

Senate Armed Services Committee
Advance Policy Questions for John Noh
Nominee for Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs

Duties

1. What is your understanding of the duties and functions of this position?

The Assistant Secretary of War for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs (ASW(IPSA)) is the principal advisor to the Under Secretary of War for Policy (USW(P)) and the Secretary of War on international security strategy and defense policy on issues related to the Indo-Pacific region. ASW(IPSA) is responsible for developing regional security and defense strategy and policy in support of the Secretary's objectives and the Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance; managing defense relationships with foreign governments in the region; representing the Secretary and the USW(P) in interagency discussions; and overseeing the execution of the Secretary's policies for the region.

2. If confirmed, what duties and functions do you expect that the Secretary of Defense would prescribe for you?

If confirmed, I expect my duties and functions will include formulating country-specific and regional strategies that advance the Department's policy objectives, serving as the Department's representative in negotiations and deliberations related to the areas that fall under the ASW(IPSA) portfolio, and managing defense relationships with foreign governments in the region, among other duties.

Qualifications

3. What background and experience do you possess that qualify you for this position?

I believe my background is well-suited for the position of ASW(IPSA). I spent several years of my youth growing up in Asia and have traveled extensively throughout the region. I began my career as an officer in the United States Army. During my military service, I deployed to Afghanistan where I led an infantry platoon in combat and learned invaluable lessons on leadership, planning, and mission execution. Later, I was a congressional staffer for the U.S. House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, where I led projects that focused on U.S. and allied posture and strategy in the Indo-Pacific region and conducted defense-focused engagements throughout the region. Prior to my current position, I was Performing the Duties of ASW(IPSA). In that role, I helped develop and advise the Secretary and USW(P) on regional security and defense policies; served as the lead policy advisor for the Secretary for his Indo-Pacific engagements, including during his trips to the region; conducted numerous engagements with Indo-Pacific counterparts; and represented the Department in interagency deliberations. For the last several months, I have served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of War for East Asia. In this role, I have advised my leadership on critical defense policies

pertaining to our alliances with Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and Australia; traveled to the region to conduct sensitive negotiations; and represented the Department in numerous interagency and foreign engagements.

Major Challenges and Priorities

4. If confirmed, what broad priorities will you establish?

I am fully committed to the President's America First and Peace through Strength agenda. If confirmed, I will make it my highest priority, consistent with the Department's focus on the military challenge posed by China, to do everything I can to support efforts to strengthen our posture and defenses in the Indo-Pacific region to deter war in the region. At the same time, I will work closely with our allies and partners so they can do more for both their own security and our collective defense in the region.

5. What are the major challenges you would expect to confront if confirmed?

The most significant challenge I would face, if confirmed, is addressing the military threat posed by China. China is undergoing an unprecedented and historic military buildup, and the United States faces a perilous moment in which peace cannot be assumed. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that we act with urgency and speed to strengthen deterrence to prevent conflict.

6. If confirmed, what management actions and timelines would you establish to address these challenges?

Since joining the IPSA team in January 2025, I have had the privilege of working closely with the team of talented and dedicated professionals who are part of IPSA. If confirmed, I look forward to creating a culture of close collaboration and unified purpose and working with the IPSA team to execute the Department's priorities with urgency. I will also work closely with others in the Department, interagency colleagues, foreign counterparts, and this Committee to address challenges we face in the Indo-Pacific region.

Relations with Congress

7. What are your views on the state of the relationship between the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs and the Senate Armed Services Committee in particular, and with Congress in general?

In my current position, I have not had the opportunity to fully assess the state of the relationship between IPSA and the Senate Armed Services Committee in particular, and with Congress in general. If confirmed, I will make it a priority to engage regularly in furthering these critical relationships as well as providing all statutory requirements in a timely manner.

8. If confirmed, what actions would you take to sustain a productive and mutually beneficial relationship between Congress and your office?

The Senate Armed Services Committee and Congress play critical roles in overseeing U.S. policies, programs, and activities in the Indo-Pacific region. If confirmed, I will collaborate with the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs to maintain regular engagement with the Committee and Congress, fostering a transparent and effective relationship on all matters under the ASW(IPSA)'s purview. I will also provide testimony, briefings, reports, and other information to support the Committee's oversight and legislative responsibilities.

Strategic Competition in the Indo-Pacific

9. What are the defense and security priorities for the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific region?

I believe our defense and security priorities in the Indo-Pacific region should be centered around deterring China, which remains our most serious military threat. I believe we need to focus on efforts to prioritize the deployment of combat-credible military forces west of the international dateline, modernize our force posture across the region, and strengthen critical capabilities including integrated air and missile defense and advanced strike systems. We also need to work with our allies and partners throughout the region – including Japan, Australia, and the ROK— to strengthen their defense capabilities, while asking that they significantly increase their own defense investments and take greater responsibility for regional security.

10. The INDSG suggests the U.S. should adopt a strategy of denial to off-set growing Chinese power. Explain what a strategy of denial means for U.S. military force structure and military presence in the Indo-Pacific region?

My understanding is that at its core, a denial strategy entails preventing China from achieving its military objectives—particularly any attempt to forcibly seize key terrain or dominate critical sea lanes.

For our military force structure, this strategy requires prioritizing capabilities that can operate effectively within China's anti-access/area-denial envelope, especially inside the First Island Chain. My understanding is that the Department is investing in long-range precision strike systems, which present asymmetric threats to China's naval forces, and shifting its force structure toward more distributed, resilient platforms that can survive and operate in contested environments, including advanced submarines, fifth-generation aircraft, and integrated air and missile defense systems.

Regarding military presence, a denial strategy involves positioning combat-credible forces west of the international dateline to demonstrate an enduring presence and provide immediate deterrent effects. This includes expanding rotational deployments of advanced

capabilities to nations like Japan, Australia, and the Philippines, while modernizing permanent basing infrastructure to be more resilient against potential strikes.

11. What does a strategy of denial mean for U.S. allies?

A strategy of denial fundamentally requires U.S. allies to take greater responsibility for their own defense while contributing more substantially to collective security efforts in their respective regions. For allies in the Indo-Pacific region, this means they must significantly increase their defense spending and prioritize capabilities that can effectively deny China's military objectives, particularly asymmetric defensive systems that can operate within contested environments at an affordable cost within the timeline required. Allies like Japan, Australia, the ROK, and the Philippines should develop robust defensive capabilities that can function independently while maintaining interoperability with U.S. forces. The strategy demands that allies move beyond simply hosting U.S. forces to becoming active partners that can defend critical terrain, sea lanes, and infrastructure within their regions, thereby reducing the operational burden on U.S. forces. Ultimately, a denial strategy transforms our alliance relationships from dependency models to true burden-sharing partnerships where allies field combat-credible forces capable of denying adversaries their objectives, enabling the United States to focus its most advanced capabilities where they are most needed.

12. How do you assess the strength and health of our alliances in the region?

Based on the past eight months of conducting numerous engagements with our allies in the region, I assess our alliances to be strong and resilient. Through a convergence of core interests and a shared perception of the regional security environment, I have seen our defense cooperation with our key allies strengthen and grow.

13. What are the key elements of strategic deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region?

Strategic deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region requires positioning combat-credible military forces west of the international dateline capable of deterring military aggression from China. This deterrent posture must be reinforced with allies like Japan, Australia, the Philippines, and the ROK, who must strengthen their own defense capabilities. It also requires other likeminded partners to do more for the collective defense. In addition, strategic deterrence demands modernized nuclear forces and advanced conventional capabilities, including long-range precision strike systems, integrated air and missile defense networks, and resilient command and control architectures that can operate effectively in contested environments while maintaining the credible threat of unacceptable costs for any adversary contemplating military action.

14. In your opinion, what should be the highest priority military capabilities and capacities in the Indo-Pacific that would most directly contribute to deterrence of aggressive behavior by our adversaries? What do you view as the gaps between these high priority capabilities and capacities and what exists today?

The highest priority military capabilities for Indo-Pacific deterrence must be those that enable a credible denial defense within the First Island Chain, including advanced submarine forces; long-range, mobile, precision strike systems; integrated air and missile defense networks; and resilient command and control architectures that can operate effectively within contested environments. My understanding is that we face shortfalls in our submarine force structure and defense industrial base capacity. Additionally, while our allies and partners are making progress, they must dramatically accelerate their own defense investments and capabilities development to deter military aggression by our adversaries.

15. In your opinion, does the Missile Technology Control Regime unnecessarily constrain our ability to transfer missile and unmanned technologies to U.S. allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific? Does this constrain U.S. military operations in the Pacific theater? If so, how?

I believe previous U.S. policies to implement the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) have presented constraints on our ability to rapidly transfer critical missile and unmanned technologies to key allies and partners in the region. My understanding is that these policies are currently being revised to remove the unnecessary barriers. Revisions to the MTCR-informed export control approaches should improve the pace of capability transfers to trusted allies like Japan, Australia, the ROK, and the Philippines at a time when we need to accelerate burden-sharing and strengthen collective deterrence, potentially impacting our ability to position combat-credible forces and advanced systems where they are most needed. I believe we must carefully balance these controls against the urgent operational requirement to ensure our closest allies have the asymmetric defensive capabilities necessary to contribute meaningfully to regional denial defense strategies and reduce operational burdens on U.S. forces in contested environments.

16. In your view, is the current U.S. force posture in the Indo-Pacific region sufficient to support our security strategy in the region? If not, how would you restructure U.S. security posture in the Indo-Pacific to compete with China, reassure allies and partners, and deter Chinese aggression? Please explain your answer.

My understanding is that the United States forward postures a significant number of personnel and advanced capabilities in the region, most notably to U.S. bases in Guam, Japan, and the ROK. If confirmed, my priority will be to advance recommendations to the Secretary that strengthen U.S. combat credible posture in the region. This includes ensuring adequate ability to field submarines, mobile long-range fires, integrated air and missile defense, command and control, and additional capabilities. I believe U.S. forces in-theater remain foundational to our ability to act in real-time alongside our allies and partners to defend our shared interests.

17. What is your understanding and assessment of the relative costs and benefits of permanent versus rotational forces forward stationed in the Indo-Pacific?

I believe a mix of both permanent, forward-deployed forces and flexible, rotational forces is necessary to establish deterrence and to maintain sufficient military readiness in the region. Enduring U.S. force presence, like U.S. forces stationed in Japan and the ROK, has an enhanced ability to create institutional ties with host nations and train to tailored mission requirements. However, permanent forces have high maintenance and auxiliary costs, including payments to house families and dependents alongside military personnel, and must cycle through readiness.

Rotational forces provide for more flexible deployments, deploy at high readiness, and are available to be positioned during high-threat windows at a comparatively low cost. Examples include the multiple Marine Rotational Forces operating throughout the region, including in the Philippines and Australia.

18. In your opinion, what are the highest priority military capabilities that would most directly contribute to deterrence of aggressive behavior in the Indo-Pacific?

I believe the highest priority military capabilities for deterring aggressive behavior in the region must include advanced submarine forces, long-range precision strike systems capable of operating within contested environments, ground-based long-range fires, unmanned systems in all domains, and integrated air and missile defense networks. Equally critical are resilient command and control architectures and distributed logistics capabilities that enable U.S. forces to operate effectively despite enemy anti-access/area-denial efforts while maintaining credible deterrent presence west of the international dateline. Finally, I believe we must prioritize enhancing our allies' and partners' defensive capacities through interoperable systems and burden-sharing arrangements that multiply our collective deterrent effect while reducing operational demands on U.S. forces.

19. What do you view as the gaps between capability requirements for the Indo-Pacific security environment and what the U.S. is actually able to field and produce today?

My understanding is that the most significant gaps involve our defense industrial base's capacity to produce critical munitions, platforms, and systems at the scale and speed required both for homeland defense and a denial defense along the First Island Chain. I believe we face particular shortfalls in our ability to manufacture sufficient quantities of long-range precision strike and air defense munitions, maintain and repair forward-deployed naval and air assets within contested areas, and produce advanced submarines and other high-end platforms at the rate necessary to meet both our own operational requirements as well as those of regional allies and partners.

20. If confirmed, what steps would you take to bridge these gaps?

Some of these challenges would be out of my purview as ASW(IPSA), but if confirmed, I intend to work with my colleagues in the Department and with Congress to emphasize the

importance of addressing the shortfalls in our defense industrial base. I would support efforts to position combat-credible forces west of the international dateline through expanded rotational deployments, infrastructure improvements, and the deployment of capabilities that can operate effectively within contested environments. Additionally, I would work to ensure our allies and partners significantly increase their own defense spending and modernize their capabilities to create true burden-sharing partnerships.

China

21. If confirmed, what policies would you recommend to deter aggression by China, maintain free passage through the global commons, and assure our Indo-Pacific allies and partners?

If confirmed, I would recommend policies focused on positioning combat-credible military forces west of the international dateline capable of deterring aggression from China. Equally critical would be transforming our alliance relationships to true burden-sharing partnerships where allies like Japan, Australia, and the ROK dramatically increase their own defense spending and strengthen capabilities that will enhance their ability to operate independently while maintaining interoperability with U.S. forces. Finally, I would advocate for accelerating defense industrial base investments to dramatically increase production capacity for critical munitions and platforms, ensuring our collective deterrent posture presents China with an unacceptable cost-benefit calculus for any military aggression.

22. How does the U.S. ensure extended nuclear deterrence remains credible against a rapidly advancing Chinese military threat, North Korean aggression, and Russia coercion?

My understanding is that the United States maintains credible extended nuclear deterrence by ensuring our nuclear forces can effectively deter multiple nuclear-armed adversaries simultaneously, which requires modernizing all three legs of our nuclear triad and strengthening our nuclear command, control, and communications architecture to address the unprecedented challenge of facing China's rapidly expanding nuclear arsenal alongside other existing threats. That said, I believe we need to be clear-eyed, frank, and realistic with our allies about the nature of the threats we face and the allocation of responsibilities among ourselves, in the service of ensuring our alliances are best defended and strategically sustainable.

23. In your view, what is the effect of China's expanding economy and rapidly growing military capabilities on the Indo-Pacific region and how do such factors influence perceptions of Beijing's emergence as the leading power in Asia? How are these perceptions impacting the U.S.'s ability to balance against China's growing power?

I believe China's expanding economy and rapidly growing military capabilities are fundamentally altering the balance of power in the region. However, China's increasingly

aggressive behavior in the South China Sea, coercive activities against Taiwan, and assertive military posture are generating significant concern among countries in the region, creating opportunities for the United States to strengthen partnerships with countries that share concerns about China's military dominance and are willing to invest in collective defense arrangements to preserve their autonomy and security and to deny China's hegemonic ambitions.

24. In your view, why has China undertaken a massive nuclear build-up? Was this prompted by U.S. actions or an inevitable byproduct of China's growing comprehensive national power?

In my view, China's nuclear buildup appears to be driven primarily by its strategic ambition to establish regional hegemony in Asia and ultimately challenge U.S. global preeminence. I believe this nuclear expansion is part of a comprehensive military modernization program and, when coupled with China's massive conventional military buildup, represents China's calculated strategy to create the military conditions necessary to pursue its geopolitical objectives.

25. Does the U.S. need to adjust its security posture in the Indo-Pacific in response to China's nuclear build-up?

I believe our response to China's nuclear expansion requires comprehensive modernization of all three legs of our nuclear triad and nuclear command and control systems to maintain credible deterrence against multiple nuclear-armed adversaries simultaneously, while also strengthening our conventional denial defense capabilities and missile defense systems throughout the region. I also believe we must accelerate efforts to position combat-credible forces west of the international dateline and demand that regional partners, particularly Japan, the ROK, Australia, and Taiwan, dramatically increase their own defense spending and strengthen capabilities to better deter China's aggression across multiple domains.

26. How should U.S. extended deterrence commitments change to account for the vast increase in Chinese military power?

I believe that first and foremost, our allies and partners must dramatically increase their own defense spending and capabilities to counter the growing military threat from China. This transformation requires those like Japan, the ROK, Australia, and Taiwan to invest more in their own defense while developing asymmetric defensive capabilities. Additionally, extended deterrence must be reinforced through enhanced nuclear modernization and advanced conventional capabilities positioned west of the international dateline.

27. China has long sought to leverage the tyranny of distance, counter-intervention capabilities (e.g., theater range missiles), and fait accompli strategies to prevent U.S. power projection and the decisive employment of military force. Does this

continue to explain China's concept of operations for countering the U.S. military superiority in the region?

My understanding is that China's concept of operations continues to center on exploiting geographic distance and employing sophisticated anti-access/area-denial capabilities, including advanced theater-range missiles, hypersonic weapons, and integrated air defense systems, designed to prevent U.S. forces from operating effectively within the First Island Chain. China's strategy remains focused on creating multiple dilemmas for U.S. and allies' forces through layered defensive systems that can hold U.S. and allied bases, naval assets, and logistics networks at risk while simultaneously pursuing rapid local campaigns, particularly regarding Taiwan and South China Sea. This approach reflects China's recognition that it cannot match American military power globally but seeks to establish local superiority within its immediate sphere of influence by limiting U.S. power projection and challenging movement in the Western Pacific.

28. China employs "grey zone" tactics that fall beneath the threshold of military response in order to effect changes to the status quo in the Indo-Pacific. In your view, can the U.S. and its allies deter grey zone coercion directed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)?

I believe the United States and its allies and partners can effectively deter China's coercion by maintaining a combat-credible deterrent force that makes China recognize any escalation to outright conflict would result in catastrophic failure. By getting our allies and partners to spend and do more for the collective defense, we are creating multiple dilemmas against aggression. I believe we must position combat-credible forces west of the international dateline, strengthen the collective defense, and maintain advanced capabilities that can credibly deter China's attempts to transition into conventional military action.

29. Are there cost imposing strategies other than deterrence that the U.S. can employ to counter the CCP's grey zone tactics?

I believe the most effective strategy is ensuring our allies and partners dramatically increase their own defense spending and strengthen their own capabilities. I believe we need to maintain our focus on building a combat-credible posture in the region to deter aggression by China.

30. What policies would you recommend the United States put in place, both unilaterally and in coordination with allies and partners, to counter the increasing challenge posed by China in the East and South China Seas?

I would recommend that U.S. Indo-Pacific Command continue to maintain an active presence in the South China Sea through exercises, freedom of navigation operations, port calls, and robust rotational U.S. force presence in the Philippines to ensure the United States is consistently challenging China's efforts to control the region and to ensure the U.S. military is postured to respond in crisis or contingency. My understanding

is that the Department and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command are enabling the Philippines to better counter China in the South China Sea through monthly bilateral air and maritime activities; routine intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) support; and security assistance to improve the capability and capacity of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine Coast Guard. I would recommend the continuation of these efforts.

31. What U.S. national interests do U.S. forces postured in or near the South China Sea protect? What do you expect U.S. allies to do to assist in countering Chinese provocations in the South China Sea?

I believe China's militarization of the South China Sea and harassment and coercion of U.S. allies and partners in the region threaten freedom of maneuver, undermine freedoms of navigation and overflight, and risk unintended escalation. I support the Department's ongoing efforts to increase cooperation in the South China Sea with the Philippines, Australia, and Japan through regular maritime activities, coordinated security assistance, and information sharing.

32. China is fielding a vast array of advanced military capability, both at scale and in every domain, yet professes to be spending a fraction of what the U.S. spends on defense. Do you believe that China's publicly announced spending on the Peoples Liberation Army is an accurate depiction of its actual defense budget?

My understanding is that China's publicly announced defense spending figures significantly understate the true scope and scale of its military investments. The rapid pace and massive scale of China's military modernization across all domains, including its unprecedented naval shipbuilding, nuclear expansion, and advanced technology development, cannot be reconciled with its officially declared defense spending levels when compared to the costs of similar capabilities in other nations.

33. What is your understanding of China's efforts to develop and deploy cyber warfare capabilities against U.S government and private sector targets?

My understanding is that China has developed sophisticated cyber warfare capabilities as part of a comprehensive strategy to challenge U.S. military superiority and undermine our critical infrastructure, with advanced persistent threat groups like Volt Typhoon and Salt Typhoon demonstrating their ability to penetrate U.S. telecommunications networks, government systems, and defense industrial base targets. China views cyber operations as a critical asymmetric capability that allows it to hold U.S. targets at risk while operating below the threshold of conventional military conflict, enabling it to collect intelligence, disrupt operations, and position themselves for potential future conflicts. These cyber capabilities are integrated into China's broader military modernization program and represent a central component of its strategy to deter U.S. intervention in the Western Pacific while simultaneously preparing the battlefield for potential conventional operations.

34. What is your understanding of the role of the Department of Defense in deterring or preventing these attacks?

My understanding is that the Department plays a critical role in ensuring the U.S. Government demonstrates to China that any significant cyberattacks against U.S. interests may face credible retaliation.

Taiwan

35. What is your understanding of the efforts by Taiwan to increase its defensive military capabilities and whole-of-society resilience?

I believe Taiwan must continue to do much more, and much faster, to substantially increase its defense spending, enact legal and policy reforms, and acquire defense equipment best aligned with an invasion scenario. Taiwan's budget needs to surge to appropriately reflect the threat that it faces. My understanding is that Taiwan is also taking measures to deepen civil-military cooperation and strengthen whole-of-society resilience. I believe these efforts are important to bolstering cross-Strait deterrence.

36. What is your understanding of the United States' responsibilities under the Taiwan Relations Act?

My understanding is that the implementation of our responsibilities under the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) has remained strong and bipartisan for over forty years. If confirmed, I will continue to uphold our one China policy – consistent with the TRA, the Three Joint Communiqués, and the Six Assurances – and provide my best advice and recommendations on the effective provision of defensive arms and services to Taiwan, supporting the Secretary's ability to maintain a credible deterrent effect.

37. What policy recommendations do you have for improving U.S. support to Taiwan?

If confirmed, I will provide my best advice and recommendations on the various tools available to rapidly strengthen Taiwan's self-defense capabilities that deter and deny China's aggression across the Taiwan Strait. Taiwan needs to do more and faster, first and foremost by significantly increasing its defense spending and rapidly acquiring the appropriate weapons and systems needed to deter aggression from China. U.S. support is a force multiplier to further strengthen Taiwan's self-defense capabilities and bolster deterrence, but it needs to be complimentary to Taiwan's own will, speed, and level of effort.

38. What opportunities do you see to strengthen our defense relationship with Taiwan?

If confirmed, I will provide my best advice and recommendations on options to expedite the provision of materiel and non-materiel assistance to Taiwan, consistent with the

longstanding U.S. policy towards Taiwan. And I will continue to encourage Taiwan to focus on acquiring asymmetric, mobile, cost-effective, and resilient capabilities.

39. What is your view regarding the longstanding U.S. policy of selling defense articles and services to Taiwan despite objections and criticism from China?

My understanding is that the U.S. Government's one China policy has not changed and is consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act, the three Joint Communiques, and the Six Assurances. The provision of defense articles and services to Taiwan remains consistent with this policy and enables Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability.

40. There is a significant backlog in Foreign Military Sales cases for Taiwan. If confirmed, how will you go about fixing this backlog?

If confirmed, I would support ongoing Department efforts to ensure that Taiwan arms sales are prioritized, including by seeking innovative ways to use the Taiwan Security Cooperation Initiative authority to overcome defense industrial base constraints and address many of Taiwan's defense requirements for an effective denial defense.

North Korea

41. Do you believe the Trump Administration should return to its policy of pressing for the Comprehensive, Verifiable, Irreversible Denuclearization (CVID) of the Korean Peninsula?

The President has expressed his desire to meet with Kim Jong Un. If confirmed, I will work with interagency partners to support the President to advance U.S strategy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

42. In your view, what should be the U.S.'s overall strategy to mitigate the threat posed by North Korea to our allies in the region and to the United States?

In my view, the United States and its allies continue to deter DPRK aggression in the region, through high levels of operational readiness on the Korean Peninsula, as well as realistic training and robust combined exercises. If confirmed, I will work to ensure we continue to do so.

43. Does the United States need to do more to deter the DPRK?

The United States and its allies have successfully deterred DPRK aggression since the end of the Korean War. Maintaining deterrence will depend on continuing to ensure a high level of operational readiness. I believe we need to be clear-eyed, frank, and realistic with our allies about the nature of the threats we face and the allocation of responsibilities among ourselves, in the service of ensuring our alliances are best defended and strategically sustainable.

44. What recommendations would you have concerning the U.S. response to potential North Korean nuclear and ballistic missile tests? What are the core elements of a strategy to contain or deter the North Korean threat?

Any U.S. response to a DPRK nuclear or ballistic missile test would necessarily be dependent on the situation. If confirmed, I would work with our commanders in the field, as well as other relevant U.S. Government departments and agencies, to determine the best means by which to respond.

45. The United States has never fought a conventional war against a nuclear armed state. How should that fact change the calculus for readiness for U.S. Forces Korea?

My understanding is that the United States plans for a range of contingency operations that provide credible options to the President in support of U.S. interests. If confirmed, I will work with U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and U.S. Forces Korea to ensure we remain well postured and operationally ready.

46. The Trump Administration's 2018 Nuclear Posture Review explicitly declared that "there is no scenario in which the Kim regime could employ nuclear weapons and survive." Does this remain the Trump Administration's policy? What policy recommendations would you make to ensure U.S. and allied forces have the capability to defeat sites in North Korea containing weapons of mass destruction?

If confirmed, I will work with U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and U.S. Forces Korea—as well as our allies and partners—to ensure we have the required capabilities and readiness to deter and defeat weapons of mass destruction threats to the Korean Peninsula, the broader region, and the U.S. Homeland.

47. Do you believe the President has the authority, under Article II of the Constitution, to conduct a military strike on North Korea, either conventional or nuclear, to protect against an imminent threat against the United States without prior Congressional authorization? If yes, what would constitute an imminent threat to the United States that would trigger the President's authority under Article II?

I would defer to the President about how he would choose to use his Article II powers to address any threats from the DPRK. If confirmed, I would provide my best policy advice and recommendations as appropriate to USW(P) and the Secretary regarding any potential threats from the DPRK.

48. What is your assessment of the threat that North Korea poses as a possible source of proliferation of missile, nuclear, or other military technology?

DPRK is a known proliferator of missile, nuclear, and military technology globally. If confirmed, I will work with relevant U.S. Government departments and agencies and with regional partners to combat the threat posed by DPRK weapons proliferation.

49. How important are cooperation and collaboration with South Korea and Japan in addressing the threat from North Korea?

The ROK and Japan continue to strengthen their cooperation with respect to the threat from the DPRK. If confirmed, I would review the current state of trilateral cooperation and make recommendations for pragmatic and results-oriented cooperation that enhances credible defense capabilities.

50. What role do you believe China would be willing to play in convincing North Korea to negotiate a freeze of its nuclear and missile programs?

The relationship between China and the DPRK continues to be dynamic. If confirmed, I will closely evaluate the DPRK's deepening relationship with China to assess the implications for a potential nuclear and missile freeze.

51. What technology and material benefits has North Korea received in exchange for its support of Russia's invasion of Ukraine?

From unclassified media reporting, it appears that Russia has provided some improved air defense capabilities and likely continues to skirt existing sanctions to provide economic support to the DPRK regime. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Intelligence Community to understand the range of technological and material benefits that Russia is providing to DPRK.

52. How has North Korea's combat experience in Ukraine improved its military readiness?

Combat in Ukraine has likely afforded DPRK insight into how to fight in a modern, unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV)-rich environment, as well as providing the opportunity to test its ballistic missile performance under combat conditions. If confirmed, I will work closely with the U.S. Intelligence Community and our military commanders to understand the implications of DPRK's combat experience for U.S. security.

Japan

53. What is your view on the state of the U.S.-Japan security relationship?

Japan is a critical ally. I believe the United States is deepening cooperation with Japan to strengthen and modernize the U.S.-Japan Alliance and ensure it is ready to deter and defend against adversary aggression. This includes pressing Japan to significantly increase defense spending and invest in and build the capabilities it needs to better defend its own country; enhancing bilateral training and exercises on realistic scenarios;

strengthening Alliance force posture and presence, including in Japan's Southwest Islands; and promoting defense equipment and technology cooperation.

54. How does Japan contribute to U.S. deterrence and stability objectives in the Indo-Pacific?

I believe Japan is an important partner in bolstering U.S. security objectives in the region. Japan's investments in strengthening its defense capabilities will help to enhance credible deterrence against adversary aggression in the region. Furthermore, Japan's proactive engagement in regional security initiatives, such as participating in exercises, conducting joint training, and providing security assistance to the Philippines, reduces the burden on the United States and increases interoperability with other regional partners and the United States.

55. What specific security capabilities do you believe Japan should emphasize, develop, and procure to improve its ability to contribute to the deterrence of China and North Korea?

Japan has long underemphasized spending for its own defense, especially given the threats posed by China and the DPRK. I believe Japan must build the capabilities necessary to enable a denial defense of its own archipelago and bolster collective defense in its region. Japan must significantly increase investment in all categories to meet the threat posed by China and DPRK. Capabilities such as long-range fires, integrated air and missile defense, and sea control and denial capabilities could provide a meaningful impact to strengthen deterrence in the region.

56. How will the transformation of United States Forces Japan (USFJ) into a Joint Force Headquarters improve the command and control of U.S. forces in the region?

My understanding is that USFJ currently performs some operational functions and routine administrative and logistical functions. The transformation of USFJ into a Joint Force Headquarters will improve command and control of U.S. forces in Japan by enhancing the missions and functions of the command that are directly relevant to operational requirements, including enhanced intelligence, fires, and planning capabilities necessary for warfighting. As we focus on our posture towards China, I believe it is important to make this shift into a Joint Force Headquarters that will be better able to respond to any contingency and effectively coordinate with Japan's newly created Japan Self Defense Force Joint Operations Center.

57. What role will the USFJ Commander play in commanding U.S. military forces during a contingency?

My understanding is that the USFJ Commander plays an essential role supporting the Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command west of the International Date Line, which will be enabled by the upgraded USFJ headquarters. I believe that once USFJ is

upgraded to a Joint Force Headquarters, the USFJ commander will be capable of integrating the joint force in and around Japan to respond to potential contingencies and to effectively coordinate with the Japan Self-Defense Force to enable U.S. operations.

58. How will this newly empowered USFJ coordinate with Japan's newly established Japanese Self Defense Force Joint Operations Center (JJOC)?

I believe the transformation of USFJ from an administrative command into a Joint Force Headquarters will empower the USFJ commander with appropriate authorities and resources, including required personnel and operational capabilities, to enable USFJ to work directly with counterparts in Japan's recently established Japan Self Defense Force Joint Operations Command (JJOC).

59. Will the U.S. have a liaison element assigned to the JJOC to ensure seamless coordination?

My understanding is that USFJ has already established a liaison element – the JJOC Cooperation Team (JCT) – to work and coordinate with JJOC. The JCT serves as the primary staff interface between USFJ and the JJOC, enabling seamless coordination. The JCT will continue to grow as USFJ expands its capabilities and authorities as part of the deliberate upgrade of USFJ into a Joint Force Headquarters.

60. Does transferring U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam under the bilaterally agreed upon Defense Policy Review Initiative still serve alliance interests?

I know that the Department leadership is committed to having the right force posture to effectively deter China and other regional threats. If confirmed, I will consult closely with both my leadership and Japanese counterparts on how the U.S.-Japan Alliance can best advance our collective security interests.

61. Japan is acquiring considerable long-range strike capability. Do we have the technical systems in place to coordinate strike operations during a crisis?

The establishment of the Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF) JJOC enables U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and USFJ forces to coordinate at the operational and tactical levels. If confirmed, I will continue to support strengthening the technical systems across the Alliance to ensure the Department's ability to coordinate strike operation, as required.

62. What role do you see for the U.S.-Japan-Republic of Korea Defense Trilateral Talks (DTT) in deterring threats in the Indo-Pacific? If confirmed, will you prioritize regularly convened meetings of the DTT?

I believe the Department is pursuing pragmatic and results-oriented trilateral defense cooperation with Japan and the ROK to address shared security challenges. If confirmed, I will look to utilize the DTT to pursue tangible outcomes that are beneficial to the United States and strengthen deterrence in the region.

63. Should the United States continue to provide ground combat forces for the deterrence of North Korea and assurance to South Korea and Japan?

I believe the Department's mission is to provide the military forces needed to deter war and ensure our nation's security. And I believe our forces in the region are a key component of our deterrence of threats in the region, including the DPRK. If confirmed, I will consult closely with U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Joint Staff, and these allies to make informed recommendations to the USW(P) and the Secretary regarding forward posture.

64. The U.S.-Japan Extended Deterrence Dialogue (EDD) has regularly convened. How does the EDD contribute to alliance?

My understanding is that the EDD has served as a mechanism to discuss extended deterrence and related issues with Japan, including how Japan can support broader U.S. deterrence objectives and how Japan can better contribute to collective security in the region. I believe that through the EDD discussions, the United States and Japan have made progress discussing how the Alliance can effectively respond to various contingencies and manage crisis escalation.

65. Does the United States need to adjust its strategic deterrence capabilities in the Indo-Pacific in response to the rapidly growing nuclear threats in the region?

I believe that U.S. nuclear forces reinforce our ability to deter and contribute to our overall defense posture and that retaining a credible, effective nuclear deterrent is a priority.

66. Do you support expanding the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) defense trade agreement to include Japan? If yes, how would Japan materially improve the capability and capacity of AUKUS? Does Japan have the requisite legal and regulatory policies in place to join AUKUS? If not, what does it need to do to meet the AUKUS standards?

The Department is conducting a review of AUKUS to ensure that it is fully aligned with President Trump's America First agenda. The review is being conducted in consultation with U.S. interagency counterparts as well as Australia and the United Kingdom.

Republic of Korea

67. What is your assessment of the current U. S.-South Korean security relationship?

The U.S.-ROK security relationship has transformed over the past 70 years into a sophisticated alliance that addresses our shared security challenges. If confirmed, I will work with U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, USFK, and the ROK government to modernize

and strengthen the U.S.-ROK Alliance and ensure it continues to advance U.S. interests in the current regional security environment.

68. What is the value to U.S. national security of the U.S.-South Korea alliance and our military posture on the Korean Peninsula, in your view?

I believe the U.S.-ROK Alliance is critical for U.S. interests and a key enabler for U.S. presence in the region. If confirmed, I will work to ensure the Alliance is modernized to reflect the broader regional security environment that the United States and the ROK face.

69. What is your understanding of the U.S. obligations in the event of an attack on South Korea by North Korea? In your view what factors should trigger the commitment of U.S. forces to engage North Korean forces in response to an attack on South Korea?

My understanding is that the commitment of U.S. forces will be a decision made by the President and the Secretary of War. If confirmed, I will provide my best advice and recommendations regarding our commitments under the 1953 U.S.-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty.

70. Under what conditions should wartime operational control be transferred from the United States to the Republic of Korea, in your opinion?

If confirmed, I will review carefully the issue of the transfer of wartime operational control, in close consultation with U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and USFK as well as with my ROK counterparts.

71. In your view, should U.S. forces on the Korean Peninsula remain focused on defense of South Korea or should U.S. forces in Korea also be available for regional or global operations? Please explain your answer.

U.S. forces on the Korean Peninsula are postured and stationed to advance U.S. interests in the region. If confirmed, I will work with the ROK government to ensure U.S. forces on the Korean Peninsula are appropriately focused for the current security environment.

72. What specific security capabilities do you believe South Korea should emphasize, develop, and procure to improve its ability to contribute to the deterrence of China?

While the ROK should focus primarily on leading the U.S.-ROK Alliance's conventional deterrence against the DPRK, many capabilities could also contribute to a deterrence of China. Capabilities such as long-range fires, integrated air and missile defense, space, and electronic warfare capabilities could provide a meaningful impact to strengthen deterrence in the region against both threats.

73. During an appearance before the Senate Armed Services Committee in 2025, Admiral Paparo, Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, stated that force reductions on the Korean Peninsula would inherently “reduce our ability to prevail in conflict.” Do you agree with Admiral Paparo’s sentiment?

U.S. posture globally is continually reevaluated so the United States is optimally postured for contingencies and our allies and partners are adequately investing in their own security. If confirmed, I will work closely with Admiral Paparo and General Brunson to make recommendations to the USW(P) and the Secretary that calibrate U.S. posture on the Korean Peninsula in light of the current regional security environment.

74. In your view, would reductions in the number of U.S. personnel on the Korean Peninsula weaken our ability to deter, and if necessary, defeat North Korean aggression? Chinese aggression?

If confirmed, I will work closely with my leadership and the Department’s military commanders to ensure the number of U.S. personnel on the Korean Peninsula is properly calibrated for all regional threats.

75. In the event of a war on the Korean Peninsula what role should South Korea play in securing North Korean weapons of mass destruction sites?

My understanding is that the United States conducts bilateral planning with the ROK on a range of contingency scenarios, the results of which are classified.

76. Does the U.S. need to forward deploy strategic capabilities in the Indo-Pacific in response to China’s nuclear breakout and North Korea’s continued increase of nuclear weapons and delivery systems?

Both China and the DPRK are dramatically increasing their nuclear arsenals. If confirmed, I will work to ensure the United States and the ROK are capable of deterring and defending our interests against these threats.

77. Do you think the Chinese People’s Liberation Army would be directed to intervene in a conflict on the Korean Peninsula as it did in 1950? If so, what would the role of the U.S. be in such a circumstance?

I believe the United States will fulfill its commitments on the Korean Peninsula, in accordance with the 1953 Mutual Defense Treaty.

78. China has significantly enhanced its naval activities in the Yellow Sea with the intent of intimidating South Korea. How should the U.S.-ROK alliance respond to these provocations?

Chinese activities in the Yellow Sea appear to be aimed at intimidating the ROK. If confirmed, I will work with my U.S. government colleagues and ROK counterparts to

review these activities and propose appropriate responses.

Australia

79. What is your assessment of the current U. S.-Australia security relationship?

Australia is one of our closest and most important allies. The strength of our security relationship is reflected in our wide-ranging cooperation, including in force posture initiatives across nearly every domain as well as advanced capabilities and defense industrial matters. Our work is accelerating through key infrastructure upgrades to support significantly expanded U.S. force posture in Australia, such as for more frequent air, maritime, and land rotations across Australia and the expansion of storage locations to serve as enduring logistics support across Australia. We have also been expanding defense industrial cooperation through Australia's Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance (GWEO) enterprise.

80. What is the value to U.S. national security of the U.S.-Australia alliance, in your view?

The U.S.-Australia Alliance is of great value to our national security. The United States and Australia share an aligned strategic outlook regarding the security challenges our countries face. I believe we should work closely with Australia to increase burden sharing and enhance our force posture and defense industrial cooperation.

81. Please explain how the U.S.-Australia Force Posture Initiatives strengthen deterrence of China?

My understanding is that over the last several years, the Department has made significant strides in force posture expansion across Australia. This includes increased rotations of U.S. air assets and U.S. Army watercraft as well as U.S. Marine Rotational Force-Darwin's annual six-month rotations. The Department has established Force Posture Initiatives across nearly every domain, including air, land, maritime, logistics, and space. Efforts are continuing to upgrade critical air bases across northern Australia. Additionally, because Australia serves as a key logistics hub, the Department is continuing to expand storage locations across Australia, enabling U.S. forces to store equipment used in rotations and exercises. If confirmed, I will seek ways to accelerate our force posture work in Australia.

82. How should the U.S. partner with Australia to build the capacity of the Philippines and other partners in Southeast Asia and the western Pacific?

Recently, the United States, Australia, and Japan announced efforts to integrate Japanese Self-Defense Forces into annual U.S. Marine Rotational Force-Darwin activities alongside Australia. Australia and Japan have exercised reciprocal deployments under their Reciprocal Access Agreement, and this work is continuing to expand through enhanced trilateral exercises between our three countries. Additionally, Australia's

Reciprocal Access Agreement with the Philippines provides an opportunity to improve training and interoperability between those two countries. The United States and Australia also cooperate with our partners in the Pacific Island nations on improved training and exercises.

83. What specific security capabilities do you believe Australia should emphasize, develop, and procure to improve its ability to contribute to the deterrence of China?

We have seen a shift in Australia's military from being a balanced force to one more focused on the specific security challenges Australia is facing. Through its upcoming 2026 National Defence Strategy process, Australia will be well positioned to make important investments in key capabilities that are needed to better defend its own country and contribute to deterrence in the region.

Australia's ongoing investments in its GWEO enterprise, specifically in PrSM, GMLRS, and 155 mm munitions, will help ensure it is positioned to develop, produce, and sustain its sovereign weapons capabilities, as well as cooperate with the United States on U.S.-origin munitions. Additionally, Australia should increase its investments in integrated air and missile defense in a manner that enables it to integrate with U.S. and allied platforms in the region.

84. How does the AUKUS agreement advance U.S. interests?

The Department is conducting a review of AUKUS to ensure that it is fully aligned with President Trump's America First agenda. The review is being conducted in consultation with U.S. interagency counterparts as well as Australia and the United Kingdom.

85. How does AUKUS contribute to deterrence? Does the fact that China does not like AUKUS mean they are deterred?

AUKUS has two lines of effort: Pillar I, relating to the delivery of conventionally armed, nuclear-powered U.S. submarines to Australia; and Pillar II, focused on developing and accelerating the delivery of advanced capabilities to the U.S., UK, and Australia. The ongoing AUKUS review is assessing both pillars.

86. Does AUKUS strengthen the U.S. defense industrial base? If so, how?

The Department is currently conducting a review of AUKUS. The review will assess commitments – under both Pillars I and II – for strategic alignment and benefit to the United States, including the U.S. defense industrial base.

87. In your assessment, does Australia need a submarine fleet? What are the implications for security and stability of the Indo-Pacific and Oceania if Australia suffered a gap in submarine capability?

The Department is currently conducting a review of AUKUS, including of Pillar I, which envisions the transfer of U.S. submarines to Australia starting in the 2030s. The review is being conducted in consultation with U.S. interagency counterparts as well as Australia and the United Kingdom.

88. The U.S.-Australia Force Posture Initiatives and AUKUS have led to a substantial influx of U.S. personnel throughout the continent. Does the U.S. military need a new command and control element to oversee our military forces in Australia?

My understanding is that the Department is continuing to evaluate the size and footprint of its rotational force presence in Australia to ensure there are appropriate and adequate command and control elements in place.

Pacific Deterrence Initiative

89. Do you believe that the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) is a useful tool to improve U.S. posture in the Indo-Pacific?

The Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) provides a framework for communicating targeted investments that improve U.S. force posture in the region. I believe PDI provides a useful framework for the Department's continued funding of critical initiatives related to infrastructure, presence, and readiness. Furthermore, PDI supports the development of dispersed and distributed U.S. military operations.

90. In your view, what strategic objectives, lines of effort, and specific areas of investment should be prioritized for funding under the PDI?

In my view, PDI is a useful mechanism for communicating the Department's resourcing of U.S. deterrent capabilities in the Indo-Pacific in support of U.S. strategy. My understanding is that activities included in the PDI report are prioritized based on a clear set of strategic objectives and lines of effort, focused on investments that yield tangible deterrence effects within the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP). If confirmed, I will work with Department stakeholders to ensure PDI advances strategic priorities.

91. Do you believe that continued, dedicated funding for PDI is required to support the U.S.'s objectives in the Indo-Pacific? Please explain your answer.

I do not believe a dedicated, separate funding line item or appropriation specifically labeled for PDI is required for achieving U.S. objectives in the Indo-Pacific region. I believe we can also leverage existing planning, programming, and budgeting mechanisms to achieve our goals in the region. Within the lens of U.S. strategy, Military Departments, U.S. Special Operations Command, the Missile Defense Agency, and other relevant DoD components should continue identifying activities, programs, and associated funding within existing authorities that align with the established criteria for PDI.

92. The European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) has significantly improved U.S. force posture and capabilities in the European theater and was proven effective during the U.S.'s response Russia's war against Ukraine. What do you see as the biggest challenges to implementing PDI in the Indo-Pacific theater to achieve similar improvements?

If confirmed, I will work with my counterparts in the Office of the Under Secretary of War for Policy and the Office of the Secretary of War - Comptroller to identify best practices from EDI that could be applied to overcome implementation challenges for PDI.

93. If confirmed, what steps would you take to overcome these challenges?

If confirmed, I would seek to better understand EDI's five principal lines of effort: (1) Increased Presence, (2) Exercises and Training, (3) Enhanced Prepositioning, (4) Improved Infrastructure, and (5) Building Partner Capacity, to determine if PDI could use a similar framework to improve implementation.

Philippines

94. The Biden Administration developed a Philippines Security Sector Assistance Roadmap to help modernize the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Do you support the PSSAR? If yes, how will the PSSAR be resourced?

My understanding is that the Philippines is taking concerted steps to modernize its defense forces and capabilities and that the Department has worked closely with the Philippine to align those efforts with investments from the United States. The Philippines Security Sector Assistance Roadmap (P-SSAR) is a non-binding tool used to ensure both sides are working together toward the same strategic objectives. It is my understanding that the P-SSAR is a living document subject to processes in the bilateral alliance to review, reassess, and update the document as needed to ensure it continues to be a relevant, helpful guide for modernization.

95. Does the U.S. intend to seek additional Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement sites in the Philippines?

I understand that our Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) sites support the defense of the Philippines and enhance deterrence in the region by enabling joint military training, combined exercises, and increased interoperability between the U.S. military and the Armed Forces of the Philippines. I believe activities at EDCA sites are the outcome of joint decisions between the Philippines and the United States, and any effort to identify and designate additional sites under the EDCA would be a bilateral decision based on mutual operational requirements.

96. What specific security capabilities do you believe Philippines should emphasize, develop, and procure to improve its ability to contribute to the deterrence of China?

Building on the defense modernization progress the Philippines has made so far, I believe that priority capabilities for the Philippines should include asymmetric capabilities, long-range fires, precision strike capabilities, improved cyber resilience, and maintenance and sustainment for its air and maritime assets.

97. What is your understanding of the U.S. obligations in the event of an attack on the Philippines? In your view what factors should trigger the commitment of U.S. forces to defend the Philippines?

The Secretary has stated, including in his first trip to the region in March 2025, that the 1951 United States-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) applies to an armed attack against Philippine public vessels, aircraft, and armed forces – including the Coast Guard – anywhere in the South China Sea. My understanding is that any action taken in accordance with the MDT would be a mutual decision made in close consultation with our Philippine allies, in accordance with our respective constitutional processes.

98. The U.S. has deterrence dialogues with Japan, South Korea, and Australia. Does it need to establish a deterrence dialogue with the Philippines?

My understanding is that the Department has a robust dialogue structure with the Philippines. For example, the Department recently established a new Roles, Missions, and Capabilities (RMC) Group – akin to the bilateral RMCs that the Department has with Japan, the ROK, and Australia – with the Philippine Department of National Defense to advance progress on critical issues in the defense partnership. If confirmed, I will remain committed to ensuring the RMC Group enhances our alliance management with the Philippines and that its recommendations inform our military planning as well as the Bilateral Security Dialogue (BSD) that is held at the Assistant Secretary-level alongside our colleagues from the U.S. Department of State and the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs.

99. Is the Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group properly organized and staffed to support the deepening and expanding military-to-military ties between the U.S. and the Philippines?

In my view, the Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG) is a key interlocutor between the U.S. and Philippine governments. JUSMAG ensures close communication and alignment on priorities between the Department and Philippine Department of National Defense and helps to liaise with other key stakeholders on both the U.S. and Philippine sides to discuss and promote defense priorities. The organization and staffing of JUSMAG leverages key relationships and strengthens military-to-military ties to support this growing and deepening alliance.

India

100. How would you describe the current state of the U.S.-India security relationship?

The U.S.-India defense partnership is anchored in a deep convergence of strategic interests. If confirmed, I would strive to expand this important partnership, including by deepening our military-to-military ties.

101. What recommendations would you make to bolster the overall defense relationship between our two countries?

My understanding is that our defense partnership has seen transformative growth through military exercises, defense sales, and strategic dialogue. If confirmed, I would continue to bolster our defense partnership with India through operational coordination, information sharing, and defense industrial and technology cooperation.

102. What recommendations do you have for accelerating U.S. foreign military sales to India?

I believe strengthening our defense industrial base is an urgent need. If confirmed, I will make it a priority to support efforts to strengthen our defense industrial base and explore mutually beneficial ways to deepen defense industrial cooperation with our close allies and partners.

Afghanistan

103. Reflecting back on the mission in Afghanistan, what do you view as the primary lessons learned and how should those lessons inform future military operations?

The Secretary of War directed the Department to undertake a comprehensive review of the Afghanistan withdrawal, and the review remains ongoing.

My understanding is that the Department is working closely with the Afghanistan War Commission that Congress established in the FY2022 NDAA to ensure it has all available Department information and access to current and former officials to fulfill its mandate of identifying the enduring lessons from the war.

104. In light of the end of the military mission, what do you view as U.S. strategic interests in Afghanistan?

Our strategic interest in Afghanistan is to prevent the emergence of terrorist threats that could endanger the U.S. Homeland. If confirmed, I will work with my leadership, interagency colleagues, and our allies to assess whether our approach is effective.

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

If confirmed, I will work closely with my leadership, the Assistant Secretary of War for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, and relevant military commanders to ensure that our approach is adequately addressing the threats that endanger the U.S. Homeland.

106. In your view, what conditions or factors would be indicative of a resurgence or reconstitution of al Qaeda, ISIS-K, or other terrorist organizations in Afghanistan such that they pose a threat of international terrorism?

If confirmed, and once I am briefed on the latest intelligence assessment of the threats posed by al Qaeda, ISIS-K, and other terrorist organizations in Afghanistan, I will work to ensure that the Department continues to focus on the threats posed by the groups or their affiliates, especially their ability to threaten the U.S. Homeland.

Pakistan

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

The relationship between the United States and Pakistan is multifaceted. My understanding is that counterterrorism cooperation has remained the central focus of our defense cooperation. If confirmed, I will continue to implement the Department’s defense relationship with Pakistan, consistent with the President’s objectives.

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

Pakistan continues to face terrorist threats emanating from Afghanistan that pose a risk to broader regional stability. I believe the United States and Pakistan have a shared interest in combatting terrorism and that our cooperation with Pakistan should be focused on specific counterterrorism objectives to protect the U.S. Homeland.

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

My understanding is that the Department implements a defense relationship that is focused on counterterrorism objectives to protect the U.S. Homeland, in collaboration with other Departments and Agencies. If confirmed, I will work to ensure our military-to-military relationship with Pakistan continues to focus on advancing U.S. interests.

Terrorism

110. What is your assessment of the threat to U.S. interests posed by al-Qaeda, ISIS, and affiliated terrorist organizations operating in the Indo-Pacific region?

My understanding is that al-Qaeda, ISIS, and affiliated terrorist groups in the region pose a continuing threat to U.S. interests due to their ability to inspire and enable regional terrorist activity.

111. What is your understanding of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy in the region?

My understanding is the U.S. counterterrorism strategy in the region focuses on disrupting terrorist networks, degrading their capabilities, and preventing attacks against U.S. interests and allies. This strategy emphasizes building partner capacity through training and intelligence sharing where possible, while also conducting targeted operations against key terrorist leaders and facilitators.

112. What changes, if any, would you recommend to that strategy?

My understanding is the U.S. counterterrorism strategy prioritizes strengthening long-term, sustainable partnerships with regional allies to enhance their capabilities and ownership of counterterrorism efforts. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Assistant Secretary of War for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, the Undersecretary of War for Policy, and Combatant Commanders to ensure that our strategy is preventing the emergence of threats to the United States Homeland.

113. What should be the strategic objectives of U.S. counterterrorism activities in the region?

I believe the strategic objectives of U.S. counterterrorism activities in the region should be to prevent terrorist attacks against U.S. interests and allies and degrade the operational capabilities of terrorist groups. Furthermore, I believe our efforts must aim to strengthen the resilience of partner nations to counter terrorism threats independently.

Defense Security Cooperation

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

I believe the Department should employ security sector assistance in a way that enables our allies and partners to take on roles and responsibilities that support U.S. national security objectives and enhance greater burden-sharing in the region.

115. What should be the strategic objectives of the Department's efforts to build the capabilities of a partner nation's security forces, as it relates to the Indo-Pacific region?

I believe building partner capacity in the region should focus, first and foremost, on strengthening deterrence against China. U.S. security cooperation efforts should enhance the ability of our allies and partners to advance U.S. security objectives and create sustainable security relationships that reduce long-term U.S. resource commitments while strengthening deterrence against shared threats.

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

I believe the Department is appropriately organized and resourced to effectively conduct security sector assistance activities. There are effective policies in place that allow the Department to carry out these activities efficiently, and those policies are often revisited and revised to meet changing demands, as they have been in response to the President's Executive Order on Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid.

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.

117. 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.

118. 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 without delay? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes.

119. 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.

120. 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.

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

Yes.

122. 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.

123. 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.

124. 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.