a foundational element of our national defense strategy.

172. In your view, how should Golden Dome be sized, structured, and resourced to implement the 2025 Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance and execute U.S. strategic objectives?

The Senate recently confirmed General Guetlein as the Direct Reporting Program Manager for Golden Dome, and he is the right leader to meet the President's directive and associated timelines. The Joint Staff will provide the Direct Reporting Program Manager with all support required to develop and deploy the Golden Dome architecture. The size, structure, and resourcing for Golden Dome will be defined by warfighter requirements to meet 2025 Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance.

Integrated Air and Missile Defense is being considered as a fifth initiative for strategic direction from the JROC.

173. In your view, why is it important that IAMD become a fifth initiative and do you support this going forward?

Integrated Air and Missile Defense is as important now as it ever has been for the Joint Force. Our adversaries continue to develop more advanced threats to our Homeland, our citizens, and our deployed forces. Joint Force investments in Integrated Air and Missile Defense capabilities must lead the threat. The Joint Staff will continue to ensure that required capabilities are provided to the warfighter at speed and at scale.

174. What is your assessment of munitions requirements for the IAMD capability?

Joint Force support for Golden Dome for America, the Guam Defense System, and overseas operations requires that we provide our warfighters with the right number of the right munitions to defeat our most complex threats. To meet the scale required to successfully deter any potential aggression from our adversaries, we must continue to strengthen our Defense Industrial Base, increase our manufacturing capacity, and ensure our munitions stockpiles are sufficient to match any potential threat.

Space

The United States is increasingly dependent on space, both economically and militarily—from the Global Positioning System on which many industries and military capabilities rely, to the missile warning systems that underpin U.S. nuclear deterrence. Our strategic competitors – China and Russia – are engaged in a concerted effort to leap ahead of U.S. technology and impact U.S. freedom of action in the space warfighting domain.

175. In your view, how would you characterize the level of risk China and Russia pose to U.S. space-based assets?

I would characterize the level of risk China and Russia pose to U.S. space assets as concerning and increasing. Both China and Russia are testing and fielding sophisticated counterspace capabilities with the intent to disrupt and degrade the U.S. space-enabled advantage and have demonstrated the ability to destroy a satellite in LEO. China has eclipsed Russia in its counterspace capabilities and is poised to compete with the United States as the world's leader in space. Russia continues to train its military space elements and field new antisatellite weapons.

176. If confirmed, how would you assist the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in improving situational awareness of space and appropriately prioritizing the protection of U.S. space-based assets?

There is an enormous opportunity for us to leverage our growing space industrial base in maintaining a complete sight picture of not just what's up in space but characterizing and monitoring activity in real time to identify and negate threats to our space-based assets. If confirmed I will certainly devote time to ensuring we are leveraging the best capabilities in the right combination of Department of Defense, government-owned, commercially sourced, and partner-provided data sources to enable freedom of access to and freedom of use of the space domain.

177. In your view, what are your greatest concerns as the Space Force continues to operationalize across the DOD for the development of doctrine,

organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities?

It's important to recognize that the creation of the Space Force came from a recognition of the need for a new approach to organizing space activities, acquisitions, and force development to support warfighting in that domain to the benefit of the overall Joint Force. All Joint Functions are directly enabled by or powerfully enhanced by space effects. An integrated Joint Force understands the interconnected nature of modern military operations are inseparably multidomain efforts. Helping the Joint Force understand their space dependencies and what the Space Force needs to provide while ensuring the service has the resources to meet those requirements is going to be an important element of setting up our military to deter convincingly or defeat decisively.

178. What are your views on how to best achieve deterrence in space when so many space control systems are highly classified?

We are continually balancing the need to demonstrate capability to potential adversaries to convince them of our means of imposing costs or denying effects of aggressive action in space with the concurrent need to maintain a level of unknown reserve capability to complicate decision calculations. Additionally, deterrence in space is one component of a broader set of deterrence activities and desired outcomes across domains. The Joint Staff has a key role in coordinating those efforts among services, combatant commands, and interagency activities to achieve security outcomes aligned with policy objectives.

179. As the Space Force is the title 10 provider of forces and capabilities to the combatant commands for space operations, do you believe they should be developing a tactical ISR space capability no different than other services and their military doctrine and capabilities?

The development of new capabilities must be driven by Joint Force needs rather than the pursuit of new systems to mirror capabilities within other Services. If the Joint Force, or the Space Force, determines that a tactical ISR space capability is a solution to a priority Warfighter requirement, and it can be developed rapidly and efficiently, then the Services and or agencies should pursue that capability.

180. Do you believe the Chief of Space Operations in their title 10 role should be the principal force design architect for space systems and operations?

In crafting Title 10 Section 9028, Congress was aware that the Chief of Space Operations would be uniquely situated to have the best awareness of current military utilization of, and requirements for, warfighting capabilities in the Space domain, and therefore would be in the best position to be designated as the primary force design architect for space systems of the Armed Forces.

181. The reason for the creation of the Space Force was to consolidate disparate space capabilities while balancing the need of other services to utilize space within their doctrine and operations. Do you support that objective?

Yes, the Space Force provides the Joint Force a necessary focus on the critical need to present to the Combatant Commands forces specifically organized, trained, and equipped for operations in, to, through, and from the Space domain while allowing the other Services to generate forces that fill their own needs related to Space capabilities.

182. What is your assessment of the Space Development Agency and the current requirements process? If confirmed, how would you ensure that commercial technology and mission support is incorporated into Space Development Agency products and SPACECOM mission execution at acceptable risk levels?

Space Development Agency (SDA) is entering a pivotal period as it begins launching the Tranche 1 satellites of its Proliferated Warfighting Space Architecture in September 2025. SDA has made innovative use of the Mid-Tier Acquisition path as it seeks to outpace our adversaries. SDA provides annual updates to the JROC that include how it's aligning to the Commercial Space Strategy of April 2024. If confirmed, I will use those opportunities to shape SDA's adoption of commercial technology and risk management approach.

183. What particular challenges do you perceive to increasing collaboration between the private sector and DOD in the acquisition of space systems and launch options?

Many of the acquisition challenges that reform efforts are trying to address apply to companies developing space capabilities, including complex regulations, the budgeting process, and security clearance limitations. I support U.S. Space Force efforts to lower classifications where appropriate to widen the number of industry participants. This not only harnesses innovation but increases competition. Additionally, the two-lane approach that the United States Space Force is executing for its National Security Space Launch program was developed with extensive industry input and provides on-ramps for new vendors in the private sector.

184. What role should the JROC have in the Intelligence Community capabilities in space given that the DOD is responsible for defending the capability during conflict?

The relationship between the JROC and IC capability developers was codified in a 2013 memorandum that provided guidelines for the interaction between the Intelligence Community Capability Requirements (ICCR) process and the

recently disestablished JCIDS process. This ensured awareness and input in both processes beyond specific space capabilities. As the Joint Staff implements requirements reform efforts, we will assess opportunities to update and strengthen guidelines where needed.

Spectrum

A large number of U.S. space-based systems and terrestrial radars operate across bands of spectrum that have been identified as candidates for auction for non-federal use, specifically those in the 3.1-3.45 GHz and 7-8 GHz ranges.

185. What are your views regarding the auction, for non-federal use, of the 3.1-3.45 GHz and 7-8 GHz spectrum bands given the U.S. dependence on such bands for missile detection and tracking?

Protecting critical spectrum bands is vital for our national security. The 3.1-3.45 GHz and 7-8 GHz bands support essential missile detection and tracking systems, and we appreciate the protections for 3.1-3.45 GHz and 7.125-7.4 GHz provided by the President and Congress in the One Big Beautiful Bill. Continued support for developing advanced spectrum coexistence or dynamic spectrum sharing solutions is key. Preserving access to this spectrum is a non-negotiable requirement for defending the homeland.

186. In your view, are there other spectrum bands besides those listed that you feel should be protected to ensure the continued operational effectiveness of the Joint Force?

A proactive and comprehensive approach is necessary to protect all spectrum critical to the Joint Force. Before any Federal band used by DOD can be identified for repurposing, decisions must be based on technical feasibility assessments and operational impact evaluations to address risks to national security missions. A rigorous, data-driven technical evaluation process, fully informed by operational risks determined by DOD, is essential to evaluate the national security impact of any proposed spectrum reallocation. This will ensure the full range of spectrum needed for current and future operations is protected.

187. What are your views regarding the potential sharing of spectrum for both federal and non-federal bands?

Any decision to repurpose spectrum used by DOD should be informed by an assessment of the impact on our missions. Spectrum sharing offers a viable path to ensuring U.S. 5G/NextG dominance while preserving DOD's ability to conduct its missions, but it requires rigorous technical analysis, modeling, and testing to prove it will not cause harmful interference. This process must guarantee the

priority and integrity of national security operations. Protecting the Joint Force's ability to operate effectively must remain our foremost objective.

188. If such bands were rendered unavailable or unsuitable for use in support of missile detection and tracking, what is your understanding of the scale of investment that would be required to develop effective alternative sensor systems?

Losing access to these critical bands would necessitate a massive and high-risk investment in alternative technologies. Developing and fielding new sensor systems would be a multi-decade effort costing tens of billions of dollars, requiring a fundamental redesign of our defense architecture and introducing significant operational risk. Any additional details about these risks would need to be provided at higher levels of classification. Therefore, protecting our access to these bands is the most fiscally responsible and strategically sound approach.

189. How long would you estimate such technologies would take to mature to the point where they could be operationally fielded?

Fielding mature, alternative technologies to replace critical capabilities is a long-term endeavor that creates unacceptable risk. While we must move faster in acquisition, the specific lifecycles for maturation depend on the unique characteristics of the spectrum band and the capabilities it supports; for complex sensor systems, it could take 15 to 20 years to progress through the entire defense acquisition lifecycle. This extended timeline could create a dangerous capabilities gap, underscoring the importance of protecting our existing spectrum allocations while we innovate.

190. If confirmed, how would you work with the DOD Chief Information Officer, Military Departments and Services, the Joint Staff, and other DOD Components to ensure that the Department's frequency spectrum requirements are accounted for and protected in interagency discussions about potential spectrum auctions?

Protecting the Department's spectrum requirements in interagency discussions is a top priority. If confirmed, I will work to ensure our operational spectrum needs are meticulously documented and validated as part of interagency discussions conducted with the Department of Defense (DOD) Chief Information Officer, the Services, and the Joint Staff. This unified, data-driven approach will ensure warfighter requirements are clearly articulated before repurposing decisions are finalized. The DOD must speak with one voice to ensure the President, Congress, and the interagency are aware of the spectrum needs for our military.

191. In your view, what role should the Joint Staff play in the interagency coordination process for spectrum studies and the relocation or sharing from the band that DOD currently resides in?

The Joint Staff has an indispensable role in providing the "best military advice" on the operational implications of spectrum policy. While the DOD CIO is responsible for overall policy and coordination, the Joint Staff must represent the combatant commands by authoritatively assessing how spectrum proposals could impact the Joint Force's ability to conduct missions. The best military advice of the Joint Staff is crucial to ensuring civilian leadership understands the impacts potential spectrum policy decisions may have on the operational effectiveness of our forces.

Electronic Warfare

192. How capable do you believe Russia and China to be in electronic warfare?

Both Russia and China are highly capable practitioners of electronic warfare. Russia has improved its EW capabilities over the duration of the conflict in Ukraine, demonstrating the ability to interfere with radar, UAVs and GPS. China maintains advanced EW capabilities and has fielded fixed and mobile EW systems that can interfere with SATCOMS, GPS, and ISR satellites.

193. Has DOD adequately integrated electronic warfare into its joint concepts and operational plans?

Each Combatant Command is responsible for EMSO planning within their respective contingency plans. This is established specifically in an appendix of each plan and is assessed yearly as a requirement from the FY24 NDAA that directed the CJCS, through the EMS operational lead, to conduct an annual assessment of contingency plans and how they align with EMS Superiority Strategy.

194. What major issues attend the United States' conduct of joint electronic warfare operations, especially at the relevant combatant commands?

The United States is facing a variety of challenges when considering joint EW operations, which begin with access to the spectrum itself. Additionally, we must balance our investment in exquisite capabilities with investment in systems that are inexpensive and can be produced at scale. Other factors include leveraging artificial intelligence, deepening the Joint Force's knowledge through training and education on Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations, and working across the whole-of-government to evolve laws and regulations on the use of the EMSO internally and externally to the United States. DOD spectrum access is critical for EMSO to protect the homeland and the military's ability to conduct its missions. Combatant commands need spectrum to increase lethality, restore deterrence, win wars, and achieve Presidential priorities, such as Golden Dome for America and

Border Security.

195. Do you support a Joint Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations Center at U.S. Strategic Command?

Yes. U.S. Strategic Command is the operational lead for electromagnetic spectrum enterprise. The Joint Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations Center increases the command's capabilities to achieve the mission.

196. Does the DOD adequately conduct joint Tier One exercises utilizing adversary level electronic warfare?

It is always a challenge to adequately simulate adversary-level electronic warfare (EW) capabilities during Tier One exercises and to fully capture the complexities of modern electromagnetic warfare through exercises. The Joint Staff is prioritizing modernization of its Joint Live, Virtual, Constructive simulation federation with a focus on EW, Space, and Cyberspace domains. Initial improvements are expected by FY26, with continued advancements through FY30, representing investment in preparing forces for the challenges of the electromagnetic spectrum. These efforts aim to ensure realistic and effective training in Joint Force Tier One exercises.

197. What is your opinion of training ranges for electronic warfare?

The ability to conduct electromagnetic warfare testing, training, and experimentation in CONUS EW ranges is a challenge. Coordination with outside DOD agencies (FAA, FCC) needs to be fast, efficient, and flexible to allow the warfighter to train and operate at a level required for the future fight. Continued investment is necessary to ensure live ranges can exceed the requirements of today for the future environment.

198. Do you believe our systems are adequately protected from adversary electronic attack?

Ensuring our systems are resilient to adversary electromagnetic attack is fundamental to Joint Force lethality and survivability. While we have robust protections, the electromagnetic spectrum is a contested warfighting domain, and we face a persistent and evolving threat from peer adversaries. Continued investment and innovation are critical to guarantee our freedom of maneuver and maintain a decisive advantage in the electromagnetic spectrum.

199. Does DOD have adequate simulation and situational awareness capability to experiment with and test joint electronic warfare concepts, in your view?

Existing electronic warfare (EW) simulation and experimentation capabilities are

valuable. We need to do more to provide the integrated, high-fidelity environment needed for developing next-generation joint EW concepts. If confirmed, I would support the Joint Force prioritizing aggressive improvements in this area to ensure readiness and maintain an edge in our ability to deter and defeat adversaries in the electromagnetic spectrum.

Information Operations

The Committee remains concerned that DOD does not yet have an effective management structure or strategy for information warfare that integrates across cyber, electromagnetic spectrum operations, and information operations that is conducted at the strategic level.

200. Do you share this concern? If not, why not?

I am concerned about state and non-state actors' capability to successfully execute large-scale influence operations against the United States. The information domain is a complex theater of modern operations and human perception that requires close study and a deep understanding. If confirmed, I will be supportive of all efforts to assure our competitiveness and protect our vital national interests.

201. If confirmed, what actions, in your view, could the VCJCS take to help solve this important problem that handicaps our ability to deter and compete with adversaries?

Our current strategic environment demands that we address several significant challenges and rapidly evolving threats. Our current and future warfighting capabilities must be measured against their ability to address and outpace those threats. To deter adversaries, we need to clearly communicate, through both what we say and what we do—that if they attack the United States or its interests, they will fail to achieve their objectives and they will incur costs that far exceed any gains. If confirmed, I will advocate for concepts to apply speed, innovation, technology, and integration in how we manage, develop, and deploy existing and new warfighting capabilities.

Cyber Operations and Cybersecurity

The United States has been rocked by a series of significant attacks from advanced persistent threat actors affecting critical infrastructure. These attacks have heightened the discussion on ‘grey-zone’ activities, the need to establish a credible deterrence in cyberspace, and the role of the Department in defending civilian critical infrastructure against these types of attacks.

202. What do you conclude from cyber-attacks carried out by Volt Typhoon and Salt Typhoon about the state of our cyber defenses?

To the extent that cyber actors affiliated with our adversaries can compromise U.S. networks, it is certainly a national security concern and suggests that the United States needs to continue investment in hardening both government and civilian critical information technology infrastructure. This should be a combination of private and public investment, and such investment should stand alongside public and private partnerships to identify and defend portions of infrastructure that DOD deems critical to our national interest.

Volt Typhoon and Salt Typhoon highlight the urgent need to improve detection, network visibility, and supply chain security and underscore the critical need for enhanced collaboration with industry and modernized security infrastructure in this escalating cyber warfare landscape.

The Department has elevated security standards for the Defense Industrial Base (DIB) and continues to share lessons learned from our engagement with Defense Critical Infrastructure with industry partners and DHS Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

203. In your opinion, what characteristics of a cyberattack would constitute an “act of war”? Do you consider the recent breaches in telecommunications infrastructure involving Salt Typhoon to be an “act of war” or an espionage operation that falls within *de facto* norms?

A comprehensive and interagency response is vital to any provocation, especially in the cyber domain. In examining the aspects of a cyber-attack, several variables should be considered, including Scale and Impact; Intention to Cause Physical Harm or Damage; Targeting of civilian populations; State Actor Involvement; and Military Objectives. If confirmed, I will review the classified details and provide any recommendations to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense.

204. In your view, is it necessary for adversaries to know that the United States can and will respond reciprocally to cyber-attacks on U.S. critical infrastructure?

Adversaries should understand the United States can and will use any instrument of national power, to include military operations in cyberspace, in response to cyber-attacks against U.S. critical infrastructure.

205. If confirmed, will you review existing policy, requirements, and capabilities to achieve this deterrence capability?

Yes. If confirmed, I will work diligently to enable our warfighters and maximize deterrent effects.

206. In your view, does the nature and scope of this intrusion operation merit a strong and tangible response? Please explain your answer.

The president and the Secretary have made it very clear that the Department must prioritize defending the homeland and deterring Chinese incursions into our infrastructure. If confirmed, I would work with our operational commanders to understand present options for the Chairman and Secretary with a range of flexible yet decisive operations that are directly tied to Joint Force objectives. I would also ensure the Joint Force's actions are contributing to whole-of-government efforts to enhance deterrence and our domestic cybersecurity resilience.

207. What role should DOD and the Cyber Mission Force have in anticipating, preventing, or responding to attacks on U.S. commercial entities?

Foremost, we should endeavor to promote cybersecurity mindedness and investment within the private sector, where much of our critical information technology is developed - that is the first line of defense against cyber-attacks. Where applicable, we should judiciously use our highly capable cyber warriors to support U.S. commercial entities in responding to, and hardening themselves from, malicious cyber actors. Streamlining industry information sharing and working closely with interagency partners will help determine the appropriate response and align actions with appropriate authorities.

208. What role do you envision for DOD and the Cyber Mission Force in defending the nation from an attack in cyberspace? In what ways is this role distinct from those of the homeland security and law enforcement communities?

DOD and the Cyber Mission Force undoubtedly have a unique role in defending against and countering state and non-state adversaries and malicious actors that extend beyond the capabilities of our homeland security and law enforcement communities. The Cyber Mission Force is primarily charged with defending forward, conducting defensive cyber operations abroad, while DHS and law enforcement work directly with organizations at home. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about how our cyber forces can best support and enhance the capabilities of our homeland and law enforcement colleagues, while maintaining high readiness and adaptability in their unique role within the DOD.

209. In your view, how can DOD improve the readiness challenges in the Cyber Mission Force units? Please explain your answer.

If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the leadership of U.S. Cyber Command and our Cyber Mission Force to ensure readiness levels and investments are in line with the emphasis we are trying to place on cybersecurity and our offensive and defensive cyber capabilities.

210. What are your views on the potential utility of tactical cyber forces that are able to deliver non-kinetic effects that more directly support operational and tactical level effects?

Combatant Commanders should have all tools at their disposal, to include cyber operations, to ensure mission success and protection of friendly forces during tactical missions.

211. How will “defend forward” and “persistent engagement” concepts deter and disrupt Russia and China in cyberspace?

Defending forward enables the United States to gain insight on Malicious Cyber Activity before it threatens the United States homeland. Persistent engagement challenges the ability of malicious actors to operate freely in cyberspace. Together, these approaches can help contribute to deterrence in cyberspace.

In September 2023, DOD released its 2023 Cyber Strategy. The strategy charges DOD to persistently engage malicious cyber actors and other malign threats to U.S. interests in cyberspace. The Committee believes that a new strategy should be developed and released in line with the forthcoming National Defense Strategy.

212. What role do you believe the Joint Staff should play in the cyber posture review, gap analysis, and oversight of implementation?

I believe that the Joint Staff should continue to proactively support the Principal Cyber Advisor’s Office in the development and implementation of the cyber posture review.

213. In your experience, how well is cyber operations and cybersecurity integrated into existing operational planning for contingencies, crises, and conflicts? If confirmed, what actions will you take to enhance that integration?

Cyberspace is an integral domain in the current and future operating environment, and existing operational plans incorporate cyberspace operations and cybersecurity. If confirmed, I will ensure that Joint Staff and combatant command plans continue to integrate cyberspace operations and cybersecurity through the Vice Chairman’s role in strategic guidance and plans reviews.

In 2020, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dunford (Ret.), produced a report to the Secretary of Defense on the dual-hat arrangement

whereby the Commander of United States Cyber Command serves also as the Director of the National Security Agency/Chief of the Central Security Service. This report, like many before it, argued that the dual-hat provided significant benefits to national security both for the joint warfighter but also for the intelligence community. Thus, he recommended maintaining the dual-hat arrangement.

214. Do you believe that the National Security Agency and U.S. Cyber Command should be dual-hatted? What are the “pros” and “cons” of this arrangement, in your view? Please explain your answer.

I believe there is benefit to the Commander, USCYBERCOM and Director, NSA being filled by the same person. I know the 2022 "Joint Study on the Dual-Hat" recommended the dual-hat arrangement not only be maintained but strengthened, arguing that the dual-hat arrangement provides the ability to look across both organizations and has empowered both USCYBERCOM and NSA to fulfill their missions better than each could do alone. It also facilitates relationships with key allies and partners in part because the corresponding foreign organizations with signals intelligence (SIGINT) and cyber operations missions are fully integrated, operating under a Dual-Hat leadership structure. A potential downside to the “dual-hat” is that the span of control could place a burden on one leader.

Science, Technology, and Innovation

U.S. superiority in key areas of innovation is decreasing or has disappeared, while our competitors are engaging in aggressive military modernization and advanced weaponry development. DOD has identified ten key areas in which investment to develop next generation operational capabilities is imperative: hypersonics; fully networked C3; directed energy; cyber; space; quantum science; artificial intelligence (AI)/machine learning; microelectronics; autonomy; and biotechnology. Much of the innovation in these technologies is occurring outside of the traditional defense industry.

215. In your view, what are the most significant challenges (e.g., technical, organizational, or cultural) to U.S. development of these key technologies?

In my view, the DOD must aggressively take steps to illustrate how these innovative technologies are conceptually employed. Through this analytic process, the Joint Staff and military departments can define future requirements. This will provide industry clear DOD demand signals. The United States commercial marketplace is teeming with innovative solutions for defending the United States. The Joint Force should re-evaluate its interactions with industry and fight for access to the commercial space, leveraging organizations like the Defense Innovation Unit.

216. In your view, has DOD properly integrated and synchronized investments in these technologies across all components?

There continues to be room for improvement in this area. If confirmed, I'll work with the Deputy Secretary of Defense and his team as the Department continues to evaluate these technologies and other aspects of the defense budget to provide the Joint Force with the tools they need to defend the Nation.

217. What is your understanding of how the Department is balancing revolutionary capability advancements as compared to "quick win" incremental improvements that can be rapidly fielded?

My understanding is that the DOD is pursuing a dual-track approach to ensure both revolutionary advancements and incremental improvements are achieved. Investments in long-term, high-risk technologies like AI, hypersonics, and quantum science are designed to maintain strategic superiority and position the United States at the forefront of innovation. At the same time, "quick win" solutions, such as upgrades to existing systems, commercial off-the-shelf technologies, and streamlined acquisition processes, address immediate operational needs. Partnerships with academia, industry, and non-traditional innovators, combined with the adoption of agile practices, allow the Department to remain responsive to current threats while preparing for the challenges of tomorrow. This approach ensures the DOD can adapt, innovate, and maintain its competitive edge in an evolving global landscape.

218. In your opinion, is DOD doing enough to identify new technologies developed commercially by the private sector and apply them to military and national security purposes?

The Department of Defense has made significant strides in leveraging commercial innovation through organizations like the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) and Office of Strategic Capital and new acquisition pathways. These efforts have demonstrated potential, but challenges persist in scaling successful pilots, overcoming bureaucratic obstacles, and keeping pace with rapidly evolving technology cycles. Building stronger partnerships with non-traditional innovators and addressing barriers such as intellectual property concerns are critical to incentivizing collaboration. If confirmed, I would leverage my role in the reoriented Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC), I would work to integrate commercial technologies into requirements, aligning them with prioritized Key Operational Problems (KOPs) and operational needs. Cross-department coordination will be essential to scale efforts, streamline experimentation, and align priorities to accelerate innovation. Additionally, I would advocate for resources to rapidly transition commercial technologies into fielded capabilities, ensuring the Department remains agile and competitive in adapting to technological advancements.

219. In your view, are there steps that should be taken to ensure that the Department has the infrastructure and equipment to maintain pace with, or surpass adversary investments in emerging technologies?

In my view, “quick win” solutions, such as upgrades to existing systems, commercial off-the-shelf technologies, and streamlined acquisition processes, address immediate operational needs. Partnerships with academia, industry, and non-traditional innovators, combined with the adoption of agile practices, allow the Department to remain responsive to current threats while preparing for the challenges of tomorrow. These approaches ensure the DOD can adapt, innovate, and maintain its competitive edge in an evolving global landscape.

220. What are the challenges you perceive to effectively transitioning technologies from research programs into programs of record?

Effectively transitioning technologies from research programs into programs of record or deployed capabilities is challenging because of the time it takes to mature a technology into a viable prototype or demonstrate the viability off existing commercial technology for experimentation and concepts of operation development. Over time, changing priorities within the DOD can shift focus away from early investments, losing sight of work done to date. Funding to support the implementation of promising capabilities is not protected in budgets. Budgetary constraints and the impacts of Continuing Resolutions (CR) add challenges for transitioning programs. Some technologies may not mature in time to be integrated into programs, while others may mature more rapidly than the existing budget cycle can accommodate. DOD also must quickly become a better buyer. The DOD is frankly a poor buyer and must devote energy to this effort.

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

The operational experience of the warfighter is crucial to ensuring emerging technologies are relevant, usable, and effective in the field. Warfighters should be integrated during experimentation, wargaming, and field testing, where concepts and technologies can be stress-tested against realistic scenarios. The Joint Staff identifies gaps and evaluates developmental technologies, inserting them into Joint Exercises to foster warfighter co-development and practical applications. This approach allows warfighters to provide feedback that shapes concepts of employment. Additionally, warfighter input should be leveraged during early collaboration with industry and academia to focus research on realistic challenges, accelerate prototyping, and avoid costly missteps. Embedding warfighters alongside scientists and engineers in Joint Experimentation venues or research teams ensures solutions remain grounded in operational needs. This integration strengthens the connection between innovation and real-world applicability,

enhancing the effectiveness of the research and development process.

222. If confirmed as Vice Chairman, what specific steps will you take to ensure that the Military Services are benefitting more quickly and directly from research being performed across the defense research enterprise?

If confirmed, I will focus on accelerating the transition of research into operational capability by prioritizing speed, integration, and operational proof of concept. Too often, innovation lingers in the research enterprise without delivering timely advantage to the warfighter. To address this, I will take steps that strengthen the connective tissues between research and operations, accelerate experimentation-to-fielding cycles, focus on integration over invention, and expand experimentation with allies and partners. This proactive approach will ensure that our research investments directly and positively impact operational readiness and deterrence.

223. If confirmed, what would you do to increase the interaction between DOD labs and the private sector, and between DOD labs and the rest of the DOD innovation enterprise to include the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, the Strategic Capabilities Office, the Defense Innovation Unit, and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency?

There is a lot of good work going on, but I do have some concerns that innovation entities are colliding with each other in the incubation process. The DOD must have a greater level of collaboration between entities to maximize the return on the USG's invested capital. If confirmed, I would continue to build on the integration of the DOD labs with OSD R&E, DIU, OSC, and DARPA through innovation programs like Replicator, JIATF, WLIF, and RDER. The Department can also increase integration through Joint Experimentation events.

Test and Evaluation

Test and evaluation is critical to ensuring that the systems warfighters rely on in combat are proven to work effectively, reliably, and safely.

224. What is your current understanding of the significant reduction and restructuring of the Director of Operational Test and Evaluation (DOT&E)?

I am not intimately familiar with the decision-making behind the restructuring of DOT&E but understand that there is an on-going effort focused on eliminating any non-statutory or redundant functions, reducing bureaucratic overhead, and driving greater efficiency, which includes returning some roles of the office back to the Services, and reverting to an oversight role, vice active participant in test and evaluation.

225. Based on your current position, and given that justification for DOT&E structure reductions were based on redundancy with service capabilities, what was your experience with how the restructuring of DOT&E took into consideration any service OT&E restructuring?

My understanding is that the reduction in the DOT&E structure was not purely based on any real or perceived redundancy with the Services, but more on identification of non-essential, non-statutory functions that do not support operational agility or resource efficiency, affecting our ability to rapidly and effectively deploy the best systems to the warfighters. The Secretary's solutions to these issues included returning manpower to the Services to execute some functions within DOT&E. I am sure that the Services, as they re-integrate those personnel and functions, will evaluate whether the DOT&E reorganization is in the best interest of the Department to maintain oversight, efficiency, and effectiveness.

226. How do you assess the value and potential drawbacks of the separation of developmental testing (DT) and operational testing (OT) in terms of delivering combat-ready systems to the Joint Force? How does maintaining the separation of these duties impact the identification and remediation of critical issues that may impact delivery schedules?

The Department of Defense must better integrate developmental testing and operational testing. As Vice Chairman, if confirmed, I will work closely with the Office of Secretary of Defense, the Services, and other Defense organizations to ensure the Department balances the need for robust testing to verify that capabilities provided to the warfighter operate as intended with the need to move faster in fielding new technologies. Throughout, if confirmed, I will be an advocate for developing, operating, and testing in a joint manner to the maximum extent possible.

227. How effective do you find the DOD's current processes in meeting the rapid pace of modern threats and technological change?

In my experience, there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to developmental and operational testing across the wide spectrum of military capabilities the Joint Force develops and operates. Across the board, though, we must go faster. We must allow greater iteration and more rapid cycles of feedback as we experiment with and test emerging capabilities. As Vice Chairman, if confirmed, I will work closely with the Office of Secretary of Defense, the Services, and other Defense organizations to inform testing practices with input from the warfighter, focusing on balancing the need for robust testing to ensure that the capabilities provided to the warfighter operate as intended with the need to move faster in fielding new technologies.

228. Do you think the current operational test and evaluation system provides for the flexibility to assess commercial technologies that might be acquired or fielded by DOD through means or processes that are not traditional acquisition programs of record?

No. Acquisition processes and procedures slow the adoption of commercial technologies by the Department of Defense at many steps in the process. If confirmed, as Vice Chairman, I will be an advocate for moving faster and increasing flexibility in processes, so path-breaking capabilities are delivered to the warfighter more quickly. At the same time, effective operational test and evaluation must be fundamental aspects of any faster capability development effort, as it is essential that any capabilities delivered to the warfighter perform as intended.

229. In your view, when is additional testing required for commercial systems to ensure they work in relevant environments and under operational constraints?

Acquisition processes and procedures slow the adoption of commercial technologies by the Department of Defense at many steps in the process. If confirmed, I will be an advocate for moving faster and increasing flexibility in processes, so path-breaking capabilities are delivered to the warfighter more quickly. At the same time, effective operational test and evaluation must be fundamental aspects of any faster capability development effort, as it is essential that any capabilities delivered to the warfighter perform as intended.

230. Are you satisfied with DOD's test and evaluation capabilities, including the test and evaluation workforce and infrastructure of the Military Services?

No. The Department's current mix of development test and operational test range infrastructure is unsatisfactory for today's modern threat environment. One area in which the Joint Force should enhance the ability to test, and train is in the Electromagnetic Operational Environment. Investment in joint live virtual constructive training is essential. The Joint Staff is also currently working to write a report to Congress on the feasibility and advisability of establishing a regional joint multi-domain non-kinetic training and experimentation environment. The development of a regionally aligned multi-domain non-kinetic training, testing, and experimentation environment is critical to provide the Joint Force and the United States' Allies and partners an immersive and realistic operational environment to train across all domains against emerging technologies and peer threats. This environment needs to replicate a contested, congested, and constrained Electromagnetic Operational Environment with an accurate threat representation to facilitate quality training and testing at scale to support throughput and readiness of the nation's warfighters.

231. In which areas, if any, do you feel the Department should be developing new test and evaluation capabilities?

One area in which the Joint Force should enhance the ability to test, and train is in the Electromagnetic Operational Environment. Investment in joint live virtual constructive training is essential. The Joint Staff is also currently working to write a report to Congress on the feasibility and advisability of establishing a regional joint multi-domain non-kinetic training and experimentation environment. The development of a regionally aligned multi-domain non-kinetic training, testing, and experimentation environment is critical to provide the Joint Force and the United States' allies and partners an immersive and realistic operational environment to train across all domains against emerging technologies and peer threats. This environment needs to replicate a contested, congested, and constrained Electromagnetic Operational Environment with an accurate threat representation to facilitate quality training and testing at scale to support throughput and readiness of the nation's warfighters.

Alliances and Partnerships

U.S. alliances and partnerships are crucial to U.S. success in competition with, deterrence of, and potential conflict against long term strategic competitors.

232. What is your view of the strength of our current alliances, relationships, and partnerships, and the trust our partners have in the willingness of the U.S. to meet its obligations? If confirmed, how would you enhance that trust?

Our alliances, relationships, and partnerships are vital to U.S. national security and global stability. While these bonds are strong, trust in our commitments must be continually reinforced through consistent actions and shared efforts. If confirmed, I will work to enhance trust by fostering open communication, joint planning, and interoperability. At the same time, I will emphasize the importance of burden-sharing, encouraging allies and partners to increase their defense efforts, expand their defense industrial bases, and invest in their own security. Together, as a collective, we are unmatched, but this strength depends on all contributing as allies, not dependencies.

233. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to strengthen existing U.S. alliances and partnerships in each Combatant Commander's geographic AOR for long-term strategic competition?

If confirmed, I will work closely with Combatant Commanders to tailor efforts to each geographic AOR, focusing on strengthening interoperability, expanding joint exercises, and enhancing information-sharing with allies and partners. I will prioritize initiatives that build partner capacity, encourage increased defense

investments, and grow regional defense industrial bases to ensure burden-sharing. By addressing shared security challenges and fostering collective readiness, we will solidify alliances and partnerships to outpace competitors in long-term strategic competition.

234. How would you characterize your familiarity with the military leaders of the Armed Forces of other nations, international consultative forums, and processes for enhancing interoperability between allies and partners?

I have developed strong relationships with military leaders from allied and partner nations through joint exercises, operational engagements, and international forums – especially in the Asia-Pacific. I am familiar with consultative processes like NATO, bilateral defense dialogues, and regional security initiatives that enhance collaboration. If confirmed, I will leverage these relationships and forums to deepen interoperability, improve shared capabilities, and strengthen collective security.

235. In your view, what kinds of activities or engagements with allies and partners are most effective at enhancing those relationships and in case of crisis and conflict are most likely to elicit their defense cooperation and support?

The most effective activities are those that build lethality, interoperability, and shared readiness. Joint exercises, combined training, and real-world operational cooperation strengthen relationships and prepare allies and partners for conflict. Regular strategic dialogues and defense planning ensure alignment on priorities, while capacity-building initiatives and burden-sharing commitments foster mutual investment in collective security. These efforts create the foundation for reliable defense cooperation in times of crisis or conflict.

236. Based on your experience, do you have any recommendations for how DOD can leverage foreign military sales and industrial base integration as a tool to improve our own military systems, as well as improve our ability to fight by, with and through our allies and partners?

Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and industrial base integration are critical tools for strengthening alliances and enhancing collective defense. FMS can standardize equipment, improve interoperability, and build partner capacity, while industrial base integration fosters innovation and shared production capabilities. If confirmed, I will advocate for streamlining FMS processes, expanding co-development opportunities, and encouraging allies to invest in their defense industrial bases. These efforts will improve U.S. systems, strengthen partnerships, and enhance our ability to fight by, with, and through allies and partners.

237. How would you characterize the current U.S. relationship with China?

Characterizing U.S. foreign relations is a policy matter, so I defer to my civilian leadership. If confirmed as Vice Chairman, I look forward to assisting the Chairman and the senior military leadership in delivering to the President and the Secretary a joint force credibly postured in the western Pacific to deter China by denial.

238. What is your assessment of the current state of U.S.-China military-to-military relations? What do you believe should be the objectives of U.S.-China military-to-military dialogue? What are the limitations on this kind of dialogue?

My understanding is that we have made some progress on military-to-military relations with the PLA due to the President and the Secretary's successful engagements with their counterparts. Engagement with the PLA is valuable in so much as it helps us maintain reliable crisis communications and reduces risk. The Vice Chairman is not a regular participant in engagement with the PLA, but I would if asked by the Chairman.

239. What do you believe are the objectives of China's steady increase in defense spending and its overall military modernization program?

China's military modernization program is primarily driven by Beijing's desire to possess a military option to pursue its core national interests—including continued rule of the CCP and gaining control of Taiwan—while guarding against perceived threats from the United States. Other drivers of China's military modernization include Beijing's desire to be seen as a global power and concerns about Taiwan separatism.

240. In what technology areas are you most concerned about the erosion of U.S. advantages?

There are currently 14 critical technology areas that we must focus on as a DOD to maximize the unparalleled strength and capabilities of our warfighters. These areas are: hypersonics; future generation wireless technology; advanced materials; integrated network systems-of-systems; directed energy; integrated sensing and cyber; space technology; quantum science; trusted artificial intelligence (AI) and autonomy; microelectronics; energy resilience; advanced computing and software; human-machine interfaces; and biotechnology. In addition to these sectors, we must improve our Defense Industrial Base, which will enable a faster developmental and production process. If I am confirmed, I intend to build upon the work by the Department's leadership by ensuring that we leverage the full potential of the greatest DIB and properly equip our warfighters.

241. What is your assessment of China's increasing military presence overseas, including installations like its bases in Djibouti and across Africa, as well as other infrastructure projects across the Indian Ocean?

China's expanding military presence overseas, including its robust logistics network and efforts to expand basing infrastructure across Africa and the Indian Ocean, reflects the CCP's directive for the PLA to develop the capability to project power outside China's borders and immediate periphery to secure the CCP's overseas interests and advance its foreign policy goals. China is likely to continue engaging in humanitarian assistance, naval escorts and port calls, peacekeeping operations, arms sales, influence operations, and bilateral and multilateral military exercises, which will enhance diplomatic relationships, provide the PLA with operational experience, and attract foreign support for hosting PLA bases and dual-use facilities. China is working to secure its overseas infrastructure in Africa as a component of its overall prioritization of the continent as a strategic global player, often highlighting their engagements as respecting African sovereignty in contrast to the West.

242. What is your assessment of the strategic and military implications for the United States of China's Belt and Road Initiative?

I agree with DOD assessments that China uses BRI to increase its international influence and shape the international system to favor its own interests. The military implications of China's BRI could include denying the Joint Force the use of key terrain and infrastructure around the globe and more seriously, the construction of new infrastructure like ports with obvious dual-use civil and military applications.

243. What are the strategic and military implications for other countries in the Indo-Pacific?

China is undoubtedly pursuing strategic and military advantage over other countries in the region as it seeks hegemony in the Asia-Pacific. Throughout the region, China has asserted unlawful claims over disputed territories and militarized terrain features in the South China and East China Seas. Strategically, an emboldened China continues to undermine international norms and threaten the sovereignty of its neighbors, including U.S. allies.

244. What are the strategic implications of the rapid modernization of Chinese nuclear weapons that are set to at least double by 2030, and what approach should the United States take to address those implications, in your view?

China's rapid nuclear modernization is not constrained by any nuclear arms control treaty, and the accelerating pace of its nuclear expansion poses an increasing threat to the United States and its allies. We will soon find ourselves

faced, for the first time, with two nuclear peer adversaries. If confirmed, I look forward to understanding potential adjustments and offering recommendations to address this new threat.

245. What do you think could motivate China to participate in nuclear arms control negotiations in a genuine and meaningful way?

The Joint Force must have the capabilities necessary to deter and respond to any CCP provocations. A strong nuclear deterrent can be leveraged to protect the United States while also providing room to engage in confidence-building measures should China so choose.

246. In your view, with the rapid development in both quantity and quality of Chinese nuclear capabilities, how does U.S. nuclear posture, and nuclear doctrine need to change to account for the existence of two near-peer nuclear strategic competitors?

As the threat from China and Russia continues to grow and complicate U.S. deterrence strategy and planning, I have confidence in the lethality and capability of the Joint Force to be able to address these complexities today and into the future. It is incumbent on the Department to be able to flex and adapt to expanding threats. If confirmed, I will assess the current deterrence policy, nuclear capabilities, and force posture and work with the professionals across the Department to ensure we can adequately deter two nuclear peers in the future.

247. As Chinese aggression and nuclear capabilities both increase, do you assess that we have adequate military and national security crisis communication channels with senior Chinese leadership to avoid or at least mitigate the threat of rapid strategic escalation?

We do not have the types of links between Washington DC and Beijing similar to the connections that exist between DC and Moscow for enhancing crisis communications. Similar to other arms negotiations, China has been unwilling to commit to that type of immediate communication capability. I believe having this type of capability with China would contribute to enhancing strategic stability and minimizing risk of miscalculation in crisis.

U.S. Capabilities and Force Posture in the Indo-Pacific

U.S. force posture in the Indo-Pacific region remains heavily concentrated in Japan and South Korea.

248. Is the current U.S. force posture in the Indo-Pacific region sufficient to support the Trump Administration's Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance?

The U.S. force posture (i.e., forces, footprint, and agreements) in the Asia-Pacific region plays a critical role in supporting the priorities outlined in the Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Department of Defense, as well as our allies and partners, to ensure our force posture remains robust, flexible, and capable of meeting the challenges of the region.

249. How would you propose to restructure U.S. security posture in the Indo-Pacific to counter Chinese aggression, if confirmed? Please explain your answer.

The Asia-Pacific region is of critical importance to U.S. national security, and countering Chinese aggression requires a comprehensive and integrated approach. The current U.S. force posture in the region provides a strong foundation for deterrence and defense. If confirmed, I will support the Chairman's responsibilities contributing to a force posture that remains robust, flexible, and capable of meeting the challenges of the region.

250. In your view, what would be the impact of significant reductions to our force posture in Japan or South Korea on the security situation in the Indo-Pacific region?

I don't want to speculate on hypotheticals, but I will emphasize that we view U.S. posture not by the number of Service members on the ground but by the capabilities needed to advance our national security interests. If confirmed, I will support the Chairman and Secretary of Defense to review United States capabilities in Japan and South Korea and make recommendations.

251. In your assessment, what are the priority investments DOD could make to implement the INDSG and improve the military balance in the Indo-Pacific?

To implement the INDSG and improve the military balance in the Asia-Pacific, the Department should prioritize investments in advanced capabilities that support ballistic and hypersonic missile defense of the Homeland and deterrence by denial in the Western Pacific; military construction to improve Joint Force posture in the Asia-Pacific and encourage allied and partner burden sharing, and in the defense industrial base to support domestic manufacturing and Joint Force capacity.

Advanced capabilities include all-domain sensing and ballistic missile defense as part of the Golden Dome for America initiative; air, maritime, and ground-based long-range precision fires that enable Joint Force stand-off; sub-surface and surface maritime dominance platforms; air dominance platforms (including 5th GEN fighters); uncrewed, attritable, and autonomous air, surface, and sub-surface one-way attack systems; space and cyber dominance.

Military construction investments should focus on hardening key locations in the Western Pacific to accommodate prepositioned equipment, supplies, munitions, and bulk fuel to enable Joint Force operations during competition and contingencies. Working with our allies and partners, investment in Military Construction demonstrates our resolve to deterring aggression and encourages burden sharing by our allies and partners.

Finally, implementing the INDSG requires prioritized funding to strengthen the defense industrial base. The Joint Force requires depth in munitions capacity to provide credible deterrence, and the attendant domestic manufacturing capacity to sustain Joint Force operations in a protracted conflict.

252. Do you believe that continued, dedicated funding for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative is required to support implementation of the 2025 INDSG in the Indo-Pacific? Please explain your answer.

Continued, dedicated funding for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) is essential to the implementation of the 2025 INDSG and enables the Joint Force to deter aggression in the Asia-Pacific. PDI provides funding that supports the ability of the Joint Force to posture combat credible forces in the Western Pacific. PDI directly funds modernized and strengthened presence of rotational and forward-postured forces in the Asia-Pacific; improves logistics, maintenance capabilities, and pre-positioning of equipment, munitions, fuel, and materiel; funds exercises, training, experimentation, and innovation; and many other investments that improve our Asia-Pacific posture. In brief, PDI extends our military advantage over China and enhances Joint Force posture in the Asia-Pacific to support deterrence by denial and encourages our allies and partners to increase burden-sharing for their self-defense.

253. In your view, what is the role of ground forces in the Indo-Pacific during competition, crisis, and conflict?

Ground forces play a vital role in the Asia-Pacific during competition and will be indispensable in a future crisis or conflict in the region, enabling the Joint Force to fight and win. In competition, ground forces set the theater for the Joint Force by ensuring access and basing in key locations and providing critical logistical support and sustainment for Joint Force exercises, operations and activities. Units such as the Army's Multi-Domain Task Forces (MDTF) and Marine Littoral Regiments (MLR) are crucial to ensuring the Joint Force can target, track, and conduct precision strikes across domains in a complex environment. In a theater with unparalleled logistical challenges, ground forces enhance Joint Force capacity while also providing large-scale ground-based sustainment and security operations; and support air campaigns with integrated air and missile defense capabilities, ensuring enemy aircraft and missiles are unable to destroy and degrade friendly forces.

254. Congress mandated the establishment of the Joint Force Headquarters at INDOPACOM. What is your view of INDOPACOM's progress in establishing the Joint Force Headquarters?

Admiral Paparo has stated that, in a Joint Operations Area (JOA) within the Theater of War, the U.S. Pacific Fleet would serve as the Joint Task Force (JTF), a capability for which they were certified in 2023. Based on the capabilities of the service components it should be able to fully execute its purpose in its current form.

255. What are the requirements for the Joint Force Headquarters at INDOPACOM to fully execute its function?

The ability to respond effectively to crises in the region, using the Joint Force with all its combined capabilities, is paramount. The existing structure, which leverages the proven capabilities of service components and their ability to function as JTFs, provides the necessary flexibility and responsiveness to address a wide range of potential crises within the INDOPACOM AOR.

256. Can you describe the strategic and operational importance of Guam to executing INDOPACOM's plans and operations in the region?

Guam is a strategic location in the Western Pacific, and a key logistical and operational hub that is vital to Joint Force power projection West of the International Dateline. Joint Force facilities on Guam provide basing and sustainment nodes for maritime and air dominance platforms that directly contribute to deterrence in the Asia-Pacific. In a crisis or conflict, a successful U.S. contingency response depends on forces based in and operating out of Guam across all domains. Guam also provides Joint Force flexibility as the Department reviews posture in the Asia-Pacific.

257. Can you describe the state of military infrastructure and facilities on Guam in the wake of Typhoon Mawar?

The Department has nearly completed the critical facilities phase of recovery, enabling a shift toward enhanced reconstruction efforts. The next phase includes MILCON-level projects focused on repairing, replacing, and hardening key infrastructure components. These efforts are supported by FY25 Continuing Resolution Supplemental funding for MAWAR Recovery and Resiliency. Notable projects moving into execution include Apra Harbor Glass Breakwater repair, War Reserve Material and POL warehouse modernization, Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 25 Hangar replacement. Guam's strategic significance as a power projection platform for U.S. forces in the Asia-Pacific makes this work critical. The island hosts major Air Force and Navy assets that support regional operations. A rapid, resilient reconstruction strategy ensures that Guam's

infrastructure remains capable of deterring threats, sustaining operations, and maintaining U.S. influence across the region.

258. Do you agree that it is critical for Guam to be reconstructed in a resilient manner so that the U.S. military can utilize Guam as a power projection platform in the Indo-Pacific?

I understand that Congress appropriated \$3.7 billion in supplemental funding for recovery efforts, and that the restoration process is ongoing. The strategic importance of Guam necessitates a rapid and resilient approach to reconstruction. The island serves as a key power projection platform for the U.S. forces in the Asia-Pacific region and hosts significant Air Force and Navy capabilities that support operations across the area. Ensuring the continued functionality of Guam's military assets is vital to maintaining U.S. influence and deterrence in the region. If confirmed, I will ensure the reconstruction effort not only restores Guam but also enhances the resilience of DOD operations to future all-hazard risks.

259. Do you support the efforts by the U.S. and Japan to establish a modernized command-and-control structure, to include an improved U.S. Forces Japan?

Yes, modernizing the US-Japan command-and-control structure will help maintain a credible deterrent and ensure the alliance's effectiveness in a rapidly changing security environment.

260. Do you agree that DOD should move as fast as possible to establish a new command-and-control structure with Japan, considering its strategic importance as a capable ally in the Indo-Pacific?

Yes, Japan's efforts to modernize its own command and control structure are already underway and it is strategically important that our efforts keep pace to ensure continued interoperability with one of our most capable allies in the Asia-Pacific.

Russia

261. In your view, which aspects of U.S. and NATO force posture in Europe are most effective in deterring Russian aggression and mitigating threats to our NATO Allies and partners? What has worked in the past? Are there additional measures that the U.S. and NATO should consider?

NATO's air capabilities, including 5th gen fighters and robust command and control capabilities, are critical to deterring Russia. Additionally, NATO's large-scale exercises, vigilance and enhanced vigilance activities, and deployed

Forward Land Forces also provide important deterrent effects. Russia must understand that the United States and NATO possess the will and the capability to halt any military aggression against our Alliance. Therefore, all current and future U.S. and NATO force posture contributions should signal NATO cohesiveness and demonstrate military superiority. Airpower and long-range fires are particularly effective, as Russia remains vulnerable to these weapons. Ground force presence near the Russian border is important to prove commitment and maintain readiness. NATO's nuclear force posture, underpinned by U.S. nuclear weapons forward deployed in Europe as well as the U.S. strategic triad, is a core element of our deterrence policy and strategy, successfully deterring Russian aggression against NATO for decades. As the backbone of deterrence since its founding, NATO nuclear policy seeks to preserve peace, prevent coercion and deter aggression.

262. Given advances in Russian attack submarine capability what additional capabilities or capacity are most important to maintaining the U.S. advantage in undersea warfare?

As the Russians, and the Chinese, improve the acoustic performance of their submarines, we also need to improve the performance of our submarines by making them harder to detect, better able to detect other submarines, and, if required, respond to threats with improved weapons available in larger quantities. Part of this solution is technological, but much of it requires the expansion of our industrial base so that we can rapidly deliver not only the ships and submarines we already have on contract, but also the additional ships, submarines and weapons systems which will incorporate new technologies which cannot be retrofitted on existing platforms.

263. What are the different capabilities that are necessary to address this in different parts of the world such as the North Atlantic Ocean, Mediterranean Sea, and elsewhere?

I believe a well-rounded Theater Anti-Submarine Warfare capability with persistent investment in emergent technology and iterative upgrades is necessary to address this in different parts of the world. I believe the Department should carefully leverage fast attack submarines, guided-missile cruisers and destroyers, and Maritime Reconnaissance and Patrol Aircraft to maintain U.S. advantages in undersea warfare and maintaining acoustic superiority.

264. In your assessment, does DOD currently have a mature joint concept of operations and the necessary capabilities in sufficient capacity to overcome advanced Russian anti-access, area denial (A2/AD) capabilities? If not, what additional capabilities or capacity are required in Europe to ensure U.S. forces are able to achieve operational freedom of maneuver?

America's commitment to support European allies in our collective effort to defend NATO from aggression is the best deterrent, and a large standing U.S. force posture is not necessarily required to demonstrate that. Russia should not question our Alliance commitments. Force posture is a manifestation of our commitment, but the type of forces stationed in Europe are more important than quantity. If confirmed, I will look closely at our European posture with the Chairman and provide my advice on any enhancements.

265. What is your assessment of EUCOM and NATO's readiness to detect, deter, and respond to Russian influence operations, including in the cyber domain?

The Commander of USEUCOM is best positioned to respond to this question. My own assessment is that USEUCOM and NATO are well postured, and leaning forward, to meet and counter Russian influence operations.

266. In your view, what additional military and non-military capabilities are required for the United States to counter effectively Russian hybrid operations below the level of military conflict?

In the USEUCOM theater, force protection and cyber security are important tools to support our allies as they guard against threats from Russian backed saboteurs and hackers. Intelligence sharing, strong local law-enforcement structures in our partner nations, and public exposure are the best ways to defend against this kind of activity.

Ukraine

In February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale, unprovoked, and illegal invasion of Ukraine.

267. How do you assess the trajectory of the conflict and the role that the DOD should play?

Ukraine has demonstrated its resolve, enabled by Western support, to endure unrelenting attack on civilian targets and critical national infrastructure and continue fighting until Russia ends its illegal invasion. Russian actions and messaging suggest it will not enter into negotiations until it is no longer confident it can achieve Putin's objectives on the battlefield. DoD will continue to enable NATO and European allies to provide security assistance and fund U.S. weapons and equipment through the Prioritized Ukraine Requirements List initiative and JUMPSTART funding mechanism. . In the case of peace, the United States and allies and partners are considering security guarantees that will ensure enduring peace and long-term Ukrainian sovereignty.

268. Do you believe it is important for the United States to continue providing security assistance to Ukraine, including after the conclusion of the war, as a means to help Ukraine deter and defeat Russian aggression?

I believe, the United States must maintain its security assistance to Ukraine, while actively engaging allies and partners to enhance their own contributions. This unified support is vital; without it, Ukraine's ability to maintain the current front lines and in the event of a negotiated peace, reconstitute and build a force capable of providing a credible future deterrent will be limited, making a renewed Russian offensive far more probable. To ensure an enduring peace following the conflict, strong and credible security guarantees for Ukraine are a vital component of deterring future Russian aggression.

269. What do you see as the role of U.S. security assistance in building the capabilities and capacity of Ukraine to meet its military requirements to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity in the short, medium, and long-term?

I believe the United States must maintain its security assistance to Ukraine, while actively engaging allies and partners to enhance their own contributions. This unified support is vital; without it, Ukraine's ability to maintain the current front lines and in the event of a negotiated peace, reconstitute and build a force capable of providing a credible future deterrent will be limited, making a renewed Russian offensive far more probable. To ensure lasting stability following the conflict, strong and credible security guarantees for Ukraine are a vital component of deterring future Russian aggression.

NATO Alliance

270. In your view, how does the NATO Alliance advance U.S. national security interests?

The Alliance advances U.S. national security interests by standing as a bulwark against Russia's willingness to use military force and destabilization campaigns to accomplish its geopolitical objectives, and as a bulwark against Russia's strengthened relationships with China, North Korea, and Iran. Our European and Canadian allies are assuming responsibility for the conventional deterrence and defense of Europe which allows the United States to focus on other global threats, specifically China in the Pacific. The 5 percent spending commitment agreed at the Hague Summit will strengthen the Alliance's ability to deter and defend against any threat - conventional, nuclear, or hybrid. It also comes with a commitment to boost and strengthen the European and American trans-Atlantic industrial base to deliver more ammunition, more equipment, and more war-fighting capabilities to our collective arsenals.

271. How important is NATO's Concept for the Deterrence and Defense of the Euro Atlantic Area to the U.S. from an operational perspective?

Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area (DDA) represents a significant breakthrough in the level of operational integration and planning of Allied military activities. The concept leverages a deliberate rhythm of operational military activity across all geographic areas of the Alliance, as well as across all operational domains and functional areas: maritime, land, air, space, cyber, special operations, and enablement. DDA enables the Alliance to adjust the position and deployment of capabilities along with military exercises to send strong signals to intended audiences. DDA is the framework from which NATO demonstrates capability and willingness to defend. Most importantly, the DDA concept enhances the speed and effectiveness of rapidly deployable forces. The associated NATO Force Model sources the DDA plans with more forces, at higher readiness, under enhanced command arrangements. The DDA architecture enables NATO to predict where an adversary may seek to gain and exploit a temporary advantage over Allies, and to respond in ways that may preempt attacks.

272. NATO updated its strategic concept in June 2022. Does NATO need to update its Strategic Concept?

Like any strategy, routine review and updating is necessary to ensure validity, but I defer to the Commander of USEUCOM and SACEUR on the need for NATO to update its Strategic Concept.

273. What do you see as the proper role for NATO in the strategic competition with Russia and China?

In my view, NATO has a preeminent role in competing with Russia due to geography and Russian military and political aspirations

274. If confirmed as VCJCS, what actions would you recommend maintaining momentum on the capabilities, readiness, and military mobility of the NATO Alliance to deter aggression?

I would recommend aggressively moving forward with the decision of this year's NATO Summit at The Hague, specifically increasing defense spending to 5% of GDP, using the capability targets that Defense Ministers agreed to earlier in June as the framework and road map to guide the increased spending, coupled with robust exercises to hone and validate NATO's capabilities with our European allies as primary lead for Europe's conventional deterrence and defense. For a more fulsome response, I would want to talk further with SACEUR and understand his views on the issue.

As recently as the June 2021 Summit, NATO Allies have declared “...that as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance.” The alliance’s Secretary General reiterated this point at the recent meeting of defense ministers in October, stating that a “...world where Russia, China, and countries like North Korea have nuclear weapons, but NATO has none, is simply not a safer world.”

275. In your view, should NATO remain a nuclear alliance as long as nuclear weapons exist?

Yes. Nuclear weapons exist, therefore NATO’s identity as a nuclear alliance is critical to deterrence and to U.S. security.

276. Do you believe that the forward deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe is an essential component of NATO’s nuclear posture?

Yes. U.S. forward-deployed nuclear weapons are a critical component of NATO’s nuclear posture, allowing for burden-sharing among Allies and bolstering deterrence against our adversaries.

277. In your view, is there a continuing requirement for U.S. nuclear weapons to be deployed in NATO countries?

Yes. These forward-based weapons contribute to U.S. extended deterrence, complicate adversary decision calculus, and reassure our NATO Allies. Nuclear proliferation, even among Allies, significantly limits U.S. ability to manage escalation risk. It could trigger further acceleration of adversary efforts to modernize and expand their nuclear arsenals. Additionally, it would irreparably erode the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and could encourage proliferation around the world.

278. At the NATO Summit in Brussels this past year, Allies pledged to “ensure a flexible, agile, and resilient multi-domain force architecture” to meet deterrence and defense needs. How do you envision NATO Allies’ military efforts aligning with the U.S. Army’s Multi Domain Task Force?

The Commander of USEUCOM is best positioned to answer this question. As I understand it, NATO Allies’ efforts will be complementary to the Army’s Multi Domain Task Force, providing capabilities that will enhance, strengthen, and support the Army’s efforts across all domains.

U.S. Capabilities and Force Posture in Europe

279. In your assessment, are there capability and/or capacity shortfalls in the current joint force that present a challenge to addressing threats in Europe?

If so, what specific changes would you make to U.S. capabilities or force posture in Europe to execute the Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance more effectively?

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs, and the Combatant Commanders to review our capabilities, capacity, and force posture, to include that in the USEUCOM AOR, and make my recommendations.

280. In your assessment, does the United States have sufficient air and missile defense capability and capacity to defend critical infrastructure in the U.S. European Command (EUCOM), such as command and control locations and air bases, against cruise missile attack?

The Commander of USEUCOM is best positioned to answer this question.

281. Do Chinese investments in European infrastructure pose threats to U.S. operations there? What other Chinese activities or investments should be cause for concern with regard to our security and that of our Allies and partners in Europe?

Chinese companies' large investments in European transportation, telecommunication, and other infrastructure contribute to Beijing's effort to curry influence in the region. As of July, China claimed its direct investment in Europe exceeded \$120B and involved ~2.8k Chinese companies. Beijing probably would consider degrading U.S. or Allied use of key infrastructure in Europe through cyberoperations if vital interests, such as Taiwan or the survival of the CCP were at stake. Even during a conflict with the United States, Beijing would balance any potential disruption of U.S. operations in the region against its goal to keep any conflict limited in scope, area, and duration, as well as its desire to present itself as a reliable and predictable partner.

282. In your view, do large-scale military exercises such as DEFENDER EUROPE 2021 serve to reassure Allies and deter adversaries such as Russia?

Yes, the exercises reinforce cooperation at the scope and scale necessary. The exercises have opportunities for allies to ensure interoperability, readiness, and a unified response to emerging global security challenges

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283. Do you support continuing a robust level of exercises with our European Allies and partners?

Yes, training and exercises are the cornerstones for a ready force. However, for these exercises, I defer U.S. participation levels to CDRUSEUCOM.

284. The Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan helped build interoperability with numerous NATO Allies and partners. What are ways we can maintain that level of interoperability going forward?

The best way to strengthen interoperability with Allies and partners is through regular large scale field training exercises. These exercises force allies to operate across domains and test their ability to communicate under realistic conditions. Smaller scale training exercises are also very useful and can be tailored to focus on specific domains or regional neighbors who would be most likely to fight together. Operationally, NATO can leverage vigilance activities and enhanced vigilance activities to hone interoperability under real-world conditions. By bringing or rotating more Allies into a given vigilance activity can broaden the impact across the Alliance.

285. Our relationship with Turkey has been strained in recent years over that nation's purchase of the Russian S-400 system and other actions, yet Turkey remains a NATO Ally with a large, operationally committed military.

286. What is your assessment of military-to-military relations with Turkey at present?

Türkiye and the United States maintain strong military-military ties including basing, exercises, and training. Turkey's geographic position on NATO's southeastern flank adjacent to regional conflicts and other possible flashpoints make it an increasingly important ally. The U.S. and Turkish militaries continue to work closely to address shared security concerns and coordinate efforts in Africa, Europe, and the Middle East.

The Korean Peninsula

287. How would you assess the continuing value of the U.S.-South Korea alliance to U.S. national security interests?

The U.S.-South Korea (ROK) alliance is the linchpin for peace, stability, and prosperity on the Korean peninsula and beyond. Through the alliance, our presence in the region provides a robust deterrence to aggression on the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia by promoting security and American prosperity.

288. Do you believe the U.S. – ROK Alliance is strategically sustainable and credibly contributes to deterrence in the Indo-Pacific?

Yes, the U.S.-ROK alliance has served as the linchpin for stability in the region and deterred North Korean aggression for over 70 years. As the Secretary of Defense has stated, we continue to call on our allies, to include the ROK, to increase their defense spending and strengthen its military capabilities to enhance

the combined conventional deterrence posture against all regional threats to the alliance, including the threat posed by North Korea.

289. What is your assessment of the threat posed by North Korea to regional and global stability?

North Korea's nuclear, missile, and cyber capabilities continue to threaten the United States and its allies on a global scale. Pyongyang has tested multiple missile systems capable of striking U.S. forces in South Korea and Japan, as well as Guam, Alaska, Hawaii, and CONUS. Additionally, North Korea conducts persistent cyber activities, such as cryptocurrency theft and adaptive cybercrime TTPs to generate funds and obtain technical information in support of the regime's military and WMD programs. Pyongyang's comprehensive strategic partnership with Moscow very likely will enable it to further improve its military capabilities, increasing the threat to regional stability and U.S. interests.

290. In your assessment, what is the value of combined joint exercises for maintaining the readiness of U.S. forces on the Korean Peninsula?

Combined joint exercises are extremely valuable. The U.S. and ROK military forces on the Korean peninsula continue to adapt the combined readiness posture through investment in defense modernization and robust exercises, such as the recently concluded ULCHI FREEDOM SHIELD. Combined joint exercises increase interoperability between U.S. and ROK forces and ensure that we are postured to respond to any threat.

291. In your view, are there additional steps that DOD could take to improve U.S. and allied defenses against North Korea's nuclear and missile capabilities?

As threats from North Korea and other adversaries increase, burden-sharing provides an avenue to enhance defense capacity. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Gen Guetlein and the professionals across the Department to understand and advise on potential improvements to U.S. and allied defenses against North Korea's nuclear and missile capabilities.

292. In your view, are there additional steps that DOD could take to ensure that North Korea does not further proliferate missile and weapons technology?

North Korea's actions continue to present challenges to the Department. If confirmed, I look forward to working with DOD and interagency professionals to identify options to address further proliferation of missile and weapons technology by North Korea.

293. How does the U.S.-ROK alliance contribute to the deterrence of threats from China and Russia?

Yes, the U.S.-ROK alliance has served as the linchpin for stability in the region and supports not only deterrence against North Korea but also other regional threats. As the Secretary of Defense has stated, we continue to call on our allies, to include the ROK, to increase their defense spending and strengthen its military capabilities to enhance the combined conventional deterrence posture against all regional threats to the alliance, including the threat posed by North Korea.

294. What will you do to ensure that trilateral military cooperation between the U.S., Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) accelerates?

I support the Trilateral Security Cooperation Framework and, if confirmed, will continue to advocate for using the Trilateral Security Cooperation Framework as a blueprint for military cooperation in exercises like FREEDOM EDGE and operationally through efforts such as our trilateral missile data warning sharing mechanism.

295. Do you believe that the ROK has met the requirements for the conditions-based operational control transition plan allowing it to assume wartime control of its military? If not, what does the ROK still need to do to achieve OPCON transition?

The U.S. and ROK currently have a conditions-based operational control transition plan (COTP) in place. The COTP requires the ROK to meet the conditions associated with their stand-alone capability and that the security environment is conducive for the ROK to assume the lead of a U.S.-ROK combined command prior to transition. The ROK continues to increase and improve capabilities by acquiring equipment and experience through multi-domain and trilateral exercises. If confirmed, I will support the Chairman and Secretary of Defense to review the conditions outlined within the existing plan before making my recommendation.

296. What are the benefits, risks, and cost of returning U.S. theater nuclear weapons to the Korean Peninsula?

North Korea has deliberately enhanced its nuclear weapons and missile programs over time and poses a threat to the U.S. homeland and our allies. If confirmed, I look forward to working with professionals across the Department, including the Combatant Commands, to assess opportunities to bolster deterrence on the Korean Peninsula.

297. What are your views on the use of landmines to deter conflict on the Korean Peninsula? Do you support continuing efforts by DOD to modernize related terrain shaping capabilities?

Landmines have been used on the Korean peninsula since the Korean War and continue to provide an effective counter-mobility capability for our military. I support the continued effort by DOD to modernize terrain shaping capability.

298. If South Korea and North Korea were able to negotiate a peace deal, how do you assess that would impact U.S. force posture on the peninsula as well as the legal status of the UN force?

I don't want to speculate on hypotheticals, but I will emphasize that any decision on U.S. force posture on the peninsula as well as the legal status of the UN force will be made by our civilian leadership. If confirmed, I will support the Chairman and Secretary of Defense into reviewing potential impacts to U.S. force posture if the security environment on the peninsula changes.

Defense Security Cooperation

299. If confirmed, what steps would you recommend, if any, to ensure that DOD is taking a strategic approach to its security cooperation with allies and partners?

Under the direction of the President and the Secretary of Defense, the United States has taken strong steps forward to improve the balance between the efforts of our allies and partners and the United States. To ensure DOD and the Joint Staff take a strategic approach to security cooperation, leadership must link activities with allies and partners to broader military planning and prioritize relationships that advance long-term U.S. interests. Resources should be focused on building meaningful capabilities with key allies and partners who are willing to share the security burden. Success must be measured and assessed using real-world outcomes – such as improved readiness and interoperability – rather than by merely counting activities or dollars spent. Current processes, policies, and regulations should be streamlined to accelerate delivery and reduce friction, especially for our most trusted allies and partners. Finally, coordination across U.S. agencies and with multinational organizations is essential to present a unified front and amplify the impact of U.S. efforts abroad. If confirmed, I would ensure that we emphasize security cooperation activities that focus on burden-sharing to its rational and logical extent to improve the security of the United States and its citizens.

300. What is your understanding of DOD's role in the foreign military sales and arms transfer process? In your view, what are the greatest challenges for DOD in fulfilling this role in a timely and effective manner?

The Department of Defense plays a vital role in managing the United States' foreign military sales (FMS) and arms transfer efforts, serving as a key link in

strengthening defense relationships with allied and partner nations. Through the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, DOD oversees the movement, acquisition, and delivery of military equipment and services. Beyond hardware, the DOD also provides hands-on training and strategic guidance to ensure ally and partner nations can effectively operate and sustain the systems they receive. DOD also remains responsible for protecting sensitive technologies and ensuring that all transfers align with broader national security goals. Despite its central role, the DOD faces significant hurdles in executing these responsibilities efficiently. Currently, the FMS process is bogged down by layers of bureaucracy, cumbersome systems, and a regulatory environment that slows innovation. Meanwhile, adversary nations such as China and Russia can move more swiftly, offering arms with fewer restrictions and greater flexibility. Domestic challenges—like limited manufacturing capacity and fragile supply chains—further strain the system. Uniform oversight and lengthy congressional reporting procedures often delay critical transfers, even when dealing with our closest allies and partners or urgent needs. Going forward, I would envision working with America’s industry to expedite our processes to ensure production is able to adapt to an ever-changing security environment.

301. Is DOD appropriately organized, trained, and resourced to execute security cooperation and foreign military sales effectively? If not, and if confirmed, what changes to defense security assistance organizations, training, and processes would you recommend?

While the founding principles of security cooperation have historically allowed the United States to support security cooperation efforts across the globe in a timely and appropriate manner, current structures and processes are not fully optimized for today’s strategic environment. The system remains burdened by outdated frameworks, fragmented coordination, and insufficient agility to respond to urgent ally and partner needs. If confirmed, I would advocate for greater integration with interagency partners and a shift toward outcome-based assessments to also enhance effectiveness. These changes are essential to ensure our efforts support readiness, deterrence, interoperability, and long-term strategic advantage.

302. What is your assessment of the impact of cuts to security cooperation programs, particularly on regional alliances and partnerships?

The Department of Defense has comprehensively reviewed, in close coordination with Geographic Combatant Commanders, Significant Security Cooperation Initiatives and other security cooperation activities to prioritize funding for the most pressing security challenges and threats. This effort will provide an opportunity to refocus long-term American resource commitments, more cost-effectively build ally and partner capability and capacity, and create sustainable security relationships based in budget reality.

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) Capabilities

Demand for ISR capabilities of every kind has grown exponentially in recent years, largely due to the enhanced situational awareness and targeting capabilities they afford commanders. Almost all the geographic Combatant Commands have validated ISR requirements that are not being met.

303. What is your assessment of DOD's current disposition of ISR assets across the Combatant Commands?

The DOD has a deliberative process to develop the DOD's ISR allocation plan, which is aligned with the priorities outlined in the Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance. The allocation plan is not static and is adjusted as needed to meet emergent CCMD requirements, such as the Israel Hamas Conflict and addressing the National Emergency at the US Southern Border.

304. What do you perceive as the most concerning shortfalls in both the capability and availability of ISR assets? If confirmed, what steps would you take to correct these deficiencies?

Demand for ISR will always outpace supply. The Services continue to deploy ISR forces at the maximum sustainable capacity, nothing is held in reserve. The Joint Staff NDAA 1061 Report to Congress on Airborne ISR Divestments will identify which capability gaps and shortfalls the CCMDs are most concerned about. This classified report will be delivered to Congress by the end of this month.

As the DOD transitions to a new, more responsive joint requirements process, I will still leverage Capability Portfolio Management reviews to examine the DOD ISR enterprise portfolio and ensure the Services are developing and fielding an effective mix of systems to meet CCMD requirements, informed by both risk and cost assessments.

305. What is your assessment of current service efforts to develop increased capabilities, as well as the processing, exploitation, and dissemination capabilities and capacity to support increased collection?

The DOD is implementing a plan to modernize its ISR capabilities, investing in platforms, sensors, and communication capabilities designed to operate in high-threat and denied environments. The focus on ISR capabilities which are survivable and resilient means a greater investment in space-based ISR capabilities with DOD's newest Service, the US Space Force.

Joint Staff supports investments in space-based ISR that will provide greater collection capacity and access for the Combatant Commands, particular in a denied environment. However, there are some concerns that proposed Service budget reductions may have an outsized impact on Airborne ISR programs. In

terms of Processing, Exploitation, and Dissemination (or PED) capabilities, the Joint Staff recently conducted a Space-Derived Exploitation Capability Portfolio Management Review that highlighted the need for the Services to address CCMD exploitation requirements. The Services, NGA, and NRO are leaning heavily on future artificial intelligence/machine learning solutions which are at various stages of technical maturity and confidence levels. As new collection systems are fielded, more data will be available to train these AI/ML programs, but we must ensure sufficient Service PED resources (manpower), and investments are available to provide targeting quality data and decision advantage.

306. How does increased demand square with Services' plans to divest many of the platforms providing ISR to the Combatant Commanders?

The DOD needs to invest in robust survivable ISR which will provide sensing and targeting capabilities at speed in a highly contested environment against a peer adversary. The investments in space-based ISR will provide greater collection capacity and access for the combatant commands. The mid-term issue is one of building trust and confidence in new space-based tactical ISR systems which are not physically deployed in their theaters.

There is also a need for cultural changes within the DOD, as there is too much attention on airborne ISR and iron, when there needs to be a greatly increased emphasis on improving collection orchestration to leverage ALL data sources...from new space-based ISR, to traditional airborne, ground, and maritime, platforms, while looking at open-source commercial and publicly available information.

Increasingly, the Space Force is being relied upon for space-based ISR to the extent that the development the E-7 Wedgetail has been severely curtailed.

307. Do you believe DOD currently has the proper mix of air and space-based ISR to meet COCOM operational planning?

The Department of the Air Force, both USAF and USSF, is currently examining the mix of capabilities needed to close long range kill chains in a highly contested environment. This is one of the key issues being addressed by the DOD MTI working group, established based on 2024 NDAA direction, which will brief Congress within the next quarter.

Special Operations

308. In your view, what is the appropriate role of U.S. Special Operations Forces in supporting the implementation of the Joint Warfighting Concept, the Joint Concept for Competing, and the National Defense Strategy?

Special Operations Forces support the national security priorities of preserving strategic focus; preventing great power conflict; and preparing the environment for the Joint Force to prevail in conflict if deterrence fails. Special Operations Forces are the premier global counterterrorism formations charged with defending the homeland. Special Operations Forces also play a critical role in global crisis response and ensuring the safety of American citizens abroad when in extremis.

Successive NDAs have empowered the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (ASD(SOLIC)) to serve as a “service secretary-like” civilian official for special operations forces, including defining the administrative chain of command for SOCOM as running through the ASD(SOLIC) to the Secretary of Defense for issues impacting the readiness and organization of special operations forces.

309. What is your understanding of the Department’s progress in implementing the “service secretary-like” responsibilities of the ASD(SOLIC)?

My understanding is that the Department has made great progress in implementing the service secretary-like responsibilities of ASD(SO/LIC) for issues impacting the organization, training and equipping of special operations forces. ASD(SO/LIC) fills a critical role in coordinating with Congress and in advocating on behalf of the Special Operations enterprise in areas related to budget, training, and modernization.

310. If confirmed, would you commit to fully implementing these reforms?

Yes.

Section 1091 of the Fiscal Year 2024 NDAA expresses the Sense of the Congress that the Secretary of Defense has the authority to conduct irregular warfare operations, including clandestine irregular warfare operations, to defend the United States, allies of the United States, and interests of the United States, when such operations have been appropriately authorized.

311. Excluding existing statutory authorities for the conduct of irregular warfare, what is your understanding of the inherent authority of the Secretary of Defense to conduct irregular warfare operations as a traditional military activity?

I understand the Secretary of Defense’s inherent authority to conduct irregular warfare to be codified in such statutes as Title 10 U.S. Code 127d, 127e and 127f. However, given the complexity of the current operating environment, if confirmed, I will support the Chairman in ensuring the Department’s Irregular Warfare authorities, and supporting processes, satisfy the scope, speed, and agility required.

312. What is your understanding of the role of irregular warfare in supporting Department of Defense strategy and operations?

Irregular Warfare (IW) plays a critical role in supporting DOD strategy by shaping conditions, deterring adversaries, and safeguarding U.S. interests through indirect, asymmetric, and non-attributable activities. It aims to subvert adversaries, create dilemmas, and impose costs on their strategic interests, including their economy, civil society, and critical infrastructure. While IW often favors indirect approaches, it can employ the full range of military and other capabilities to erode an adversary's power, influence, and political will. The Joint Force uses IW to shape conditions for ongoing operations, prepare for contingencies, and defend against attacks or malicious activities targeting the United States. This makes IW a vital tool for achieving strategic objectives in both competition and conflict.

313. Is the Department of Defense appropriately organized and resourced to effectively operate in the irregular warfare domain? What changes, if any, would you recommend?

The Joint Force continues to institutionalize irregular warfare as a core competency; however, irregular warfare campaigning against state adversaries requires a whole of government approach and the DOD has room to improve interagency planning, coordination, and synchronization in the irregular warfare space against peer and near peer adversaries. The preceding decades of low-intensity conflict provide insight into how the Department can best work with the interagency.

Section 127e of title 10, U.S. Code, authorizes special operations forces to provide support to regular forces, irregular forces, and individuals supporting or facilitating military operations for the purpose of combatting terrorism. Section 127d of title 10 authorizes special operations forces to provide similar support to forces or individuals supporting or facilitating irregular warfare operations.

314. What is your assessment of the national security utility of each of these authorities in the current strategic environment?

My assessment is that these authorities allow the Department to conduct counterterrorism or irregular warfare activities by, with, and through foreign forces, irregular forces, groups, or individuals since they often have access and placement to adversary operating areas that U.S. forces lack. DOD expends funds to support partner forces as they in turn lend their support to achieving United States' military objectives. In my view, by expending relatively small amounts of funding, combined with advice and assistance from the U.S. military, the Department leverages these local forces to protect the U.S. homeland and

Americans abroad by maintaining continuous pressure on strategic competitors, non-state actors, and asymmetric threats.

315. If confirmed, what criteria would you apply to the evaluation of proposals for the use of each of these authorities, with a view to mitigating the risks associated with the conduct of counterterrorism and irregular warfare activities below the level of traditional armed conflict?

If confirmed, I would defer to, and support, SOCOM's expertise in confirming the trustworthiness and reliability of potential partners through stringent screening and vetting processes. In most instances, choosing the right partners is the best way to ensure compliance with the Law of Armed Conflict, proper expenditure of funds, and accountability of defense articles.

Defense Support to Civil Authorities

Civil authorities may request DOD support for domestic disasters and certain counter-drug operations, as well as in managing the consequences of a terrorist event employing a weapon of mass destruction.

316. In your view, are the procedures by which Federal, State, and Local agencies request DOD support efficient, effective, and timely?

The procedures by which Federal, State, and Local agencies request DOD support have been designed to be efficient, effective, and timely. The National Response Framework (NRF) and the Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) guidelines provide a structured and well-coordinated approach for such requests.

317. In your view, are DOD procedures for evaluating and approving the provision of support requested by a civil authority efficient, effective, and timely?

The DOD procedures for evaluating and approving support requests from civil authorities are efficient, effective, and timely. The DOD has established clear protocols and criteria for assessing requests, which include considerations of legality, risk, cost, appropriateness, and readiness.

318. What factors should be considered in determining whether DOD will provide support to a civil authority?

The DOD evaluates and decides on Requests for Assistance (RFAs) based on the following criteria: legality, risk, cost, appropriateness, and readiness.

319. In your view, to what extent should the Department anticipate being called on to support civil authorities in the event of a war with a peer competitor?

DOD's priority missions are to defend the homeland and fight and win our nation's wars. The primary conditions for evaluating requests from civil authorities are military readiness (the impact on DOD's ability to perform its primary missions) and resources available. A determination will be made at time of crisis on the ability of DOD to provide support to civilian authorities with any available resources. It is important for our federal partners and state and local authorities to improve their capabilities and resilience.

320. In your view, what investments and planning do you believe the Department should be undertaking to prepare for such a scenario?

Military forces are trained and equipped to conduct the department's warfighting missions. Support to civilian authorities is provided with any available resources at time of crisis. To better understand competing requirements for domestic response in a time of conflict, the interagency should continue to invest in National Level Exercises and war gaming.

Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs)

321. What is your understanding of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy and the role of DOD in supporting that strategy?

My understanding is that the U.S. counterterrorism strategy provides a holistic, whole of government approach to countering violent extremist organizations (VEOs). DOD is involved in several lines of effort including a leading role in strengthening the counterterrorism abilities of international partners and conducting military operations overseas to disrupt terrorist networks.

322. What is your assessment of the effectiveness of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy in addressing the threat posed by VEOs?

My assessment is that given the long-term effort to counter violent extremism, the Joint Force will have to measure effectiveness based on trends associated with our strategic approach and objectives. In the near-term and recent past, while we continue to successfully diminish the capacity of terrorists to directly attack the U.S., we struggle as an interagency to effectively curtail radicalization, recruitment, and mobilization of would-be extremists. If confirmed, I will work with the Chairman and interagency to routinely assess our progress of the strategy to address violent extremist threats and identify areas for adaptation.

323. What changes, if any, would you recommend to the strategy and its associated measures of effectiveness?

If confirmed, I will work with stakeholders and agencies to monitor our strategic measures of effectiveness to ensure we are working towards an agreed upon, shared, and sustainable end state with the understanding that progress will require strategic patience.

324. Should efforts to prevent the underlying causes of extremism be a component of our counterterrorism strategy?

Efforts to prevent underlying causes of extremism are a key component of our counterterrorism strategy, especially as we prioritize resources and focus to threats against the U.S. homeland and other national interests.

325. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to promote a more resource sustainable approach to counterterrorism?

If confirmed, I would support the ongoing evaluation of Joint Force's counterterrorism campaigns and endeavor to balance resources and outcomes. I will continue to advocate for improved collaboration and integration within the Department, interagency, and allies and partners to maximize resource sustainable approaches to counterterrorism.

Civilian Casualties

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

The primary challenges combatant commands face is timely access to evidence and the ability to share evidence with our allies, our partners, and non-governmental organizations. These challenges are due to restrictive data sharing policies with each of these entities, which slows the assessment and response process. This results in decreased integration, analysis, and dissemination of civilian casualty information and effects.

327. What is your understanding of the implementation status of the Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan (CHMR-AP) and what additional actions do you believe should be taken to enable the Department of Defense to effectively and credibly mitigate, investigate, and respond to allegations of civilian casualties resulting from U.S. military operations?

The Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan, or CHMR-AP, is in its fourth and final year of implementation. A workforce is in place, doctrine has

been updated, and education and training are ongoing. I understand the combatant commands see positive impacts from the program. As with any new program, there comes a time to pause and reflect, listen to feedback, and assess the future path. That is where we are today. It is appropriate to look at the resources, the distribution of those resources, and the changing

Israel

328. In your opinion, what are U.S. national security objectives with regards to Israel?

The US wants a stable and enduring peace in the Middle East. Israel is a U.S. major non-NATO Ally under U.S. law and steadfast support for Israel's security has been a cornerstone of American foreign policy. Consistent with statutory requirements, it is the policy of the United States to help Israel preserve its Qualitative Military Edge and its ability to counter and defeat any credible conventional military threats from state and non-state actors. Additional security objectives with Israel include supporting their ability to address regional threats, enhancing regional integration, and degrading Iranian influence which align with the Interim National Security Guidance.

329. In your opinion, what should DOD's role be in supporting Israeli efforts to continue to degrade and defeat Hamas?

This is inherently a policy decision. With that said, following the 7 Oct attacks of Hamas on Israel, Israel has fundamentally reshaped the regional strategic landscape through degradations to Iran and the Iranian proxy network. The DOD, if directed to, has demonstrated the ability to rapidly and decisively deploy forces to the region. Disarming, dismantling, and reducing the capabilities of Iranian proxies and Iran by Israel supports Interim National Security Guidance.

Iran

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

Iran's military capabilities were degraded by Israeli airstrikes during the 12-Day War; however, they still pose a considerable threat to U.S. interests and personnel in the region. Iran's ballistic missile and UAV forces remain capable of responding against Iran's adversaries, if authorized to do so. In addition, Iran's naval forces were largely untouched during the War and Iran's small boats and minelayers continue to pose a significant threat to maritime traffic transiting the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz. Tehran is unlikely to break the ceasefire with Tel Aviv as it focuses on military reconstitution and recovery efforts, particularly among its AD forces.

331. In your view, what are the long-term effects of the recent U.S. strike on Iranian nuclear facilities on Iran's interest in and capability to develop nuclear weapons?

I cannot speak to the specifics of the strikes, as I was not closely involved. I understand that the U.S. strikes were executed with precision by the Joint Force and displayed that the U.S. military is the only military with the global reach to effectuate such an operation. To the effects, we should assume that Iran remains a dangerous, capable adversary that is likely to continue its nuclear ambitions.

332. 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?

Currently, military force posture in the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) area of responsibility (AOR) is sufficient to deter and respond to threats posed by Iran. The security environment that exists in the CENTCOM AOR requires continuous assessments of appropriate disposition of military forces and capabilities in the AOR. If confirmed, I will work with the Chairman and CDRUSCENTCOM to provide advice to the Secretary of Defense on capabilities required mitigate threats posed by Iran.

333. What is your assessment of U.S. national security interests associated with the growth of Iranian influence in the Middle East?

Iran's influence in the Middle East was dealt a significant blow over the past 16 months. The fall of the Assad government in Syria, the degradation of the Houthis in Yemen achieved by Operations ROUGH RIDER, the devastation of Hezbollah's leadership in Lebanon, and the success of Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER have all eroded Iran's ability to project power in the region. Despite this, Iranian influence in the Middle East still poses significant challenges to United States national security interests, as it undermines regional stability and threatens key U.S. allies and partners. Iran supports international terrorism and proxy forces in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon through the proliferation of advanced conventional weapons and destabilizing actions. These activities enable its proxies to undermine governments, perpetuate conflicts, and challenge U.S. and allied forces in the region. Iran's influence complicates U.S. efforts to counter terrorism, secure energy resources, and promote peace in the region, making the containment of Iran's regional activities a priority for U.S. national security strategy.

334. If the U.S. relieved sanctions on Iran, do you assess that there is a risk that Iran would use that sanctions relief to further its malign activities in the region?

I would defer to the Department of State on matters of United States sanction policy. However, it is my assessment that if the United States relieves sanctions on Iran, there is a risk Iran would use some of the resulting influx of capital and resources to further its destabilizing activities in the region. In the past, Iran used increased oil revenues and access to foreign reserves to support proxy groups while expanding its defense budget and regional influence.

Iraq and Syria

335. What is your understanding of current U.S. strategy and objectives in Syria? How have those objectives changed, if at all, in light of the fall of the Assad regime?

I look forward to working with the Chairman and the Secretary as this administration assesses and refines our broader United States policy for Syria after the fall of Assad, but our military mission is unchanged. United States forces are in Syria to defeat ISIS, and to prevent external operations from ISIS and al-Qaida from threatening the United States. Homeland. The December 2024 fall of the Assad regime does not fundamentally alter these United States military objectives.

336. From a DOD perspective, what must be done to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS? What non-military efforts are needed for the enduring defeat of ISIS?

The Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS must continue to cooperate on counterterrorism efforts around the world to ensure we preserve our hard-won gains. As I understand it, our coalition operations with our Iraqi and Syrian partners have reduced the threat of ISIS in the region to the point where we can shift the main responsibility for these operations to local forces. Lasting regional stability requires this burden-sharing with regional and international allies and partners. U.S. must continue to work closely with allies and partners to address shared security concerns through a whole-of-government approach to eliminate threats to the Homeland.

337. What do you perceive to be the role of the Syrian Democratic Forces and Iraqi Security Forces in countering ISIS and al Qaeda?

As Operation INHERENT RESOLVE ends its military mission in Iraq and our forces consolidate in Syria, I believe the SDF and ISF can continue leading the fight against ISIS. They have proven to be critical, capable partners who demonstrated their commitment to our shared long-term CT objectives in the region. I will seek to work with the Secretary, the Chairman, and interagency on the future of these relationships as regional dynamics

continue to change and the Administration reviews its policies regarding Syria and Iraq.

338. 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 would you factor into your recommendation to the President on future troop levels in Syria?

I believe that United States. troop levels in Syria should be in accordance with our national interests, policy, and objectives while taking into consideration the global readiness of the Joint Force. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman, and the Commander USCENTCOM to review our strategy and posture in Syria and make my recommendations.

In September, the U.S.-Iraq Higher Military Commission announced the transition of the global coalition to defeat ISIS to a bilateral security relationship with the Government of Iraq. However, many of the details of such a transition are still being negotiated with the Iraqi Government.

339. In your view, what should the guiding principles for DOD's presence in Iraq moving forward? Do you assess that U.S. forces should remain in Iraq beyond next September? Why or why not?

Iraq has become a key partner for the United States in the region. I believe the United States is committed to a strategic partnership Iraq and its people. The United States actively collaborates with Iraqi partners to support a secure, independent, and prosperous Iraq. I believe that our partnership supports United States interests, Iraq's security, regional and global stability, and reinforces Iraqi economic development, foreign investment and regional leadership. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman, and the Commander USCENTCOM to review our strategy and posture in Iraq to support the goal of a sustainable and enduring bilateral relationship.

Afghanistan

340. Reflecting back on the mission in Afghanistan, what do you see as some of the major strategic missteps? How would you apply those lessons learned in future military operations?

The Joint Force has learned, and continues to learn, the lessons from twenty years of operations in Afghanistan at all echelons from Service Training and Warfare Development Centers, through the Combatant Commands (CCMDs), up to the Joint Staff and the Combat Support Agencies (CSAs). Key operational and strategic lessons from Afghanistan include: A comprehensive approach that

includes governance, security, and development is required for long-term stability and success; Good governance and effective institutions are essential for stability and security; Understanding local culture and context is crucial for mission success; Winning the local population is key contributor to success. Utilizing the lessons and observations that have been made regarding the Afghanistan operations, and conclusions from ongoing reviews, incorporating recommendations into updated Joint doctrine ensures that our professional military education and training programs address lessons learned from the conflict to enable effective force development and employment in the future.

341. What factors do you assess as leading to the Taliban's ultimate success in returning to power in Afghanistan?

I defer to ongoing reviews of the Afghanistan War to provide assessments of the outcomes in Afghanistan. If confirmed, I will ensure the Joint Force takes those assessments into account for future operations.

342. 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?

I would use conclusions from ongoing reviews to inform planning for future train, advise and assist missions. My initial analysis based on reviews conducted so far would be for future operations to set realistic expectations and modest objectives in concert with the partner force. In addition, and most importantly, the United States should not significantly invest in any security force without a solid foundation of governance in the host country.

343. As the military mission in Afghanistan has concluded, what do you view as U.S. strategic interests in Afghanistan?

The most immediate U.S. strategic interest in Afghanistan is to ensure the country is not used for terrorist attacks against the United States. If confirmed, I will continue to assess the U.S. military strategy in Afghanistan against our national strategic interests and in light of broader global requirements and I will make recommendations to the Chairman and Secretary.

In a conflict with terrorist organizations, a local partner force is usually preferred and often advantageous. But as a Joint Force, we also have deep knowledge of the violent extremist organization's footprint in Afghanistan. We have spent the last four years expanding counter-terrorism partnerships with countries in the region and use all the tools at the disposal of the U.S. military and the capabilities of our partners to address threats emanating from Afghanistan. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Combatant Commanders to assess the challenges and benefits of our "over the horizon" counterterrorism operations.

344. Can the United States conduct effective “over the horizon” counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan without a partner force on the ground? Please explain your answer.

In a conflict with terrorist organizations, a local partner force is often preferred. But as a Joint Force, we also have deep knowledge of the VEO terrain in Afghanistan. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Combatant Commanders to review global force posture and capabilities and understand the challenges and benefits of the over the horizon posture.

Guantanamo Bay Naval Station

345. Do you support the standards for detainee treatment specified in the revised Army Field Manual on Interrogations, FM 2-22.3, issued in September 2006, and in DOD Directive 2310.01E, the Department of Defense Detainee Program, dated August 19, 2014?

Yes. Individuals in the custody or control of the U.S. Government may not be subjected to any interrogation technique or approach, or any treatment related to interrogation, that is not authorized by and listed in the Army Field Manual.

Insider Threat

DOD has experienced devastating attacks from insider threats—attacks that have led to the death and injury of DOD personnel, as well as to the loss of highly-classified information critical to national security.

346. In your view, has DOD’s Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency effectively postured the Department to deter, detect, and mitigate insider threats before they reach a critical point and potentially harm national security?

The Department's Defense Counterintelligence Enterprise, through either Service CI elements, or the Military Department Counterintelligence Organizations, DIA, and others are actively engaged with as many people as possible within the Department to become the first line of defense to mitigate and/or eliminate as many potential or active Insider Threats as possible. As with any program within the Department, more investment could be made toward CI and Insider Threat resources to continue to address the Insider Threat issue.

347. What can the Department do to ensure that senior leaders in each DOD Component—not only the intelligence or counterintelligence communities—

are fully invested in protecting their people, facilities, and information from insider threats as a core mission objective?

Insider threat awareness is everyone's core mission. The Department is executing multiple efforts to combat the Insider Threat problem. This includes a robust Insider Threat program spanning the entire Department, where each element of the Department has or should have an Insider Threat Program. Additionally, the entire Department workforce (active duty, civilian, and contractor) is subject to Insider Threat and Awareness Training within 90 days of onboarding and annually thereafter.

Operational Energy and Energy Resilience

348. If confirmed, are there actions you can take to harness innovations in operational energy and link them with emerging joint operational concepts?

To complement investments by the Military Departments, the Department leverages enterprise-level programs of record, including the Operational Energy Capability Improvement Fund and the Operational Energy Prototyping Fund, to accelerate the delivery of Joint power and energy solutions across all domains. The Department has made progress with microgrids, energy storage, autonomous system power solutions, space operations and refueling, and foundational capabilities supporting initiatives such as Golden Dome. Moving forward, we must maintain a dual focus: Near-term solutions to upgrade and harden current platforms and infrastructure; Long-term innovation in future system design, emphasizing integration of emerging technologies to ensure enduring energy resilience and operational advantage.

349. In what specific areas, if any, do you believe DOD needs to improve the incorporation of energy considerations in strategic planning processes?

Energy supportability must be fully integrated into strategic and operational planning. By considering energy requirements early in the planning process, we can identify capability gaps and proactively develop mitigation strategies through updated procedures, targeted investments, and innovative solutions that directly support mission success. Equally important is validation through wargames and exercises. Incorporating energy considerations into these events will confirm energy capacity and resiliency solutions under realistic conditions, while also helping us uncover additional vulnerabilities. This deliberate approach ensures that energy is a critical enabler of operational advantage and mission assurance.

350. How can DOD acquisition systems better address requirements related to a military platform's use of energy?

Rigorous, data-driven analysis informs the development of energy requirements for all new capabilities. This process is critical to guaranteeing that emerging

platforms and systems are energy-resilient and operationally sustainable. If confirmed, I will continue to enforce and support the Certification of Energy as the requirements process evolves under recent Secretary of Defense direction. I am committed to ensuring that new capabilities do not impose an energy burden on our warfighters, particularly in a contested environment where supply lines are vulnerable. Energy supportability will remain a key design and operational consideration from concept to deployment, ensuring mission assurance and sustained advantage. Additionally, energy solutions that reduce demand for strategic lift and intra-theater transportation makes the Joint Force more agile.

351. If confirmed, are there actions you can take to prioritize energy resilience and mission assurance for DOD, including acquiring and deploying sustainable and renewable energy assets to support mission critical functions, and address known vulnerabilities?

Energy is a key component of our weapons systems and overall mission readiness. If confirmed, I will work closely with OUSD(A&S) and ASD(A) and the Services throughout the acquisition lifecycle to ensure energy considerations continue to be fully integrated from concept development through sustainment. This will include increasing the energy efficiency and operational endurance of weapons systems, embedding resilience into supply chains and supporting infrastructure, and leveraging innovation in alternative fuels, advanced power systems, and energy storage. By making energy resilience a core design factor we can enhance combat capability, reduce vulnerabilities, and ensure that our forces maintain the operational advantage required to prevail in contested environments.

DOD Auditability

DOD has invested significant effort and dollars in preparing its financial information for annual audit reviews. However, the 2024 DOD-wide financial audit again resulted in a disclaimer of opinion.

352. What do you see as the primary challenges facing the Department of Defense in 2025 and 2026 in achieving a clean audit option?

The primary challenge is to accelerate resolving the material weaknesses that drove the latest disclaimer. The Department has committed to achieving a clean audit by 2028, which demands addressing the most difficult problems that have persisted to cause repeat findings. If confirmed, I will strongly support efforts to improve auditability throughout the Joint Force.

353. If confirmed, what actions would you take or direct to improve auditability?

If confirmed, I will join the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs in demonstrating a

consistent and informed commitment to achieving an unmodified audit opinion by setting the “tone from the top,” highlighting the importance of financial accountability and transparency within the Department. Setting expectations, holding senior leaders accountable, visibly messaging the importance of financial management and audit process adherence sends a clear message throughout the Joint Force.

354. If confirmed, what steps would you take to instill responsibility for audit progress among command leadership, and not just default to a financial management community?

Maintaining transparency, accountability, and operational efficiency is key to improving auditability. If confirmed, I will work with the Department to ensure that auditability is integrated in the overall command structure of the constituent services, establishing clear roles and responsibilities related to financial management, ensuring the emphasis on auditability is pervasive from the most senior roles and commands to the most junior.

Section 920 of the Fiscal Year 2024 NDAA required DOD to develop metrics for performance evaluations of senior executive service members, general officers, and flag officers in their ability to achieve audit goals of the Department.

355. What is your understanding of the progress that has occurred in developing those metrics, and how would you propose using them as a strategic tool to prioritize audit readiness across the workforce?

I am a firm believer in management and leadership-level accountability. My view of the Section 920 provisions is that it provides a fair system to evaluate leadership against their ability to be good stewards of taxpayer funds. If confirmed, I look forward to getting up to speed on Department-wide efforts in this area and reporting back to Congress on my findings.

Role of Department of Defense Inspector General

The Inspector General Act of 1978 requires that Inspectors General of Federal departments “be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, without regard to political affiliation and solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations” in order to “conduct and supervise audits and investigations relating to the programs and operations of” the Department of Defense.

356. What is your view of the necessity of the DOD Inspector General to conduct and supervise audits and investigations relating to the programs and operations of DOD in an independent, objective, and apolitical manner?

The necessity of the Department of Defense Inspector General conducting and supervising audits and investigations in an independent, objective, and apolitical manner is imperative for ensuring the integrity, accountability, and effectiveness of DOD programs and operations. The Department of Defense Inspector General is necessary for combating waste, fraud, and abuse, promoting economy, efficiency, and effectiveness on government programs and operations by identifying and recommending corrective actions.

357. If confirmed, do you commit to respecting the independence of the DOD Inspector General, subject only to the requirements and limitations contained in the Inspector General Act of 1978?

Yes.

Role of Judge Advocates General

Federal law states that no DOD officer or employee may interfere with the ability of the Judge Advocate General of a military service to give independent legal advice to their chief of service or interfere with the ability of judge advocates of the military services assigned or attached to, or performing duty with, military units to give independent legal advice to commanders.

358. What is your view of the propriety of and need for uniformed military lawyers to exercise their independent judgment when providing legal advice to military commanders, military service leadership, and DOD leadership?

I support uniformed military lawyers' independent and professional advice to military commanders, military department leadership, and Department of Defense leadership. I have relied on and benefitted from judge advocates' candid and independent legal advice throughout my career and will continue to do so.

359. If confirmed, do you commit to respecting the independence of uniformed military attorneys to provide their best legal advice free from undue influence and reprisal?

Yes. I have done so throughout my career and, if confirmed, will do so as Vice Chairman.

Role of the Reserve Component

Historically, the reserve components have been used as a strategic reserve in the event of significant armed conflict involving the United States. Post-9/11, reserve

forces have been used more extensively to support both contingency operations and ongoing military requirements in a garrison environment.

360. In your view, should the reserve components serve as a part-time workforce, an operational reserve, a strategic reserve, or some combination of those?

The reserve components can and should serve as a combination of a part-time workforce, an operational reserve, and a strategic reserve to address the evolving nature of global threats and increasing military demands. As a part-time workforce, reservists should support routine military operations, training exercises, and domestic missions, leveraging their civilian expertise for cost-effective utilization. As an operational reserve, reservists should be ready for deployment in contingency operations and ongoing military requirements, a role that has grown in importance post-9/11. Finally, as a strategic reserve, reservists should maintain readiness to respond to significant armed conflicts or national emergencies, ensuring a robust and scalable force.

361. What changes or investments are necessary to ensure the Reserve Components are properly resourced and integrated, including considerations like equipment, training, compensation, career management, and professional military education?

To ensure the Reserve Components are properly resourced and integrated, several key changes and investments are necessary. Reserve units need access to modern equipment, timely upgrades, and advanced technology. High-quality training programs with flexible schedules and increased funding for joint exercises are essential. Competitive compensation packages are crucial to attract and retain talent. Effective career management programs should support professional development and balance civilian and military careers. Finally, efforts should enhance integration with active-duty forces through joint training, improved communication, and seamless transitions between active and reserve status.

362. In your view, what reforms, if any, should be made in order to facilitate easier transitions for members of all components between active and reserve status?

I know the Department has been engaged in a long-term effort to develop duty status reform recommendations for Congress to streamline these issues. Today's complex system is overly burdensome and results in pay and benefit inequities. In my view, at least three reforms should be implemented. First, an integrated, cohesive legislative proposal designed to comprehensively address the longstanding problems with the current duty status system will ensure that we take care of people and actively take steps to rebuild the military. Second, ongoing efforts to reform current Separation History and Physical Examination Status policy should continue, with the intent of maximizing the retention of personnel leaving active component service who wish to continue service in the

reserve component. Lastly, continued modernization of Service pay and personnel systems is essential to ensuring timely and efficient transitions of personnel between active and reserve status.

Military Quality of Life and Family Readiness

The committee remains concerned about military family readiness programs; childcare; spouse education and employment support; health care; and morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) services such as Commissary and Military Exchange stores.

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

The Department of Defense has an obligation to take care of service members and their families. Quality of life is fundamental to recruiting and retaining the all-volunteer force today and in the future. If confirmed, I will collaborate with the Service Chiefs to strengthen quality of life programs that support service members and their families. I will also review existing programs to identify and prioritize those most critical to military communities and overall force readiness. I will continue to encourage the advancement of MWR programs and community partnerships that both promote well-being while also adapting to the current demands of service members. These programs include outdoor recreation, sports and fitness, and child development and youth programs.

364. What factors would you consider in assessing which quality of life programs are providing high value for military families?

If confirmed, I would work with the Services to look primarily at usage metrics, benefit, cost, and Service member and family feedback to assess which programs are providing high value. Overall, these programs are critical recruiting and retention tools and must be adequately resourced to maintain our talent.

Military Health System Reform

Section 702 of the Fiscal Year 2017 NDAA, as modified by Sections 711 and 712 of the Fiscal Year 2019 NDAA, transferred the administration and management of military hospitals and clinics from the Military Departments to the Defense Health Agency (DHA), a Combat Support Agency. Additionally, Section 732 of the FY 2019 NDAA required the development of joint force medical capabilities that meet the operation planning requirements of the combatant commands.

365. In your view, in the aggregate, how many military medical providers and what medical capabilities, are required to support the Combatant Commanders' operational plans associated with the 2022 NDS?

Thank you for your question on such an important matter. Our ability to medically support all operational plans is of the utmost importance. If confirmed, I look forward to the opportunity to return and provide more detail on how we support Combatant Commanders' operational plans at the appropriate classification level.

366. In your view, do military medical providers across the Military Departments possess today the critical wartime medical competencies required to save the lives of service members injured in combat or contingency operations?

Ensuring our clinicians maintain critical wartime medical competencies is a top priority for the Military Health System (MHS) and the Joint Staff. The Department takes numerous actions to improve military clinicians' ability to sustain the trauma care skills required in large-scale combat operations, including on-going evaluations of capabilities and capacities at military hospitals and clinics required to generate readiness and leveraging the DOD Trauma Registry (DODTR) to identify critical skills and engaging in military-civilian partnerships with Level 1 Trauma centers to ensure exposure to high acuity trauma cases.

367. In your view, are the Services adequately supporting DHA by assigning to MTFs the appropriate number of military medical providers in the specialties needed at the MTFs?

Ensuring our Service members, their dependents, and our retirees have timely access to healthcare delivery and the specialties/specialists they require is of the utmost importance. The United States, to include the Military Health System (MHS), is experiencing increased demand for health care and a shortage of health care providers across a range of specialties. While the Military Departments are meeting their overall accession and retention goals, challenges remain in recruiting and retaining medical specialties. Some are critically manned (below 85%), creating gaps within military Medical Treatment Facilities (MTF). When the MHS cannot support a healthcare requirement within the MTF, the referral is sent to the local network where TRICARE is required to find a provider that meets access to care standards.

Suicide Prevention

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

First and foremost, we must recognize that physically and mentally fit Service members are a critical component of Total Force readiness. If confirmed, I would work closely with our healthcare professionals and policymakers to ensure that adequate resources are made available for evidence-based suicide prevention programs and assess and monitor all programs for effectiveness to ensure and enhance Service member readiness. I will also promote leadership involvement in recognizing warning signs and strengthening family support initiatives that promote resilience and open discussion around mental health. My commitment is to ensure every Service member, and their family have access to the mental health resources they need.

Mental Health

369. In your view, does DOD effectively bridge the gap between a service member's desire for confidentiality and the chain of command's legitimate need to know about matters that may affect individual service member and the unit readiness?

In my view, the Department has made significant changes to bridge the gap between Service members' desires for confidentiality and the chain of command's legitimate need to know. The Department continues to assess how it can help those who struggle with complex mental health issues, while still ensuring the readiness and lethality of the force. Mental health is an element of total health, and the Joint Force needs to address, and optimize every aspect of the warfighter.

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.

370. 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.

371. 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.

372. 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.

373. 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.

374. 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.

375. 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.

376. 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.